Library commemorates Banned Books Week

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It has been thirty years since the first celebration of the right to read “banned” books, yet books are still being challenged.

Popular titles such as *The Hunger Games* trilogy and *Fifty Shades of Grey* are just a few to join the likes of *The Catcher in the Rye* in this year’s list of most challenged books.

Banning a book is a rare occasion; however, many titles are challenged in libraries across the nation. The reasons for banning a book vary from sexual content to profanity, anything that can be offensive to members of a community.

This year, there have been 326 accounts of challenged books.

Although books are challenged, they are rarely banned in the United States. Challenged books are still taught in some public schools throughout the nation.

Lauren Arras, 19, a biochemistry major, first learned about banned books and their significance during her junior year of high school.

“It was my junior year when we began reading *The Catcher in the Rye* and prior to reading the book, my teacher discussed how the book was controversial. She mentioned how when the book was first published, a lot of parents were very against the book for some of its content and they wanted to ban the book,” said Arras.

Kendal Perez, 20, a biology major, said he does not think that books should be banned, no matter how offensive they may be.

“I don’t think books should have the right to be banned, even if you don’t agree with them or even if they can be considered morally obscene,” said Perez.

Jie Tian, a reference librarian at the Pollak Library, said Banned Books Week was created to commemorate the books that have been challenged throughout their lifespan and protect the right of authors to present their ideals.

“The rationale behind banned books is really intellectual freedom, creative freedom. Banning books is just one expression, it’s one manifestation of not giving people the freedom to speak. Our First Amendment right is the freedom of expression,” said Tian.

Perez also said that banning books is like stripping authors of their First Amendment right, one that is guaranteed to citizens in the Constitution.

Throughout the nation, libraries are conducting readings of challenged works to bring to attention the issues that come along with censoring certain works.

The Pollak Library is hosting its second consecutive event celebrating banned and challenged books.

Tian coordinated the school-wide event after conducting a similar event while teaching a University 100 class last year.

“(While) creating my syllabus, (I noticed) in September is Banned Books week... we did an exhibit last year and we also did a reading from banned books. This year we decided to continue the tradition,” Tian said.
Tian’s students created posters to display numerous works that have been challenged and included the reason the novels were challenged. These posters will be on display once again at this year’s event.

Among the challenged books is *Fahrenheit 451*, which holds a special place in the heart of the Pollak Library.

*Fahrenheit 451* is one of the most prominent banned books and its author, Ray Bradbury, is one of the most celebrated authors of his time.

The library owns the manuscripts of *Fahrenheit 451* and the short story “The Fireman,” which the novel is based upon.

The Pollak Library’s readings will take place on Wednesday, Oct. 3, with Irena Praitis, Ph.D., opening with excerpts from her new poetry book, *Straws and Shadows*.

The event will close with with a community reading with faculty and community speakers, each choosing their own passages to read from the long list of challenged books.

The event will begin at noon in the Salz-Pollak Room.