

La Rue, James. *The New Inquisition: understanding and managing intellectual freedom challenges*. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2007. 157p. \$40.00 (ISBN: 1-59158-285-7)

What do you do when a patron complains about a book on your library shelf? Where would you turn if a group of citizens are accusing your library of allowing smut to be viewed by underage patrons? What if a patron is dissatisfied with your collection because it allegedly under represents a certain population in your community? Many of these contentious issues are examined in James La Rue's book, *The New Inquisition*. La Rue's holistic approach to censorship gives librarians the necessary tools for understanding and dealing with challenges to a library collection. Rather than being a "social asset" the library sometimes is seen as a saboteur to "conscientious parenting."

La Rue does what librarians do best—research. The book begins with a brief history of book censorship and moves to the origins of the Constitution and the Library Bill of Rights. With lively writing about relevant and current issues, the reader is engaged with example letters from concerned patrons provided. La Rue also includes "Sample Request for Reconsideration" forms and responses to past patron concerns, all of which are excellent resources for frontline librarians as well as the new generation of library students concerned about challenges to intellectual freedom.

Drawing from years of experience as director of Douglas County Libraries, Mr. La Rue has faced numerous challenges on books that deal with issues such as homosexuality, religion, suicide, sex, and violence. With eloquence and a unique perspective, La Rue succinctly outlines how to respond to a patron's grievance. Books challenged in La Rue's district were met with discourse rather than idle complacency. He writes that if we attempt to understand our patron's legitimate concerns, ultimately, we will benefit while also educating our library community. La Rue explains, "It is too easy to demonize our enemies. But it's easiest when you don't actually have to talk to them. Showing up at their meetings, providing information on topics of interest to them, listening to their concerns before I articulated mine was a strategy that led not to victory but to something rarer and more precious: mutual respect."

The library remains altruistic and relevant even in these seemingly disparate times of change. The library as an institution serves the most basic necessities of a democratic society, e.g., freedom to express, freedom to learn, freedom to think. Has there not been a better time than now for a book about intellectual freedom to be written? La Rue calls on, not only librarians, but also "library advocates" to become engaged in their community and become pro-active sponsors of the library on a local level, as well as a "legislative level and beyond." Among the many maxims offered by Mr. La Rue, one continues to reverberate to this reviewer. The author states, "If you never leave the library, then you only ensure that you will spend your career responding to the decisions of others."

Paul Mascareñas
Reference and Instruction
Adams State College-Nielsen Library