

A few don'ts:

1. Don't run scared on the topic or overreact to criticism. Simply strive for inclusion and balance.
2. Don't get involved in a numbers game, counting pieces of material. Books are published or not; orders are fulfilled or not, and you can never exercise perfect control over any area of knowledge.
3. Librarians are professionally trained to think in terms of letting everyone have their say. It is inappropriate to apply pressure on them to exclude or over-represent particular viewpoints.

Standard selection sources increasingly include materials from religious publishing houses among their reviews. If you are in the habit of bypassing their products, go back and take another look at what they have to offer.

Textbook writers say that it is very hard to please believers by including a description of their beliefs because someone will always say the description is inadequate. It's easy to understand why references to religion are often deleted entirely from textbooks, but this is another issue. In the meantime, develop a conscious policy of making this important area a part of your students' educational environment through library collection development.

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RELIGION IN THE LIBRARY COLLECTION

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[This is Edna Boardman's personal statement, offered as one point of view in answering the current religion in the schools controversy. Ed.]

In the ongoing public dialogue about the place of religion in the public schools, the unique role of the library is not usually taken into account. Please consider the incorporation of religious views as a way to serve patrons of every faith. The library has a long tradition of serving as a storehouse of ideas, the materials quietly awaiting the reader's pleasure.

Students' freedom to choose or bypass materials fits in well with our constitutionally-guaranteed religious freedom. We need to be very clear about our philosophy concerning the inclusion of religiously-oriented materials. If questions arise, our patrons need to know that the presence of ideas in a library setting does not constitute endorsement.

The Library Bill of Rights states as an ideal: "in no case should any book be excluded because of the race or nationality or religious views of the writer." Of course, any attempt to

convert students from their family faith is clearly inappropriate.

Religion in its many aspects has played an important role in shaping every age and culture. No young person's education is complete if religion or religious views are omitted. Students need access to material that has the fighting and arguing and discussing as well as the description of beliefs.

The library may include religious materials in these ways as part of a varied, balanced collection:

1. Include the scriptures or special writings that play a role in the religious traditions of all your students. The Bible in several translations is appropriate, along with a concordance that will help in locating particular stories and quotations. Include the Book of Mormon, The Koran, The Bhagavad-Gita, the story of Native American Religions, and others as you become aware of them or as the student body changes.

2. Have several standard reference books that summarize and describe various beliefs, practices and traditions.

3. Shelve biographies and autobiographies of religious leaders.

4. The collection should contain religious, political and artistic histories. Much fine art, music, drama, poetry and architecture has been created as a response to religious

impulses. History cannot be understood without the Reformation, the Pilgrims, or the Rev. Martin Luther King. Students should be aware of religions that originated in the United States and what impact they have had on our national life. The downside of religion, as when it has precipitated persecutions, should not be censored.

5. Add books of meditations and collections of prayers. Books on dating, personal morality and the shaping of one's lifestyle from a faith perspective should be included.

6. Books that present opposing viewpoints often contain essays by religious leaders. Their special perceptions of national affairs are a valuable part of the discussion.

7. If you provide books on Christmas, include several on Hannukah.

8. Don't automatically rule out religious polemics. Students want to know what all the fuss is about, and these constitute a type of primary material.

9. Creation Science may be controversial when taught in the classroom, but it is fine for students to be able to find statements in its favor in the library, along with the standard works on evolution.

10. Many publishers are taking advantage of the interest in religion to publish novels in which religion is part of the lives of the characters.

Locate and include these titles in your collection.