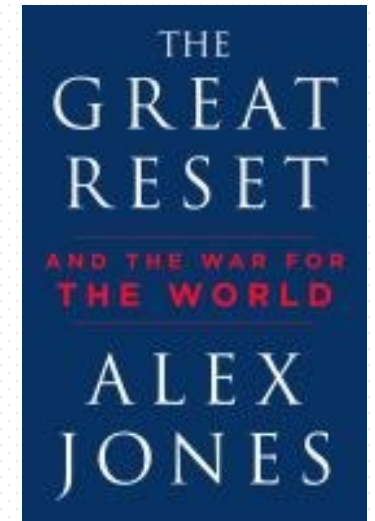
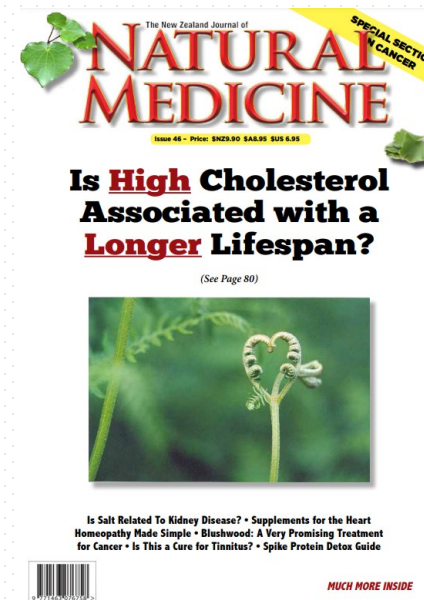
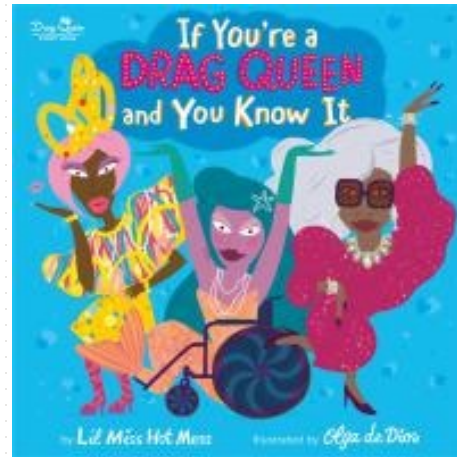
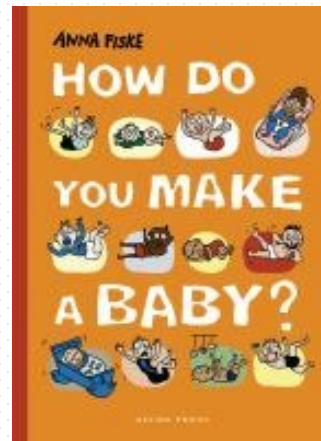


# Freedom of Access to Information

*What you need to know about challenges to library collections*



May 2023





# CENSORSHIP

BY THE NUMBERS

## REASONS FOR BOOK CHALLENGES

GENDER NON CONFORMITY OBSCENITY  
 POLITICAL VIEWPOINT PROFANITY  
 RELIGIOUS VIEWPOINT OCCULT SATANISM DRUGS ALCOHOL SMOKING  
 DIRTY MAGAZINES TEEN SUICIDE RACISM  
 PORNOGRAPHIC GLORIFIES CRIMINALS LGBTQIA+  
 CULTURAL INSENSITIVITY VIOLENCE  
 SEXUALLY EXPLICIT NUDITY  
 TRANSGENDER CHARACTERS LIBERAL PROPAGANDA CONFUSES CHILDREN  
 ANTI-COP SAME SEX MARRIED COUPLE WHITE SUPREMACY  
 LANGUAGE SEX EDUCATION



OFFICE FOR  
*Intellectual Freedom*  
American Library Association



# LIANZA statement on freedom of information 2020

## PRINCIPLES

A commitment to intellectual freedom is a core responsibility for the library and information profession

## ACTIONS

Avoid censorship and promote non-discrimination

- a) Acquire, preserve, and make available the widest variety of materials, reflecting the plurality and diversity of their communities.
- b) Ensure that the selection and availability of library materials and services is governed by professional considerations and not by political, moral, or religious views.
- c) Where relevant in their library service, make space available for and arrange displays and talks to stimulate learning and the exchange of information, while ensuring all in the community feel welcomed and safe.



# Core duty of library work



## UNESCO / IFLA - Public Library Manifesto 2022

Freedom, prosperity and the development of society and of individuals are fundamental human values.

They will only be attained through the ability of **well-informed citizens** to exercise their democratic rights and to play an active role in society.

Constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on **free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information**



### *Mission number 1 (of 11)*

Providing access to a broad range of information and ideas free from censorship, supporting formal and informal education at all levels as well as lifelong learning enabling the ongoing, voluntary and self conducted pursuit of knowledge for people at all stages of life.



## **We must also consider...**

Moana Jackson: No one's exercise of free speech should make another feel less free.

There is not an even playing field:

- Power and privilege are not evenly distributed.
- Norms and rules (and 'principles') tend to reflect the values of those with power.

People have a right to challenge what is in our collections if they think it will do harm.



# What's happening now- Trans & LGBTIQ+phobia

- Groups are mobilizing to coordinate and share ideas for challenging what they are calling “grooming” and “sexualization of children” being delivered in libraries.
- Some of these groups are moving on to criticize what children are taught in schools and can access in their school libraries or public libraries - in particular the presentation of LGBTIQ+ lives and stories as normal.
- Internationally and particularly in the USA there has been an increase in protests, book challenges and even attempts to defund libraries and remove librarians who resist this censorship.



Auckland libraries and other public libraries in Aotearoa have experienced protests when they delivered Drag Queen story times events

# What if we don't like some content in our libraries?

Why can't we just remove all the racist, homophobic, wacko conspiracy and anti-vaxx books to protect our diverse communities and honour the treaty?

*Because other sets of people would and do say...*

We must remove all the woke, anti-Christian, gay rights feminist agenda books to protect our children,

## **BREAKING NEWS**

**The state of Montana has banned drag queen story times at public libraries - "an event hosted by a drag queen or king who reads childrens books and engages in other learning activities with minor children present."**

# Here in Aotearoa

There are differences here which change the nature and scope of campaigns to censor books.

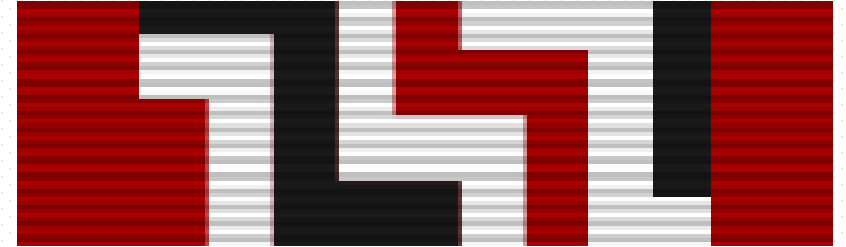
## Funding and governance

Public libraries in Aotearoa are funded and governed by local government rather than elected boards. Communities don't directly vote on library policy and services.

School libraries are funded by schools – which do have elected boards.

## Legislation

The USA and many other countries don't have an equivalent to Te Mana Whakaata / Classification Office. Books, films and games are not classified by a central/federal body so individuals and groups can only challenge books locally.



## Councils govern, libraries manage.

In general collection policies and processes are set and implemented by libraries.

Public libraries have processes to review content when challenged by individuals or groups





# LIANZA advice for challenges

## Curate, Assess, Inform

### Curate for context

- Curation – what is promoted, displayed, recommended (physical and online).
- Classification and subject headings
- Description, summaries and reviews, user tags and comments
- Location and number of copies – open access or stack? lending or reference?

### Assess and respond

- We don't see all the content we add to the collection
- Some of it may be acquired decades ago
- Review any challenged works against your policies and selection/weeding guidelines
- Check for any legal issues such as defamation or harm under the Human Rights Acts

### Inform and educate

- Refer people to your collection development policy and processes
- Refer people to LIANZA/IFLA statements on freedom of information
- Advise challengers of relevant legislation and the process to submit books for classification
- **Promote information literacy and guides to evaluating content for mis or disinformation**

# Be prepared

- ➔ LIANZA Toolkit for responding to book challenges – *in development*  
(Covers Policy, Process, Awareness, Staff training, Public relations, Documentation & Reporting, Resources & Support Networks)
- ➔ Panel at LIANZA Conference in October 2023  
*Freedom of Misinformation: Equity or Harm?*
- ➔ LIANZA website pages  
<https://lianza.org.nz/about/what-we-do/advocacy/lscfoi/>  
Statements, resources, toolkits



# Auckland Libraries

What are the processes and principles that guide the development of the collections at Auckland Libraries?

What sort of complaints do we get about items in our collections?

How do we respond?

How you can prepare and get help or advice



# Planning & Development team

- Responsible for developing deep and broad collections (physical and electronic) that inspire, inform and delight Aucklanders.
- Develop and maintain policies, plans and profiles to guide the development of our collections
- Collaborate closely with suppliers to ensure Auckland Libraries gets the right content.
- Set and monitor the annual collections budget.
- Select items for our collections and assess donations for suitability.
- Respond to staff and customer enquiries or complaints about items in our collections.



# Our collections

- Around 2.7 million physical items in Auckland Libraries' collections across 56 branches
- Multiple formats (books, audiobooks, DVDs, jigsaws, serials etc)
- Lending (“current use”), heritage, research and reference items
- Over 300,000 eBooks and eAudiobooks
- More than 100 databases



# Collection Development Policy

<https://www.aucklandlibraries.govt.nz/Pages/collection-development-policy.aspx>

Public-facing policy that guides our collection development.

Four guiding principles:

- collections that reflect Auckland's diverse communities
- commitment to Māori knowledge
- commitment to the principle of freedom of access to information
- applying best value for the people of Auckland to purchasing and managing the collections.



# The Collection Development Policy guides:

- decisions about developing current use collections
- decisions about developing reference collections
- decisions about developing heritage and research collections
- how collections are stored
- how material is removed from collections
- how it is disposed of
- how donations are treated.



## 5.1 We provide collections that reflect Auckland's diverse communities

This means collections that:

- Provide open access to a broad and deep range of library materials
- Are region-wide but also reflect the history and interests of local communities
- Are shaped by stakeholder relationships, collection usage information and customer and community feedback, as derived from surveys, suggestions, comments, and complaints.

*Auckland Libraries Collection Development Policy, pages 5-6*





### 5.3 We are committed to the principle of freedom of access to information

This means Auckland Libraries:

- Will not suppress or remove material simply because it gives offence
- Assesses and places material into age-appropriate collections. Parents and caregivers are responsible for their child's selection and viewing of library materials.

*Auckland Libraries Collection Development Policy, page 6*



# Collections Plan | Mahere Kohikohinga

Internal document - purpose is to guide all staff in understanding, developing, and maintaining our collections. Provides background on how we develop and manage our collections including:

- Selection
- Collection Assessment
- Deselection

Includes a section on how we deal with contentious content

## **Other internal guides and policies include:**

- Classification and labelling standards
- Disposal Policy
- Donations policy
- Floating rebalancing - the definitive guide
- Item Assessment Guide
- Collection selection profiles
- Guide to Community Language Collection



# Selecting for the Auckland Libraries collections

- All items for our collections are selected by trained librarians and subject matter experts
- Planning & Development creates and maintains selection profiles for every collection
- The profiles outline the subject range, publishers, formats, price and preferred sources of material for each collection.
- We receive around 200 customer suggestions every week through the Ask Us To Buy It (AUTBI) webform. We select those items that fit our selection criteria and budget.
- We also receive a range of donations that are assessed against our selection criteria



# Selecting for collections at Auckland Libraries

- We have a commitment to providing a broad and deep range of library materials that represent diverse views and voices.
- Sometimes our selectors will need to select items for our collections that they don't personally agree with, or that they find offensive.
- Due to the volume of material purchased every year, we cannot review or assess every item that is added to our collections.
- We welcome all feedback from our customers and staff – positive or negative!



# Adult Non-Fiction Selection Profile

## Coverage

- New and upcoming titles
- Reputable publishers
- Respond to local, national and international trends

The majority of non-fiction purchased should be of general interest, written for general audience and/or students.

- Range of views represented
- Range of levels from introductory to more advanced.

New selections should also include a proportion of coverage of content that includes:

- Of interest to people with particular leisure interests that are deeper than average
- Emerging trends, including those of interest to youth and sub-cultures.



# Complaints about items in our collections

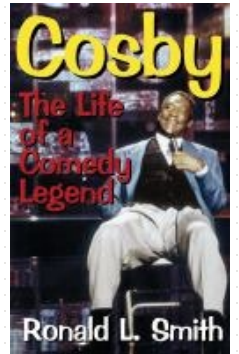
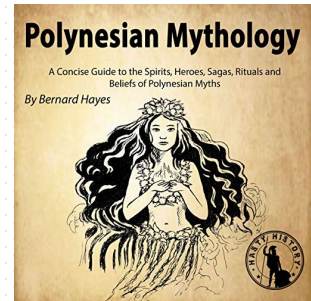
Complaints and feedback about our collections come via a wide range of channels:

- In person at one of our branches
- Through the Libraries Contact Centre
- Social Media
- Emails/letters to senior staff members
  
- Emails/letters to Councillors, Local Board members, Council Executive Lead Team
- Official information requests received under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act (LGOIMA)
- Phone calls
- Feedback forms on the website

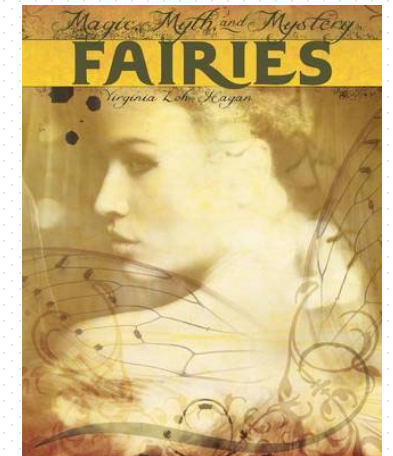
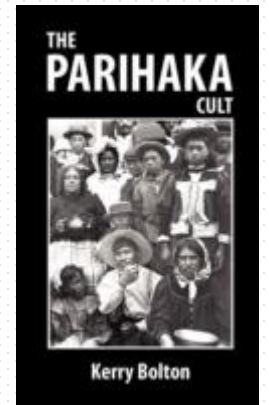


# What is the process Planning & Development follows when receiving a complaint?

- Gather information about the item - call in a copy to assess, read reviews, seek advice from subject matter experts
- We keep a complaints register that helps us identify patterns and refer back to previous responses
- Assess our catalogue record – is it accurate? Are adjustments needed? Eg to intended audience, subject headings. Are there any other actions we should take?
- Pull together relevant data to aid our response. Sometimes customers ask specific questions.
- Seek advice from Legal Services if a legal matter is involved, such as an accusation of defamation.



- Who is the most appropriate person to respond? Team Leader, Manager, Legal Services team, LGOIMA team etc?
- The most common response is an email based on our standard template, tailored to the circumstances of the complaint and explaining any specific actions we have taken.
- Respond to any follow-up emails
- Record all details on our complaints register





# Components of a standard response

Thank customer for feedback

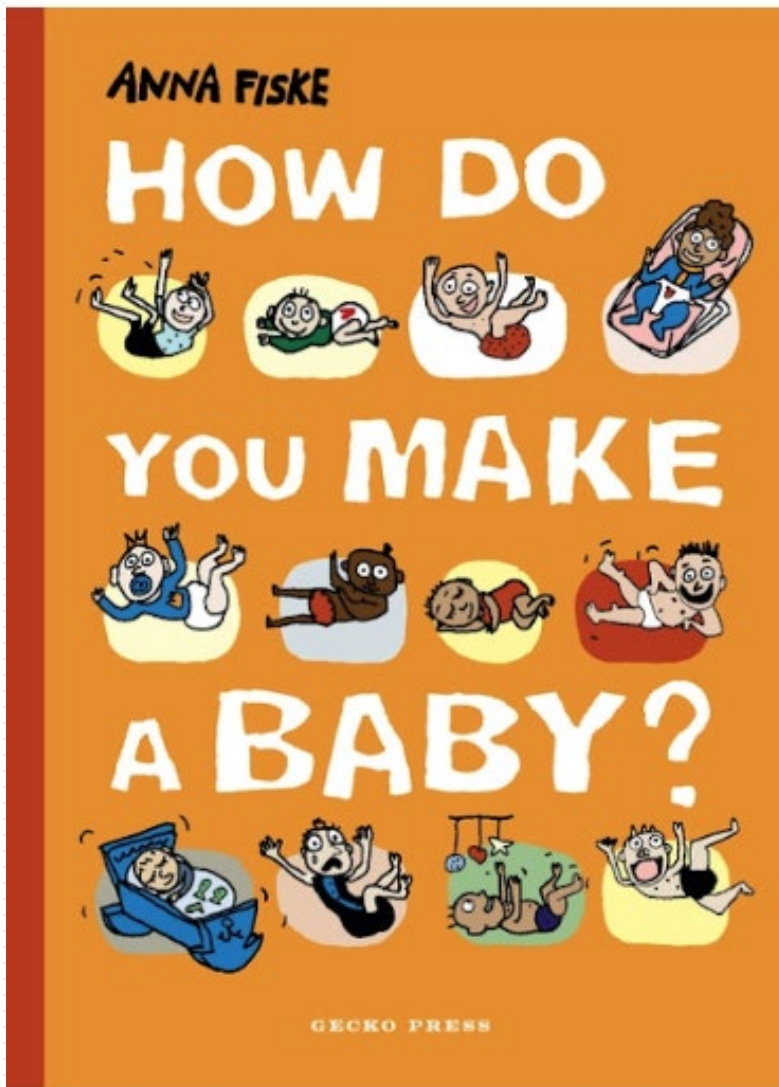
Explain our commitment to freedom of access to information and direct customers to our Collection Development Policy

Include specific comments about the item including any data requested and any action taken

For complaints about children's books: comment about intended age range and responsibilities of parents/guardians

Direct customer to the Classification Office





## The complaint

Complaints received from two different customers through more than one channel.

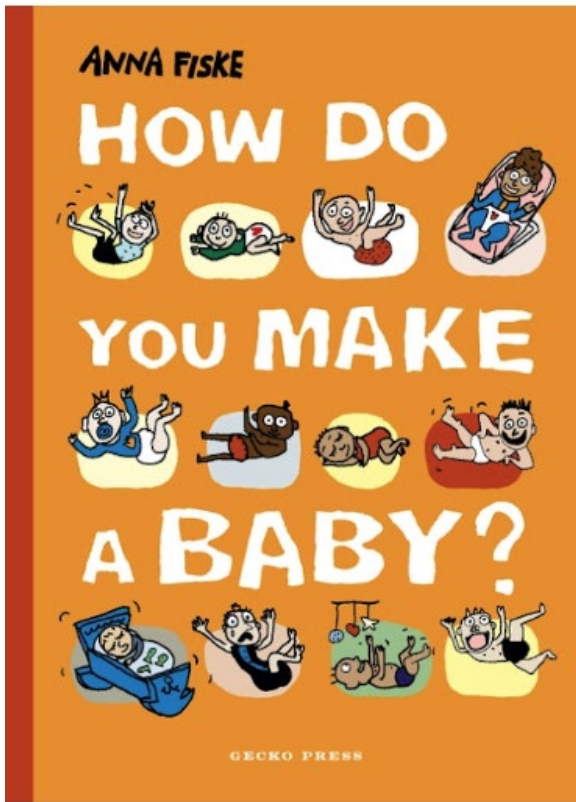
The complainants were concerned that this book:

- Contains graphic, pornographic images
- Normalises sexuality at a young age
- Targets very young children (as young as 4)
- Was being promoted/recommended by Auckland Council Libraries

They asked us to:

- Remove it from the kids section
- Explain why we are promoting it
- Respond quickly to them explaining what actions we will take in relation to the book





## The book

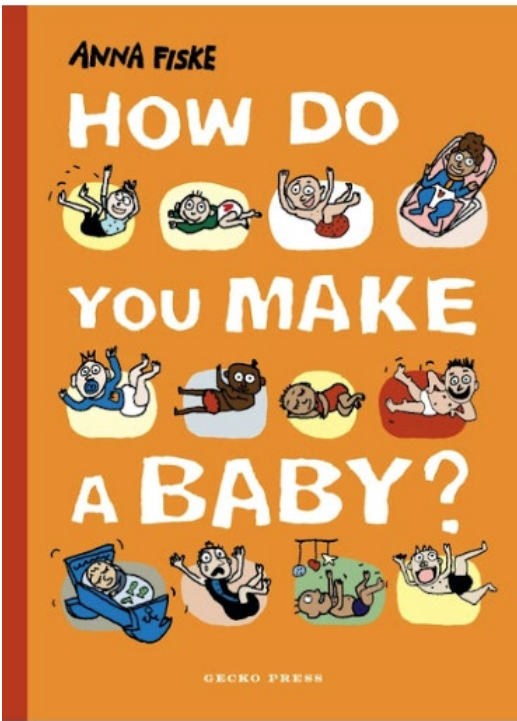
A factual and funny book for children aged 4 and up that answers the questions all children are curious about.

How does a baby get into the mother's stomach? Who can make a baby, and how is it actually done?

With comic illustrations and a playful tone, this book is a great conversation starter for families and classrooms approaching the topics of sex education, human anatomy and how babies are made (publisher description)

*“An informational and fun treatment of what can be a difficult subject. Readers will appreciate the humor and straightforward presentation. Recommended for general purchase.”* – School Library Journal





# The response

Email response included standard components:

## Thanked customer for feedback

- **Outlined our commitment to freedom of access to information, directed customer to our Collection Development Policy, and reminded them of the responsibilities of parents/guardians**
- **Specific comments about the title including any data requested and any action taken:**

*This book is classified as children's nonfiction on our supplier's website and the publisher's website states that it is suitable for children. Auckland Libraries purchased this book for the collection on 16 September 2020 and this is the first complaint we have received about it. Up to now there have 253 checkouts from 25 copies. We have assessed this book and found it suitable for the children's nonfiction collection. We have updated the target audience note on the catalogue record to 8-12 to better reflect the intended audience.*

- **Directed customer to the Classification Office**



THE  
GREAT  
RESET  

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AND THE WAR FOR  
THE WORLD  

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ALEX  
JONES

## The complaint

The complainant outlined their concerns about the book:

- Authored by a known xenophobic, racist conservative
- Author has been found guilty in the US courts for publicly denying the events of Sandy Hook Massacre
- The book contains hate speech and disinformation, and is a tool for harm
- The purchase of the book is an endorsement of discrimination and hate

They asked Auckland Libraries to:

- Remove the book from our shelves and destroy it



# THE GREAT RESET

AND THE WAR FOR  
THE WORLD

ALEX  
JONES

## The book

From central bankers, corporate billionaires, and corrupted government officials, global elites have been organizing a historic war on humanity under a trans-humanist, scientific dictatorship.

The Great Reset: And the War for the World chronicles the history of the global elites' rise to power and reveals how they've captured the governments of the world and financed The Great Reset to pave the way for The New World Order...

(publisher description)



THE  
GREAT  
RESET  

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AND THE WAR FOR  
THE WORLD  

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ALEX  
JONES

## The response

Email response including standard components:

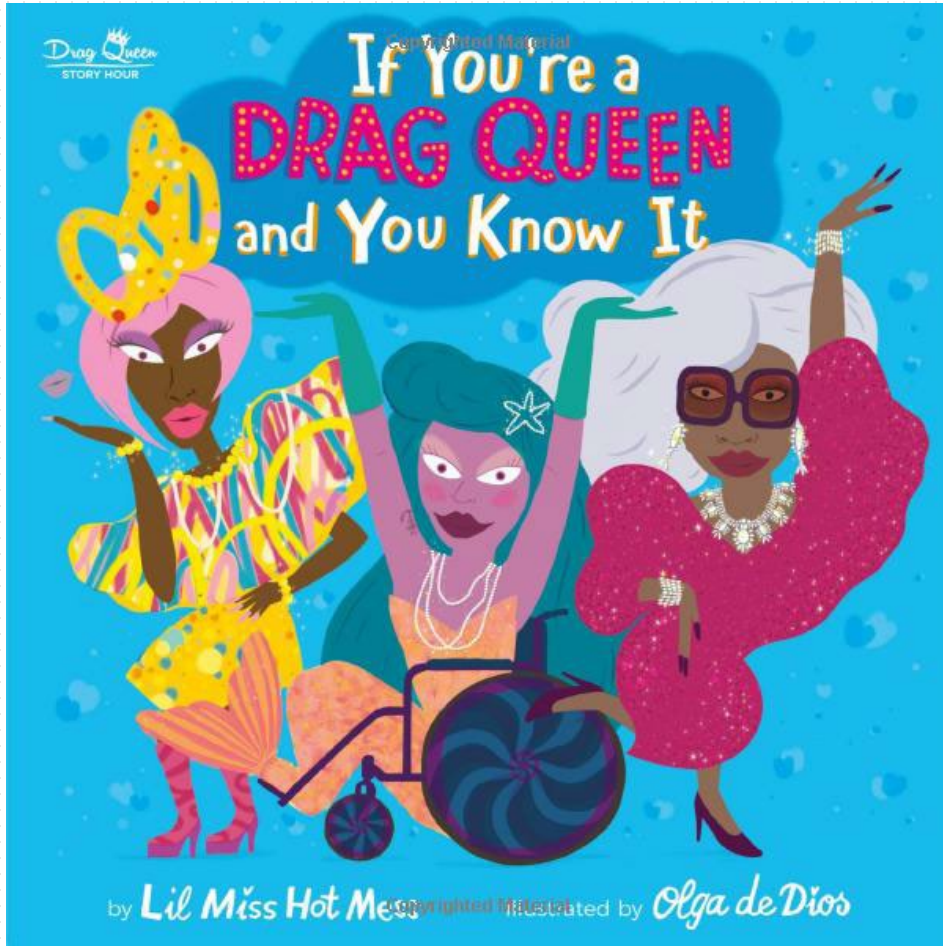
- **Thanked customer for feedback**
- **Outlined our commitment to freedom of access to information and directed customer to our Collection Development Policy**
- **Specific comments about the title including any data requested and any action taken:**

*We do not limit what people may choose to read, rather, we provide broad and deep collections and encourage informed debate. We also hold titles in our collections so that future researchers have resources that reflect the range of views being expressed at a particular time in history.*

*The catalogue record describing this book uses the subject heading term Conspiracy Theories. This helps identify and categorise the contentious nature of the subject matter in this book.*

- **Directed customer to the Classification Office**





# The complaint

The complainant outlined their concerns about the book:

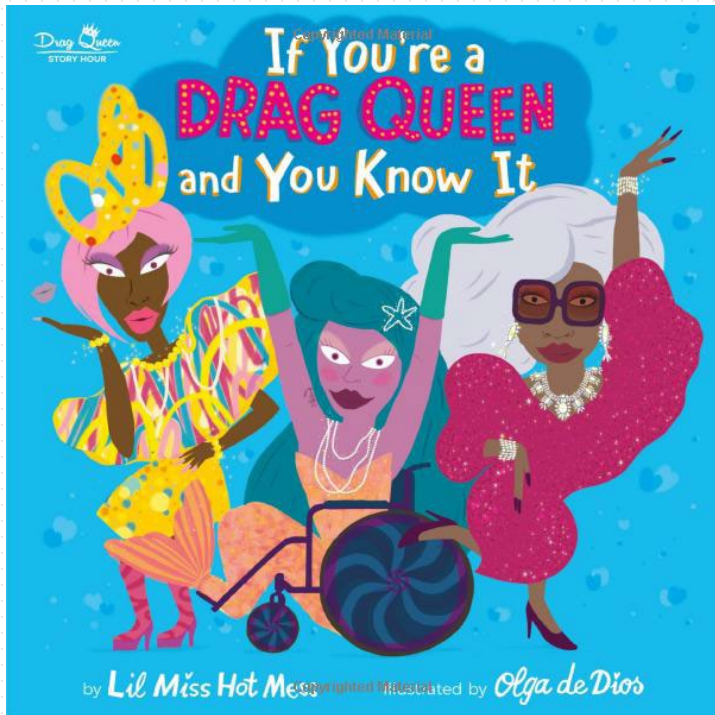
- Book found in the picture book section
- Does not see this as suitable for young children
- Something usually found in adult night clubs should not be aimed at children

They asked us to:

- Consider the age-appropriateness of the book and its inclusion in the picture book section







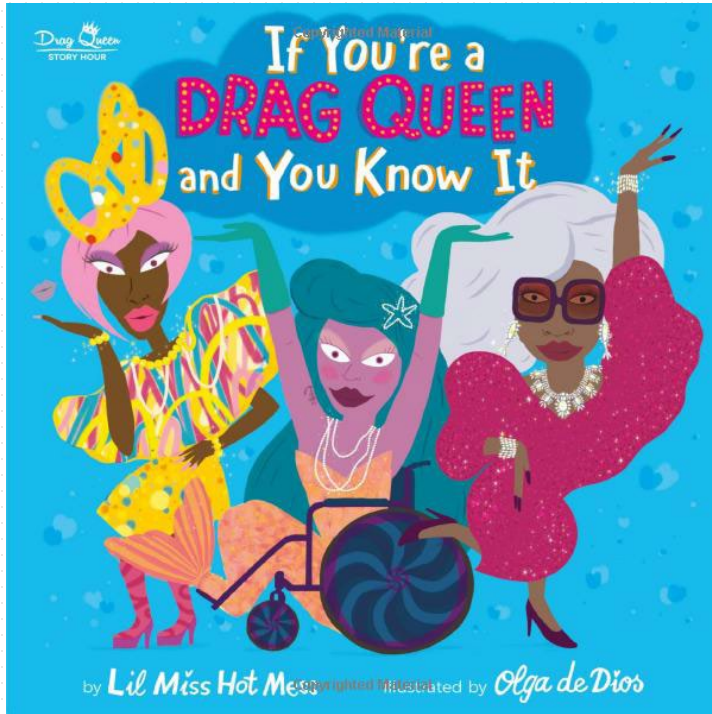
## The book

Strike a pose. Blow a kiss. Mouth the words. A fun, sing-along book with a drag twist that encourage kids to embrace all the playfulness of drag culture written by a founding member of Drag Queen Story Hour.

Join a cast of fabulous drag queens as you sing along to the tune of “If You’re Happy and You Know It” in this playful celebration of expressing your brightest and boldest self. (publisher description).

The lively, colorful illustrations and the characters’ wild costumes will engage readers from the first page... And of course, for libraries participating in Drag Queen Story Hour, this title is a must! — Kirkus Reviews



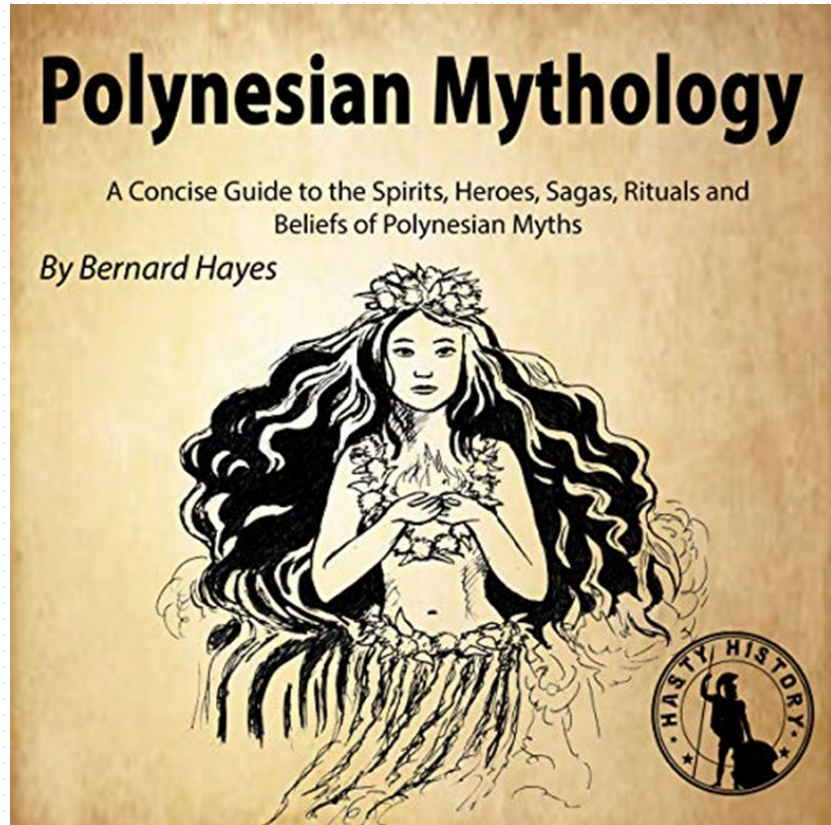


# The response

Email response including standard components:

- **Thanked customer for feedback**
- **Outlined our commitment to freedom of access to information and directed customer to our Collection Development Policy**
- **Specific comments about the title including any data requested and any action taken:**
  - At Auckland Libraries we strive for inclusiveness for all our marginalised communities. LGBTQ+ books are an important part of our collection and we hold LGBTQ+ material for all age groups. 'If you're a drag queen and you know it' has a simple structure demonstrating fun actions with colourful illustrations, while celebrating human beauty in its diverse forms. This is why we have included it in our picture book collection. Auckland Libraries participates in Rainbow Storytimes where books like this are well-received by families.
- **Directed customer to the Classification Office**





# The complaint

The complainant outlined their concerns about the audiobook:

- Extremely poor pronunciation of Polynesian languages
- Contains factual errors

They asked us to:

- Immediately withdraw the title from our collection
- Make a complaint to the publisher





# Polynesian Mythology

A Concise Guide to the Spirits, Heroes, Sagas, Rituals and Beliefs of Polynesian Myths

By Bernard Hayes

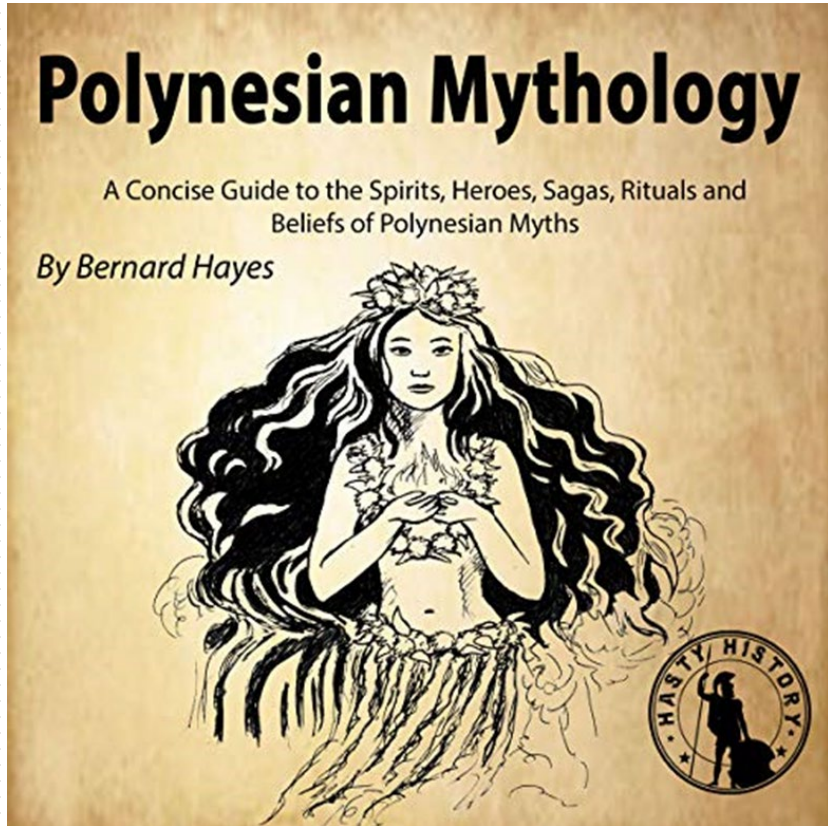


## The book

This book is dedicated to exploring the gods and goddesses that the Polynesian people worshiped, and within the pages you will find more information about:

- Background facts about the Polynesian culture, such as family, social stratification, education, fishing, gardening, religion, art, and traditions
- The intriguing legend and background story of Maui, the trickster
- Rangi and Papa and the creation myth from the Polynesian islands
- What Polynesians believed about ghosts and spirits





## The response

Email response including standard components:

- **Thanked customer for feedback**
- **Specific comments about the title including any data requested and any action taken:**

We have discussed this with our Māori and Pacific specialists and they are happy to keep this book in our collection. We have listened to a sample of this book and agree that the narrator's pronunciation of Māori words is poor, but the author is a credible academic who has considerable knowledge of world history and mythology.

At Auckland Libraries we collect a range of material that captures different perspectives, including material written about Māori and Pacific cultures from people from outside this culture.





## **What should you do if you receive a complaint from a customer about an item in our collections?**

Be prepared. Familiarise yourself with the complaints process and the Collection Development Policy. Discuss with your team.

Discuss the complaint with the customer. Show them the Collection Development Policy and explain our commitment to freedom of access of information.

If they would like to take it further, show them how to submit their complaint via the website, or submit it on their behalf. Provide as much detail as you can including contact details if they want a follow-up response.

You are not alone! If you need help or advice about this topic contact the Planning & Development team.



# PATAI?

*Ko te manu e kai ana i te miro, nōna te ngahere.  
Ko te manu e kai ana i te mātauranga, nōna te ao.*

*The bird that partakes of the miro berry reigns in the forest.  
The bird that partakes in the power of knowledge has access  
to the World*

