

Do You Do Dewey 200? Religion in the Public Library:

Do You Do Dewey 200?
Religion in the Public Library:
An Infopeople Webinar



What exactly is a religious issue?

What we'll cover in this hour

- collecting appropriately in the Dewey 200's
- responding to religion-specific reference questions
- distinguishing between staff/volunteers' personal beliefs and on-the-job behavior
- partnering with community faith-based groups

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Do You Do Dewey 200? Religion in the Public Library:

Religion permeates our culture, as well as the our political history

- The US Constitution's [First Amendment](#) guarantees our freedom from the "establishment of any religion"
- The Pledge of Allegiance contains the clause "under God," a phrase inviting both Judicial review and public contention
- The Armed Forces provide chaplaincies for troops and their families.
- The American Library Association's [Library Bill of Rights](#) addresses the topic

Interpretation is the fundamental activity of many public library-oriented concerns. It underlies how we

- select materials
- regard and address information seekers
- identify community needs and interests
- train staff and volunteers to interact with users, nonusers and government

Popular culture affects information ...and how we interpret it

- Store decorations
- School projects
- Greeting cards
- Music
- Movies
- Types of schools in the community
- In-library displays
- Ways we greet during different seasons
- Outgoing voicemail messages

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Policy formation: the care and feeding of the 200's

- Donations
- Updating
- Providing for differing viewpoints
 - A Bible isn't a Bible (sorry, Gertrude Stein!)
- Shelving issues
- Weeding matters
- Language and community access
- School work, and often unrecognized related collection uses

Responding to religious reference questions

- Know your collection; know your community
- The reference interview
- Typical reference concerns
 - Homework that isn't obviously "religious"
 - Studying for rites of passage
 - Preparing for weddings, memorials, etc.
 - Attending/participating in an unfamiliar religious ceremony

Training staff and volunteers

- Personal beliefs must remain personal
- Agreement/disagreement=judgment
- Identifying hotspots and addressing them
- Displays and programming with holiday orientations
- Courtesy ends and promulgation begins: recognizing where and when

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Religious partners

- Affinity areas can outstrip belief concerns
 - Services to new Americans
 - Tutoring programs for children
 - Food pantries, shelters and other social services
- Building community alliances and allegiances
- Knowing where to draw the line
