

# From the Guest Editor's Desk:

By J. Douglas Archer

Advocates of intellectual freedom each have her or his own story of how they became involved in "the cause." Way back in the early 1980s, I attended my first American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference in Philadelphia with my newly minted MSL to scout out the opportunities for involvement in the wider profession. You need to understand that I was one of those librarian-as-a-second-career people. I had been a socially involved pastor for several years committed to civil rights, peace and religious liberty. I needed a break. I had no intent of getting hooked into any more of that "movement" stuff.

While wandering the convention center, I passed an open door to a standing room only session and looked in. There were Cal Thomas, Nat Hentoff and Judith Krug having at it over religion and censorship. In spite of my best intentions, I was hooked. I joined the Intellectual Freedom Round Table (IFRT) and the rest, as they say, is history. Over the intervening years I have had the honor and pleasure of serving and chairing almost all of IFRT's committees along with ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee and, most relevant to Hoosier readers, serving on and chairing the Indiana Library Federation's Intellectual Committee for many years.

During this time, I have had the privilege of fighting the good fight with numerous Indiana intellectual freedom champions including early mentors John Swan and Danny Gunnells and many, many other dedicated opponents of censorship too numerous to name. In ALA this has included first and foremost, that force of nature, Judith Krug, founding Director of ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom and the Freedom to Read Foundation and a myriad of other intellectual freedom stalwarts. I am especially indebted to the unsung heroes who have struggled week in, week out in local libraries. They are unknown because they have done such an excellent job of developing, implementing and following good IF policies that their challenges have never seen the light of day.

In this issue you will meet many of today's leading defenders of Intellectual Freedom as they address the vast diversity of challenges facing today's libraries and librarians. This includes the current and several past chairs of ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee and Intellectual Freedom Round Table, current and past ALA presidents along with "line librarians" in library school and school, public and academic libraries who have been vigorous opponents of censorship and defenders of reader choice. Topics include everything from a broad appeal to affirm the freedom to read to a narrow look at religion in American public libraries. In between you will find discussions of labeling, privacy, civic engagement, service to minorities, the benefits and threats of new service initiatives such as open shelf holds and unrecognized allies in the struggle to preserve the freedom to read.

My hope is that, as you browse these pages, one or more of these essays will grab your attention and, as happened to me over 30 years ago, you too will be hooked (or re-hooked) into becoming an active defender of one of our professions' core values – free and open access to our libraries' resources for all people so that they may read, view, listen to or otherwise access whatever *they choose* without fear of government interference or intimidation.