

Resisting the Backlash

Empowering Librarians to Champion Academic Freedom

Florida Association of College & Research Libraries

Summary

The presenters discussed the importance of resisting the backlash against academic and intellectual freedom, with a focus on the role of librarians in protecting these freedoms. They also explored the historical context of censorship, the concept of shared governance, and the formation and function of the FIU Library's Academic and Intellectual Freedom Committee. Lastly, they discussed strategies for promoting academic freedom within their organization, the challenges and potential solutions for dealing with legislative initiatives, and the trend of adjusting language and presentation to maintain academic integrity while addressing controversies.

20th Century Tensions and Professionalism

Bryan Cooper discussed the historical background of the 20th century, moving through the Progressive era, the Depression era, and the Post-World War II era. He highlighted the tensions and conflicts that arose during these periods, as well as the emerging professional philosophies and seminal documents. Bryan emphasized the lasting power of anti-censorship efforts and organizations, particularly the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) established in 1915. He also touched upon the current era, noting economic stress points and the shrinking middle class in the US.

Censorship, Fascism, and Intellectual Freedom

Bryan shifted the discussion to the historical context of censorship and its impact on society. He highlighted the rise of fascism and totalitarianism in Europe, particularly in Germany under Hitler's rule, and the subsequent book burnings and suppression of intellectual freedom. He also mentioned the American Library Association's response to these events, including the adoption of a defining Library Bill of Rights. Bryan then transitioned to the post-World War II era, discussing the rise of McCarthyism and the resistance it faced from various sectors. He emphasized the importance of the freedom to read and the role of libraries in promoting intellectual freedom. Finally, he mentioned the library faculty's resolution in support of academic freedom and professional standards.

Shared Governance and Decision-Making

Bryan introduced the concept of shared governance and encouraged the audience to consider borrowing freely from the FIU Libraries' work and the resolution passed by the Library Assembly and the FIU Faculty Senate. Christopher M. Jimenez then expanded on the importance of shared governance, emphasizing its role in decision-making processes and its alignment with academic and intellectual freedom. He outlined five key aspects of shared governance: Collaboration, Responsibilities, Competence, Expertise, and Empowerment. Christopher also highlighted the importance of faculty having a voice in decision-making, choosing their representatives, and being trusted to assess their peers' performance. He concluded by emphasizing the ultimate goal of institutions to serve the best interests of their students.

FIU Library's Academic Freedom Committee

Christopher discussed the formation and function of the FIU Library's Academic and Intellectual Freedom Committee. Established in 2022, the committee aimed to promote academic and intellectual freedom within the library and beyond. They composed a resolution on the topic, which was unanimously approved by both the Library Faculty Assembly and the Florida International University's Faculty Senate. The committee then transitioned into a standing committee, providing monthly reports to the library assembly and responding to challenges in a timely manner. Their primary function is to facilitate discussions on issues affecting academic and intellectual freedom, host special presentations, and engage in community building and library strengthening. Christopher also emphasized that individuals could contribute to these initiatives regardless of their formal governance structure or faculty status.

Promoting Academic Freedom Strategies

Christopher and Melissa Del Castillo discussed strategies for promoting academic freedom within their organization. Christopher suggested hosting discussion groups and subscribing to mailing lists, while Melissa emphasized the importance of creating a culture of influence and collaboration. She shared how their group, the Academic and Intellectual Freedom Committee, created a libguide to collect resources and promote expertise on the topic. They also held open meetings, shared news articles, and conducted internal workshops. Melissa highlighted their partnership with the United Faculty of Florida at FIU and their efforts to bring the conversation of academic freedom to the profession. They

encouraged others to reach out for collaboration and to contribute to the broader conversation on academic freedom.

Addressing Legislative Challenges in Libraries

Melissa and Christopher discussed the challenges and potential solutions for dealing with legislative initiatives in their academic institutions. They highlighted the importance of foresight and involving all departments within the library to address potential issues. They also emphasized the need for library staff and students to feel empowered and comfortable in case of a challenge. The conversation ended with a question about how to handle confrontations regarding the content on their library research guides (also known as LibGuides).

Addressing Controversies in Academic Talks

Christopher discussed the trend of adjusting language to maintain academic integrity while addressing controversies. Melissa shared a recent example from the university where a book talk by an author on Cubans in Miami sparked controversy. The university decided to offer both sides of the conversation, a strategy that Melissa has seen being used in many events on campus. She also mentioned the challenge of presenting topics like climate change, which are based on scientific facts. Melissa further raised the issue of including such talks in the institutional repository.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the presenters underscored the critical role of librarians in safeguarding academic and intellectual freedom amidst growing challenges. By fostering collaboration, shared governance, and proactive strategies, librarians can effectively champion these freedoms and ensure their institutions remain bastions of open inquiry and knowledge.

Resisting the Backlash



Empowering Librarians to Champion Academic Freedom

Presented by: Christopher Jimenez Melissa Del Castillo Bryan Cooper Sabine Dantus

FACRL 2024

This presentation will:

- Emphasize the importance of intellectual freedom in the field of librarianship.
- Utilize Florida International University Libraries as a case study.
- Illustrate how faculty librarians can champion academic and intellectual freedom through shared governance.
- Highlight how an academic and intellectual freedom committee or working group can effectively tackle challenges.
- Provide practical steps that you can implement individually or collaboratively with colleagues at your own institutions.
- Discuss real-world scenarios relevant to academic and intellectual freedom.

Agenda

History & Importance

Progressive Era

Into the 1920's

- Articulation of Academic Freedom
- Progressive Era Challenges

Great Depression

1929 - 1945

- Nazi Book Burnings
- Grapes of Wrath & U.S. Libraries Respond

Postwar Period

1940 - 1991

- McCarthyism
- Coalitions form to respond to the challenge
- ALA's Freedom to Read Statement

21st Century Florida

Today

- How will we respond?

Progressive Era

Great Depression

Postwar Period

21st Century Florida

Rise of Environmentalism – Preservation & Conservation

Birth Control Clinics Open / Women's Right to Vote

Protection of Working Classes & Children

Middle-class support for expanding government regulation limit power of business/industry

Progressive Era

Great Depression

Postwar Period

21st Century Florida

Economic stress in America; Germany & worldwide

Social alienation with disconcerting, rapid change (industrialization / urbanization)

Spread of right-wing extremism; Totalitarianism & Fascism in Europe

Rise of anti-intellectualism; antisemitism; anti-immigration; anti-pacifism, etc.

Hitler's rise to power – from within German democracy, 1933

Nazi Book Burnings



May 1933

- American newspapers nearly unanimously condemn
- Nearly 100,000 people marched in NYC for more than 6 hours to protest what was happening in Germany, May 10, 1933

Responses took many forms

Plays

Dramatic reenactments of book burning & the consequences.

Libraries

Libraries formed to collect & distribute burnt materials.

Written

Authors respond with statements, letters, etc. to raise awareness.

John Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath

1939



- Published 6 years after Nazi Book Burnings
 - National Book Award and Pulitzer Prize for Fiction
- Book burnings in the US, August 1939
 - Steinbeck's life threatened
- The ALA adopts Forrest Spaulding's
 - Des Moines's Library statement
 - Becomes the Library Bill of Rights, 1939
- World War II starts 3 months later

Library Bill of Rights

- Reflected strong response to spread of totalitarianism
- The LBR was introduced at ALA in 1939 with this preamble:

“Today, indications in many parts of the world point to growing intolerance, suppression of free speech, and censorship affecting the rights of minorities and individuals...”

Progressive Era

Great Depression

Postwar Period

21st Century Florida

House Un-American Activities Committee, 1938 (response to both fascism and communism)

- **Becomes a standing committee with Fascist defeat, 1945**

McCarthyism – weaponization of government power against US citizens, 1950

- **Targets government employees, entertainment industry; left-wing politicians; academics; labor union leaders – stoking fear; uses inconclusive and questionable evidence.**

Coalition of professors, directors, librarians, publishers and business owners respond, 1953

The American Library Association publishes the Freedom to Read Statement, 1954

- **Opening Sentence... “The Freedom to Read is essential to our democracy.”**

Progressive Era

Great Depression

Postwar Period

21st Century Florida

**“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”
– George Santayana, The Life of Reason, 1905**

**Florida International University – Library Assembly
Faculty response through formal resolution – reflection on historical touchpoints.**

**“Resolution Regarding the FIU Libraries Adherence to and
Support For Intellectual and Academic Freedom and Associated Professional Standards”**

REGARDING THE FIU LIBRARIES ADHERENCE TO AND ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGE & RESEARCH LIBRARIES (ACRL) STANDARDS ESTABLISHING PROHIBITIONS, ONLINE RESOURCES, DISPLAYS, AND FACULTY SERVICE AND SCHOLARSHIP; AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM, AND ASSOCIATED PROFESSORS

THE FIU LIBRARIES (HEREAFTER LIBRARIES) DECLARES SUPPORT FOR AND ADHERENCE TO THE ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGE & RESEARCH LIBRARIES (ACRL) STANDARDS ESTABLISHING PROHIBITIONS, ONLINE RESOURCES, DISPLAYS, AND FACULTY SERVICE AND SCHOLARSHIP; AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS (AAUP)

WHEREAS,

Intellectual Freedom (IF) is a core value of librarianship formalized nationwide by the ALA on June 19, 1939, that aligns fully with First Amendment rights of the US Constitution;

WHEREAS,

ALA seminal documents – the *Library Bill of Rights* and *Freedom to Read* – originated with the United States opposition to authoritarianism and victory over fascism and imperialism during World War II;

WHEREAS,

Since the post-war American democratic and civil liberties values of the US spread highly respected globally

In 1940, the ALA endorsed the AAUP's *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*, and subsequently in 1946 the ACRL established its *Statement on Academic Freedom for Librarians*;

WHEREAS,

On January 24, 2017, the ALA *Resolution on Access to Accurate Information* restored its opposition to government power to suppress the free flow of knowledge and information;

WHEREAS,

The current FIU Employee Code of Conduct states, "We are committed to the following core values: Truth in the pursuit, generation, dissemination, and application of knowledge; Freedom of thought and expression; Respect for diversity and the dignity of the individual; Responsibility as stewards of the environment and citizens of the world; Excellence in intellectual, personal, and operational endeavors."

WHEREAS,

The ALA continues to urge librarians and library workers to actively seek and provide sources of accurate information that counter disinformation and recognize that inaccurate information, distortions of truth, and deliberate deceptions in information are anathema to the ethics of librarianship. (*Resolution on Access to Accurate Information*).

Google Keyword Search

“resolution library academic freedom”

OR

“resolution intellectual freedom”

Working through Governance

Governance is important

Librarians are professionals who are capable of participation in shared governance.

Governance gives librarians a voice

Shared governance gives librarians a forum for safe and honest expression.

Yes, you can govern yourselves

There are a lot of ways, both formal and informal, for librarians to participate in shared governance.

What is Shared Governance?

Shared Governance is a decision-making process for universities and colleges that emphasizes:

- **Collaboration** among key stakeholders.
- Distributed **responsibilities** to **competent** and trustworthy **experts**.
- **Empowerment** of these individuals to pursue their own initiatives for the benefit of the institution.



Collaboration

Faculty, administrators, and governing boards work together to make decisions about how a college or university is run.



Responsibility

Faculty are mainly responsible for deciding what is taught, how it's taught, and how students learn. They also decide who becomes a faculty member and handle student issues related to education.



Competence

Faculty should choose who represents them on committees or boards, using rules that they agree on.



Expertise

Faculty are experts in their fields and should be the ones making decisions about what they teach and how well other faculty members do their jobs.



Empowerment

Letting faculty make decisions about education means those decisions will be based on what's best for students, not just on making money.

FIU Libraries' Academic & Intellectual Freedom Committee

Formation

How did Academic & Intellectual Freedom Committee (AIFC) start?

Formalization

Why did AIFC keep going?

Function

What does AIFC do?

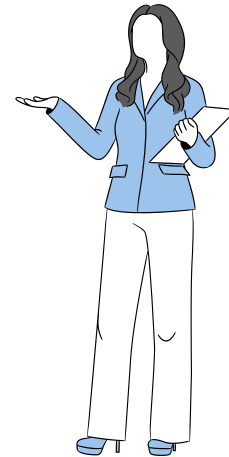
FIU Libraries' Academic & Intellectual Freedom Committee



One Resolution

Resolution Regarding the FIU Libraries' Adherence to and Support for Intellectual and Academic Freedom, and Associated Professional Standards

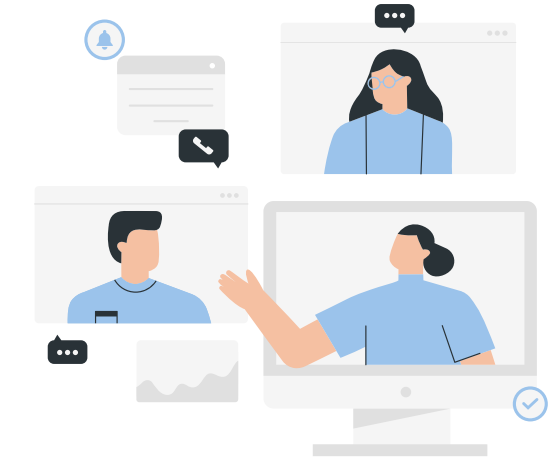
<https://library.fiu.edu/academic-freedom/libraries-resolution>



Four Presentations

Including library-focused lectures, Banned Books Week Presentations, and Panel Sessions featuring faculty from outside the libraries.

<https://library.fiu.edu/academic-freedom/scholarship>



Outside FIU

We're here at FACRL right now! And we have plans to continue.

Membership has also published or presented on AIF topics on their own.

Fall 2022 - Formation

FIU's Library Assembly formed the ad hoc committee on Academic and Intellectual Freedom in Fall 2022 with a single, specific task.

- In light of increased frequency of incidents and legislation of concern, the FIU Libraries' Faculty Assembly decided to compose a resolution.
- The AIF presented it to the Library Assembly on February 16, 2023, where it enjoyed unanimous approval.
- Library Assembly approved a motion to deliver the resolution to FIU's Faculty Senate, where it was also overwhelmingly approved at the end of Spring, 2023.

Spring 2023 - Formalization

- Ensure ongoing oversight and proactive measures to protect academic and intellectual freedom within the FIU Libraries.
- Maintain a consistent focus on these issues.
- Respond to emerging challenges in a timely manner
- Foster a culture of open inquiry and critical thinking among Library Faculty.
- Establish a democratic process by which all Library Faculty could participate in the shared governance structure.

AIFC - Function

Typical AIF Functions include:

- Discussion and raising awareness of issues affecting academic and intellectual freedom
- Advocacy (Through presentations and reporting to Library Assembly)
- Community building & strengthening Library standing
 - Hosting panel discussions and inviting colleagues to present
 - Build connections with Union representatives
 - Collaborating with others at the university through Faculty Senate meetings

What Can You Do?

- At your next shared governance meeting, propose the creation of an ad hoc committee to investigate Academic & Intellectual Freedom Issues.
- Organize your library by forming a shared governance assembly.
- Start a reading and discussion group on the topic.
- Create a mailing list or group chat to share information about academic and intellectual freedom issues.
- Have hallway discussions with your colleagues about current events related to academic and intellectual freedom.
- Subscribe to mailing lists from organizations like ALA OIF, FIRE, AAUP, PEN America to stay informed on the issues.

Practical Purpose Influence & Collaboration



What are some practical steps that you can use in your library?

How can an established discussion group advise and influence the outcome of challenges?



library.fiu.edu/aifc

Influence & Collaboration within the **AIFC Group**

The screenshot shows the FIU Libraries website page for the Academic & Intellectual Freedom Committee. The page features a navigation bar with the FIU Libraries logo, a search bar, and links to LibGuides, A-Z List, and Help. The main content area is titled "FIU Libraries: Academic & Intellectual Freedom" and includes a sub-header "Library Assembly Committee on Academic Freedom". A sidebar on the left contains a "Welcome" section and a list of links: "FIU Libraries Resolution On Academic Freedom", "Associations & Documents", "FIU Resources", "Florida Resources", "In The News", and "Academic Freedom In HigherEd Libraries". The main content area is titled "FIU Libraries Committee On Academic Freedom" and includes a "Current Committee Members" section with a list of members: Christopher Jimenez (Chair), Sabine Dantus (Vice Chair / Chair-Elect), Bryan Cooper, and Melissa Del Castillo. A quote by Albert Einstein is displayed: "I understand the right to search for truth and to publish and TEACH what one holds to be TRUE".

- Build & maintain a LibGuide on the topic. library.fiu.edu/aifc
- Create a subject for Censorship & Intellectual Freedom & name your group as “experts” on the topic.

Influence & Collaboration within the **Library**

Open Invitation Meetings

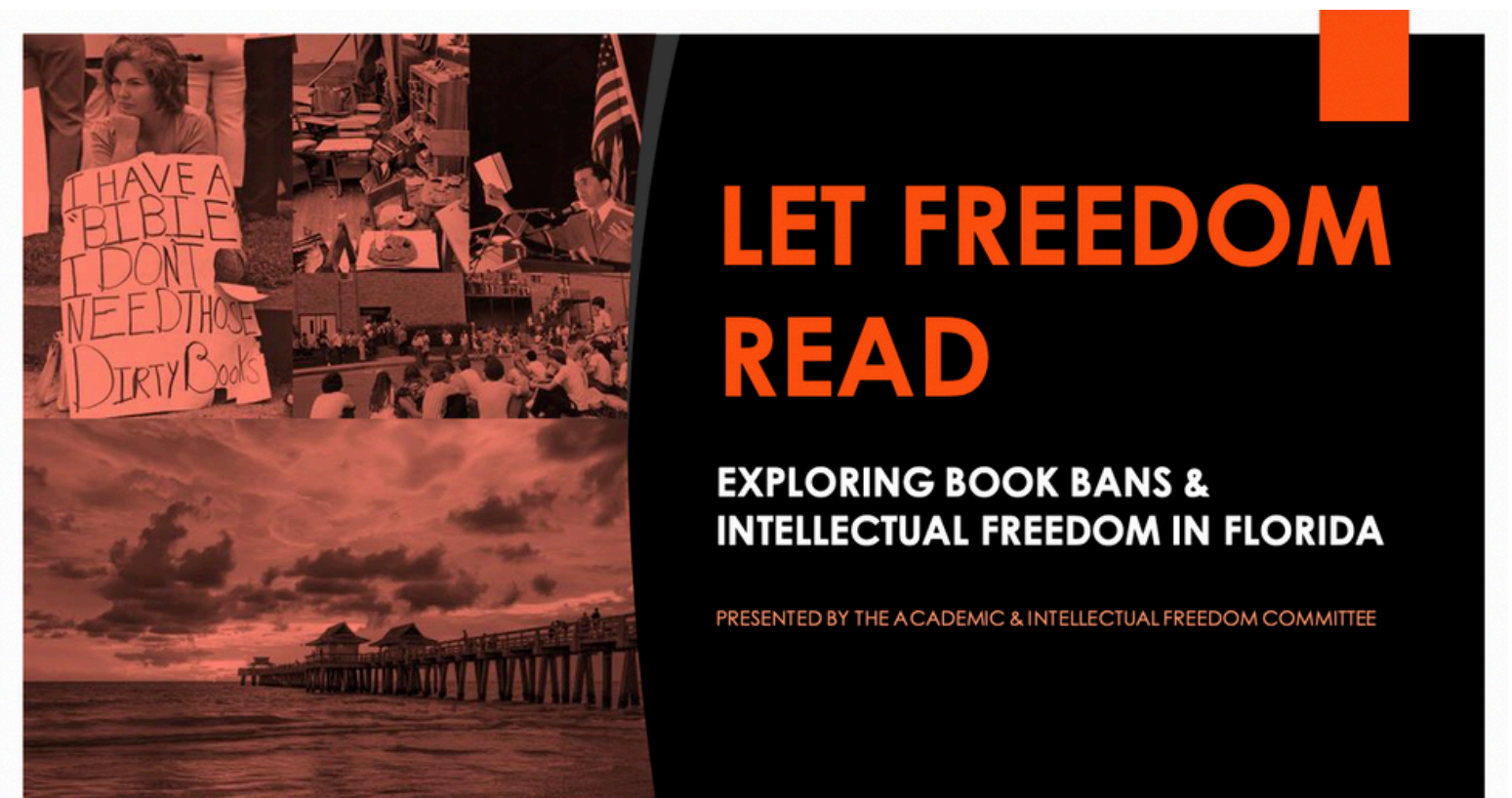
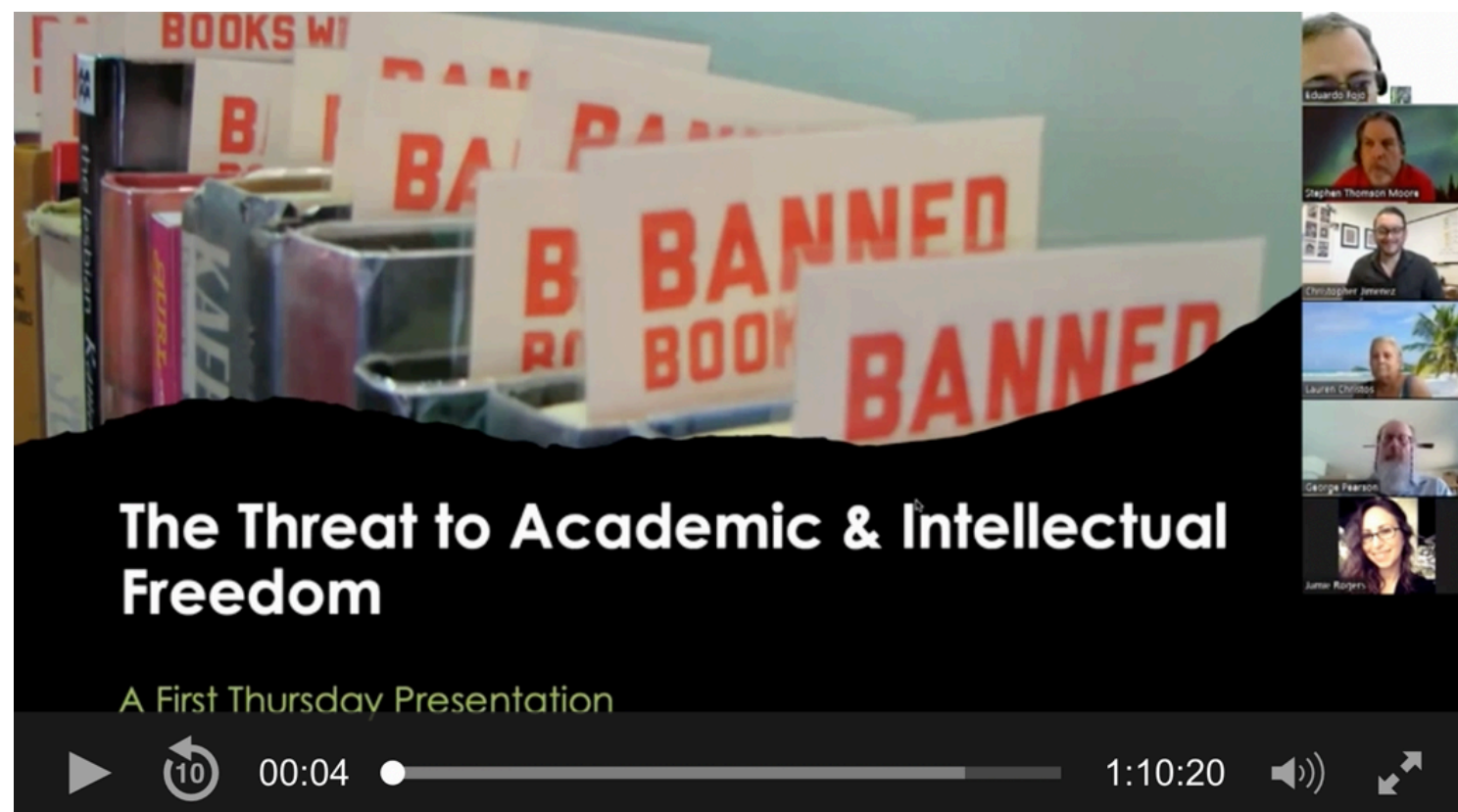


**Collect Resources &
Become Experts**



Influence & Collaboration within the Library

Take Part in Internal Workshops & Presentations



library.fiu.edu/aifc

Influence & Collaboration within the University



library.fiu.edu/aifc

Build Coalitions in Faculty Senate

- Resolution Regarding the FIU Libraries Adherence to and Support for Intellectual and Academic Freedom and Associated Professional Standards

facultysenate.fiu.edu/resolutions/

Host Events with Discipline
Faculty with a Banned Books
Week Panel

Collaborate with UFF

- Academic Freedom and Labor in the U.S.
- Censorship, Religious Freedom, and Secularism in Western Civilizations

Influence & Collaboration within the University



library.fiu.edu/aifc

Influence & Collaboration within the Profession



- Spark Discussions with Fellow University Libraries
- Engage & Advise Statewide or National Committees
- Present at Relevant Conferences

library.fiu.edu/aifc

Academic Library Scenarios: Responding to Intellectual Freedom Dilemmas

Scan the QR code to take the
poll or
Join at menti.com | use code
21137256



SCAN ME



Academic Library Scenarios: Responding to Intellectual Freedom Dilemmas



Scan the QR code to take the poll or
Join at menti.com | use code 2113 7256

SCAN ME



THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?

FIU Libraries Committee on Academic Freedom LibGuide

library.fiu.edu/aifc



Contact Us

Christopher Jimenez, jimenezc@fiu.edu

Melissa Del Castillo, meldelcast@fiu.edu

Bryan Cooper, lbcooper@fiu.edu

Sabine Dantus, sdantus@fiu.edu



Christopher Jimenez, Melissa Del Castillo, Bryan Cooper, & Sabine Dantus

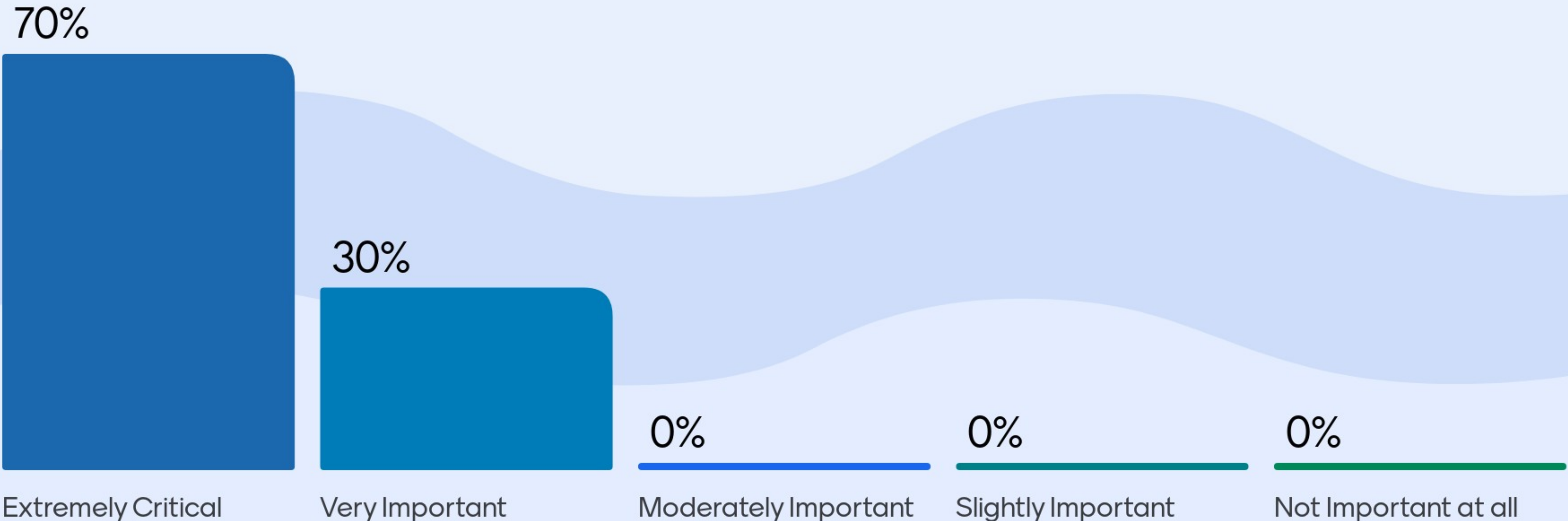
Resisting the Backlash

Empowering Librarians to Champion Academic Freedom

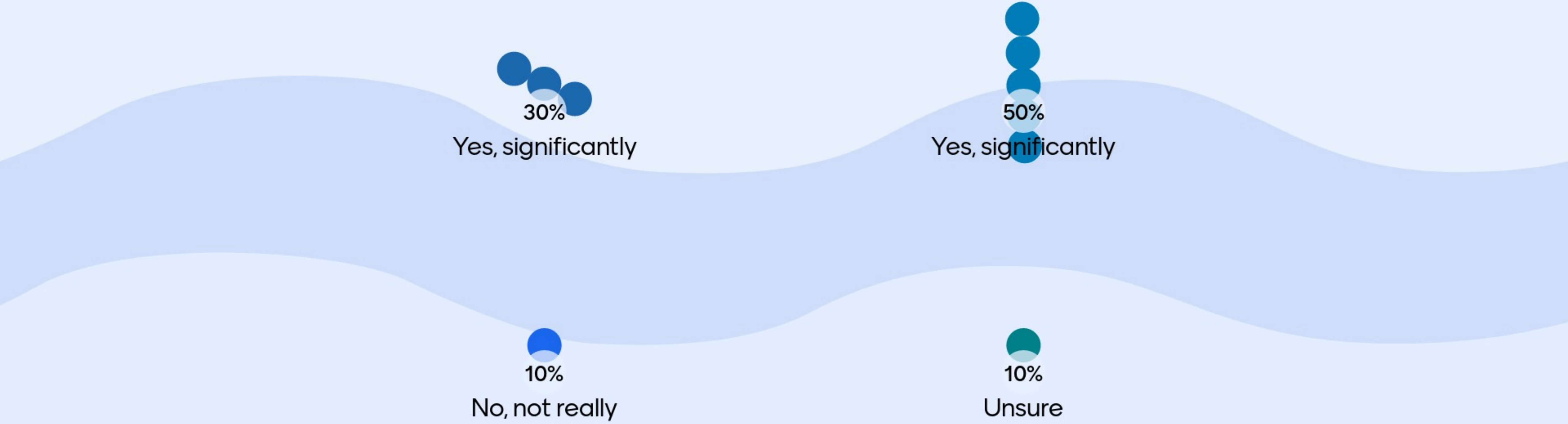


Resisting the Backlash - FACRL 2024

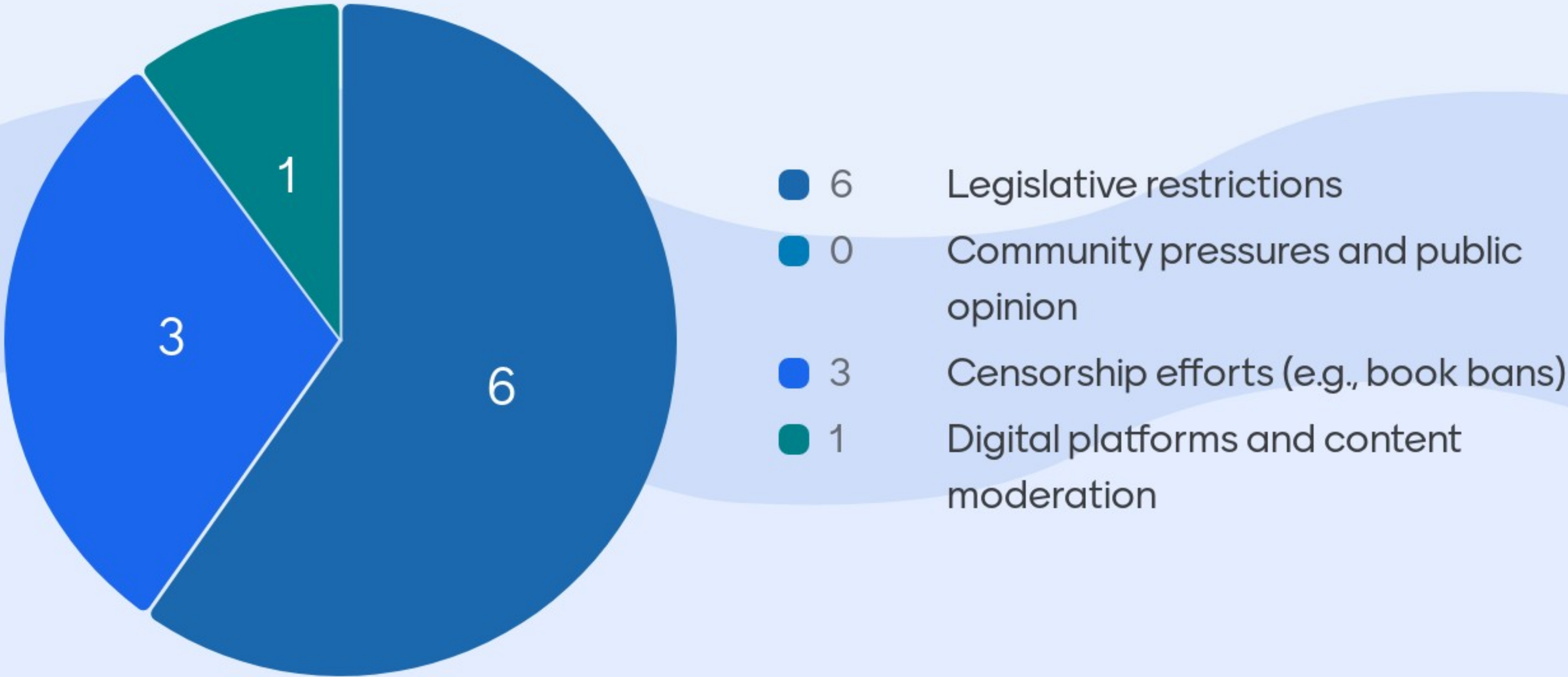
How critical is academic & intellectual freedom in supporting the mission of academic libraries in Florida?



Do you believe intellectual freedom is currently under threat in Florida's academic libraries or institutions? ↓



What is the biggest challenge to intellectual freedom in Florida today?



Resisting the Backlash - FACRL 2024

What single word or phrase comes to mind when you think about the future of academic & intellectual freedom in Florida's libraries?

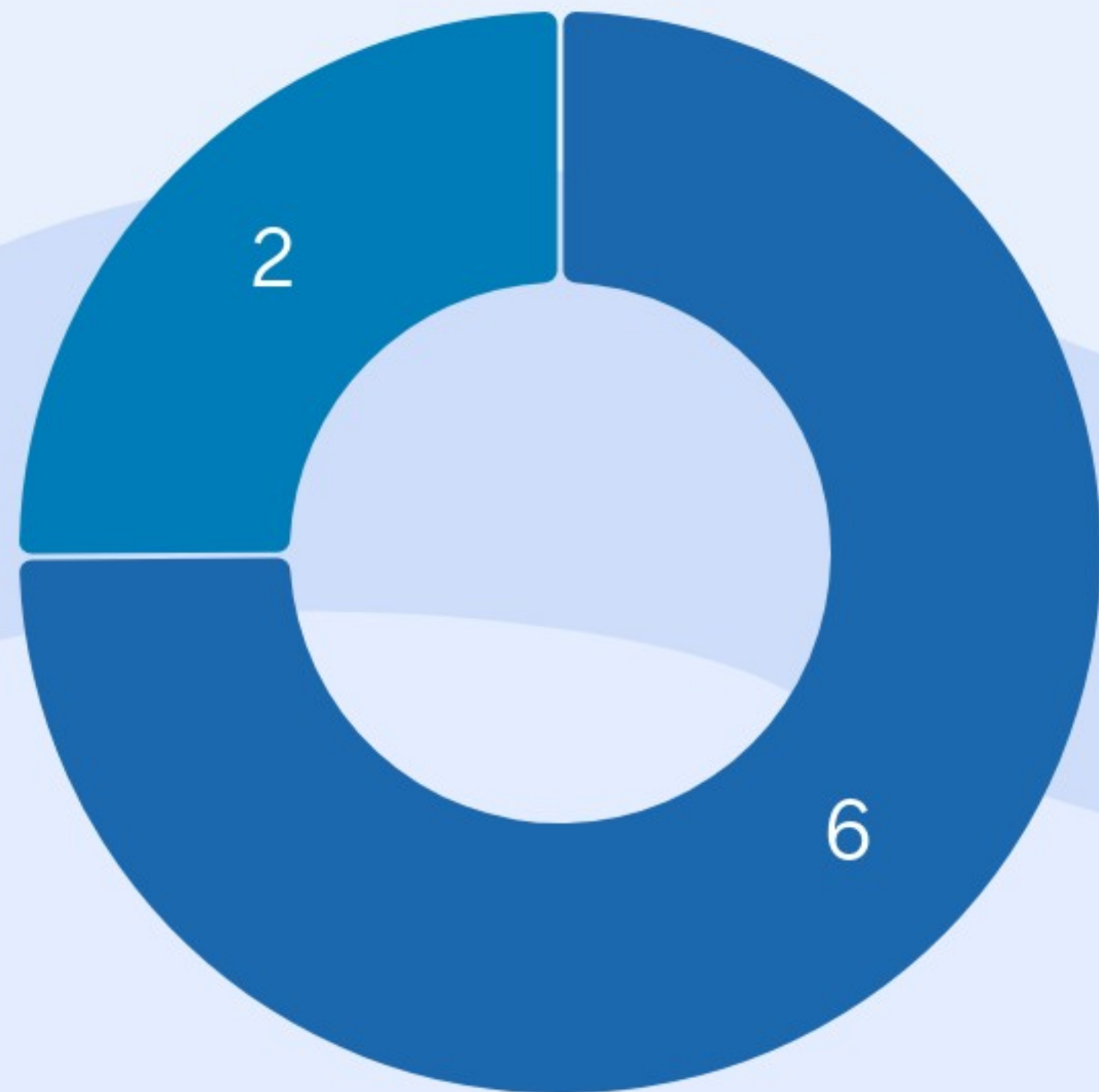
24 responses



Scenario: A group of students at your university petition to have a book removed from the library collection due to its controversial subject matter, which they feel promotes harmful ideas. The library's collection policy emphasizes diverse viewpoints, including materials that might provoke strong reactions.



How would you respond in this situation as a librarian?

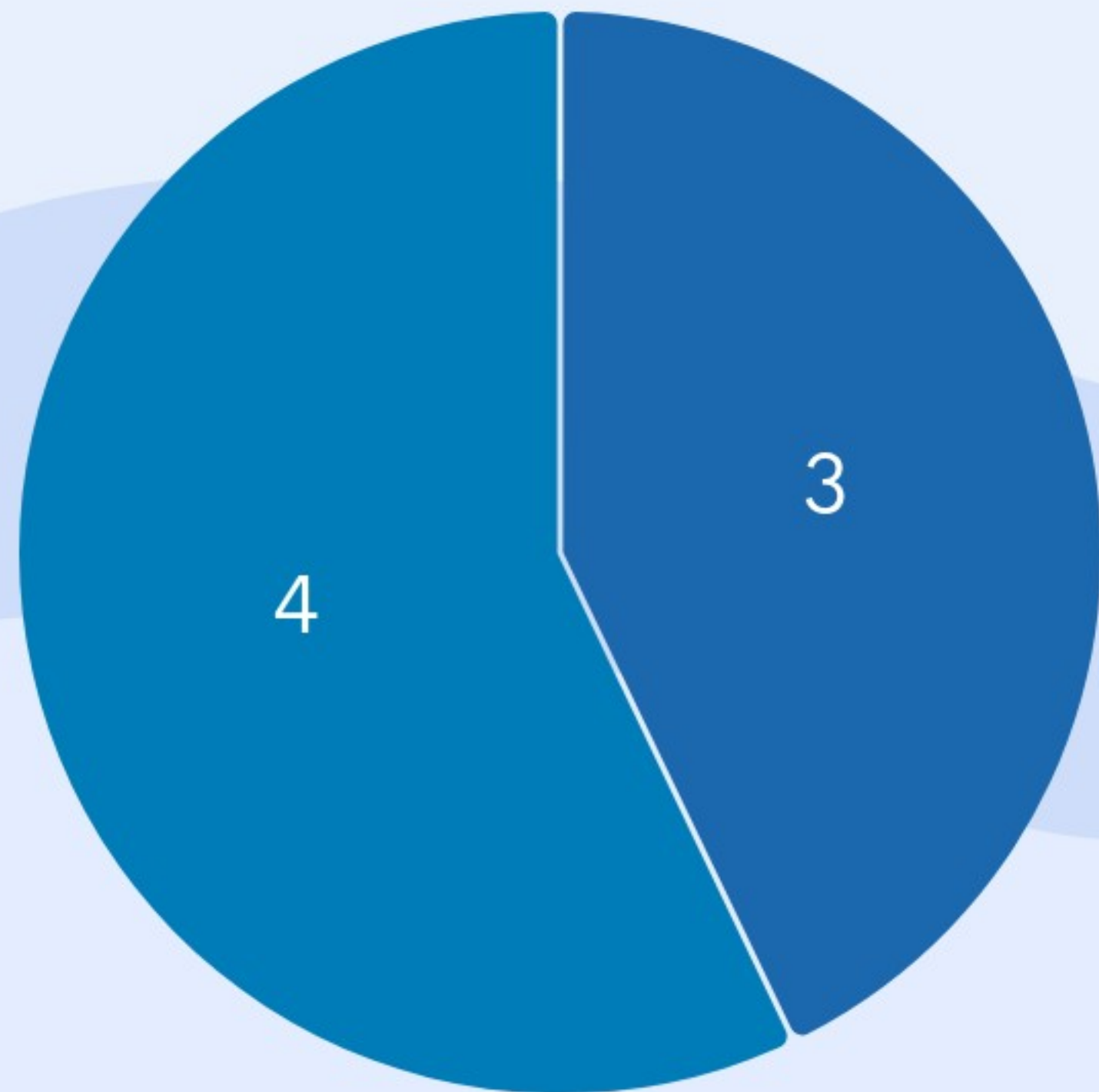


- 6 Uphold the library's policy and retain the book in the collection.
- 2 Hold a campus-wide discussion to address the concerns and promote open dialogue.
- 0 Agree to remove or restrict access to the book to maintain campus harmony.

Scenario: A faculty member requests that specific materials related to a politically sensitive topic be removed from a student research guide, citing concerns about backlash from students or administration.



What action would you take?

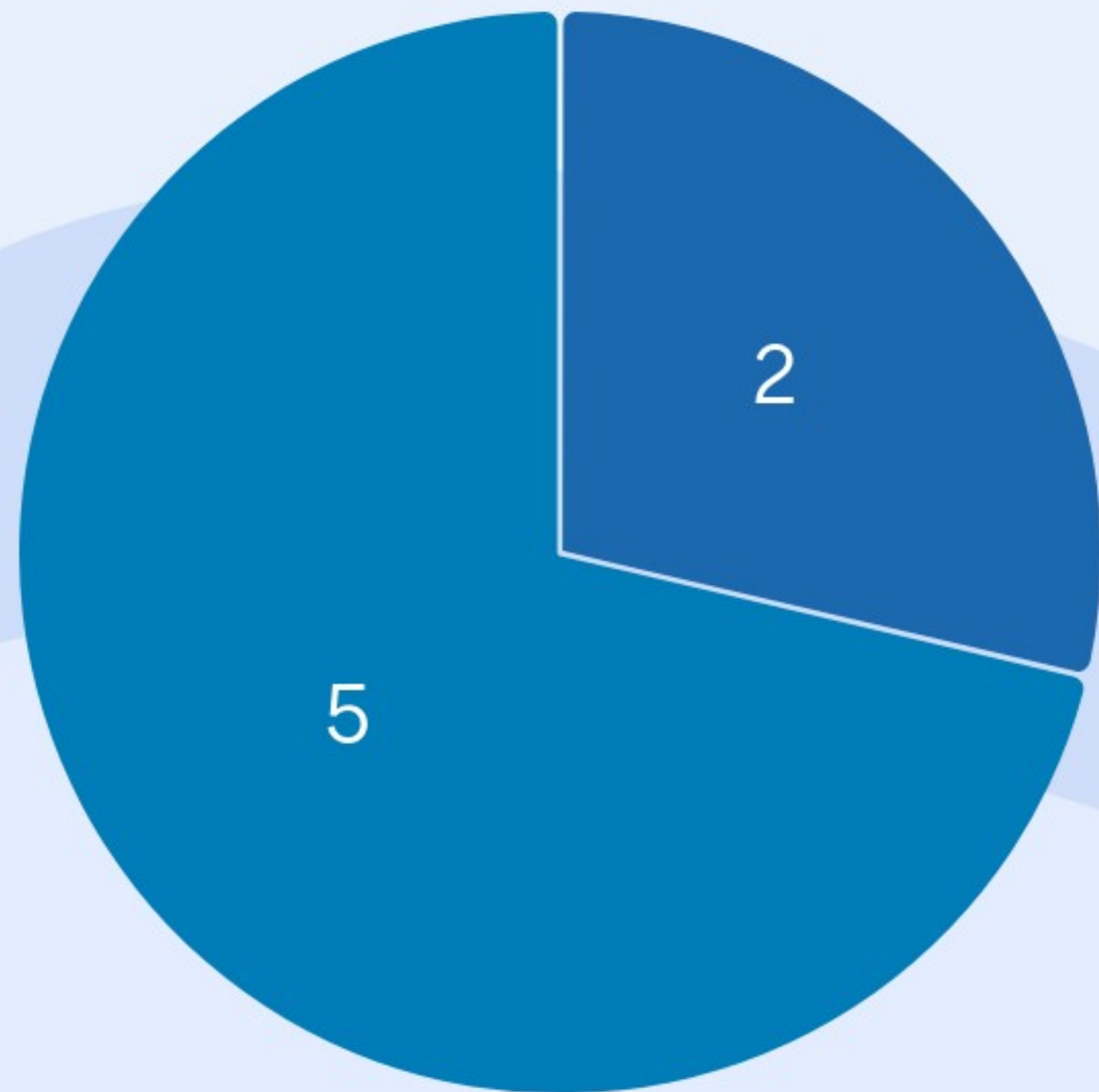


- 3 Explain the importance of intellectual freedom and maintain the content in the guide.
- 4 Compromise by adjusting the language or presentation without removing the materials.
- 0 Remove the materials from the guide to avoid potential conflict.

Scenario: An academic department is interested in hosting a guest speaker with controversial views, sparking debate among students and faculty about the appropriateness of the event. The library is asked to co-sponsor and provide space for the talk.



What action would you take?



- 2 Support the event as an opportunity for open discourse and debate.
- 5 Decline to sponsor but allow the department to use library space for the event.
- 0 Refuse to sponsor or host the event due to the potential backlash.

Resisting the Backlash - FACRL 2024

Thank you! Any questions?

**1 question
0 upvotes**

