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End of Research Report
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Censorship in the Digital Age

For my summer 2023 FURSCA research, I spent my time researching modern and historic policy on banned and censored books, both domestically and internationally. Over my eight weeks in the program, I researched four different countries' policy, history, and current censorship attempts and conducted eight interviews with current librarians across the state. As a Political Science and History double major, with a minor in Women's Studies, and a concentration in Public Policy through the Ford Institute, I was able to combine all my interests and areas of study into one project.

I started my research by briefly studying the global history of censorship, to understand the breadth and depth of this issue. I then focused on historic and modern policy that legalized censorship and book destruction. Policy analysis is where I have spent the majority of my time; analyzing wording, the party that proposed the policy, start/end dates of legislation, and possible loopholes. I then followed these pieces of legislation into case studies, when law enforcement and individuals used these laws to stop the printing of text, destroy texts, or make them unavailable at public libraries. All banned books fit into four categories, for censorship justification - religion, political, social, and sexual - I read 20 different banned books, and the synopsis of many more, to understand how they fit into these categories. Simultaneously, I also conducted interviews with librarians across the state to understand first-hand the reality of modern book censorship and its impact on their work and the greater issue of representation.

When I started this project my two main goals were to understand the purpose of book bans in the digital era and the impacts book censorship and banning have on individuals and communities. The internet isn't tangible and can't be controlled, but physical books can, so censoring and banning books isn't addressing issues, but giving people a sense of control. Additionally, with the increase in censorship and decrease in access to physical information, we are increasing the possibility of misinformation being digested and spread and leaving thousands of people without digital access, for a variety of reasons, behind. This information shifted my focus and expanded my research, where I have spent the end of my research period looking into the direct link between book/literature censorship and fascism.

This experience has impacted my personal and academic life in a variety of ways. I also hope with the addition of my research, we can learn from history and not once again repeat the incredible damages of censorship and fascism in the United States. This research will be the base of both my senior thesis and my public policy grad school applications. In addition to presenting at Elkin Isaac, I am applying for a variety of other conferences. This experience and time, with the incredible guidance from my advisor Dr. Franzen, has taught me invaluable research skills, necessary for grad school and my future political career. I would like to thank Renee and Elizabeth for listening to frustrations, helping to answer technical questions, and always creating a positive research environment. Finally, thank you to all the FURSCA donors, without you this research would not have been possible, and researching and writing my thesis would have been more painful than enjoyable - thank you!