

August 1, 2024

Trade, Travel & Tourism Committee
Neighborhood & Community Enrichment Committee
Los Angeles City Council
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

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John Ackerman
Chief Executive Officer

On April 17, 2024, the City Council approved the Motion attached to Council File 24-0237 which was presented by Councilmember Rodriguez. That Motion requested that the Library Department and Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) report back with a plan which would provide banned book access within the terminals of Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). LAWA and the Library Department are pleased to offer this communication in response to the Motion and look forward to future discussions with both Committees on this topic.

Background of Banned Books Week

Established in 1982 as a collaboration between the American Library Association and Amnesty International, Banned Books Week is an annual event in which libraries all over the United States highlight the value of free and open access to books in the spirit of supporting the freedom to seek and express ideas.

Each year, the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom receives submissions from librarians and teachers throughout the Country of locally challenged, censored or banned books. Once submissions have been reviewed, the Office for Intellectual Freedom publishes its annual list of "banned books" to highlight for that particular year.

Since its inception, the Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL) has been a proud participant in Banned Books Week.

Each year LAPL staff throughout the city create physical and digital book displays, host programs and plan book discussions highlighting challenges to the freedom to read. The library also highlights Banned Books Week with blog posts, social media and a customized landing page that pulls all the content together.



Read Freely Initiative

In 2023, the LAPL launched the “Read Freely” program with two simple goals: (1) promote the idea of reading freely without restrictions and (2) increase access to information and stories for all people. This initiative, continuously active since its launch, has allowed the LAPL to engage in Banned Books Week year-round.

Fundamentally, the program enables applicants to obtain a digital library card and, once that digital card has been issued, those individuals have immediate access to a collection of books which have been identified as the most frequently challenged books in the nation, per the American Library Association.

Banned Books Access at LAX

After detailed discussions between LAWA and the LAPL, the best method to implement the intent of the Motion is to extend the LAPL’s Read Freely initiative throughout LAX. Specifically, through the display of a video and/or static graphic in each terminal, individuals will be able to scan a QR code on their cell phone which will allow them to apply for a digital library card and then obtain access to a catalog of banned books which they can read at the airport or on their flight. The next Banned Books Week is scheduled to occur September 22 – 28, 2024 and we will have the graphics displayed in the terminals and the library infrastructure in place prior to September 22, 2024 to ensure all people traveling through LAX have access to challenged, censored or banned books.

LAWA and the LAPL appreciate the opportunity to share this information with the Committee and looks forward to sharing more information as this technology develops.

Sincerely,



John Ackerman
Chief Executive Officer
Los Angeles World Airports



John F. Szabo
City Librarian
Los Angeles Public Library

JA/JFS:cm