

Disgruntled library patron attacks blindfolded mannequin

By Leah Pearse and Avi Silberstein.

A good rule of thumb for all public libraries: if you're not offending someone, you're doing something wrong. That's how we knew we were doing something right when a lady stomped in and began beating up our display mannequin.

"This offends me," she yelled. "This really offends me."

First things first: What was a blindfolded mannequin doing in the Central branch of the Greater Victoria Public Library?

This year, we decided to create a provocative and engaging "Freedom to Read Week" display. We thought it would be fun to have a mannequin – blindfolded – at the entrance to the library. So we made a few phone calls and visited a few stores, and after some persistence were able to convince the owner of a local consignment shop to loan us a mannequin.

We picked out a mannequin that was lying on her stomach with her hands near her face, dressed her up in clothes from the consignment store, and propped a book up in her hands. Then we tied on a blindfold. We put her up on a table, and filled an adjacent table with banned/challenged books. We also made sure to put up some signage explaining the display and that the books were there to be borrowed.

The response we received was overwhelmingly positive. Patrons loved it, staff loved it, and it got people to stop in their tracks and walk up to the display for a closer look.

Well, almost everyone loved it.



Not the aforementioned disgruntled patron who attacked the mannequin. But we reserve the right to keep books that will offend certain people, and the same applies to displays that offend certain people. In fact, the rallying cry of Freedom to Read Weeks past has been "There is something in my library to offend everyone."

This statement reminds us that in a free society, we are willing to be offended rather than censor what people say, think, do, and even read in an effort to ensure that no one is offended.

And the mannequin -- did it survive the attacks? You better believe it.

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