**Intro**

Sex-Education in the United States is a contentious topic that while furiously scrutinized, has seen little reform. There are increasing movements to not only discredit the effectiveness of comprehensive sex education, but also label anything outside of abstinence as immoral and dangerous to youth. This deprivation of crucial information not only fails to prevent sex among youth, but also leads to an increase in teenage pregnancies, STIs, trauma, and abuse.

Public libraries are currently experiencing a significant rise in book challenges and bans that focus on these topics. A frequent argument made in support of such bans is that books written for children and teenagers are too explicit in detail and are inclusive of the LGBT+ community. As a result, many librarians and educators have found themselves at the center of harassment campaigns, and even calls for criminal charges. What this paper aims to provide is information that can educate the public, especially those who have misgivings regarding censorship and book bans but are concerned that such materials may not be in the best interest for children or teenagers. This kind of information is not just limited to the specific science and data of sex education, but also provides guidance in promoting materials that are actually useful for the targeted audience. Blanket derision of censorship, while overall integral to a free and educated society, is no longer enough to overcome misinformation campaigns.

**Body**

1. The Current State of Sex Education in the United States
   1. No Standardized Curriculum
   2. Low-Income & Minority Demographics Most at Risk
   3. Comprehensive Sex Ed leads to delay in sexual activity
2. Sex Education Materials in Libraries
   1. Unprecedented amount of book challenges/bans in 2022
   2. Top 10 most challenged/banned, 8 in regards to sex, 5 for LGBT+ themes
      1. There is a deep connection between LGBT+ intolerance and opposition to sex ed
   3. Accessibility/Anonymity fills in gaps left behind by current system
      1. The lack of comprehensive education from families and schools leave much of the effort and responsibility to understand sex to children & young adults. The internet is a fertile field of helpful information but also harmful, inaccurate depictions of sex. Published books are still a reliable medium to accessing relevant, accurate information, specifically tailored to young audiences.
      2. Fear of backlash from families & friends leaves many children and teens lost and confused, which also makes more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. The ability to learn without risking their livelihood or reputation is an aspect of libraries that benefits everybody and protects our fundamental rights.
3. Effective Dialogue and Discourse Strategies for Defending Library Collections
   1. Blanket Arguments against book bans is not enough
   2. Hardliners unlikely to be convinced, reach for those on the fence
   3. Librarians & educators need to be informed on the full content of challenged materials; not every book meets the standards of effective comprehensive sex ed, regardless of intention. This does not mean condoning censorship or book bans, but rather reevaluating collection policy.
   4. Define as “Defensive Sex Ed”. Categorizing it as such is both an accurate and important distinction. Contrast Defensive Sex Ed, which is essentially what all sex ed already is, to the provocative Sex Ed often presented as the standard, despite lacking in evidence.
      1. Defensive Sex Ed is
         1. Inclusive to all genders, orientations, and identities
         2. Age Appropriate in its content, not defined by the explicitness of the information, but rather the approach and dialogue. You would not expect a 10 year old to comprehend a 100 page doctoral thesis on human anatomy, but it would be reasonable to simplify the information through less technical details and more images. This is why so many authors in this field have utilized the graphic novel approach.
         3. Representative of the diversity of the human body, its shape, sizes, proportions, etc. Reiterate that this about helping youth understand that there is no normal standard of the human body. This is to prevent issues like body dysmorphia and present a deep contrast to the artificiality of pornography. Showing a fully nude body or its various parts is not inherently pornographic, and attempts to label it as such is done in either ignorance or malice.
         4. Emphasizes concepts such as consent, body autonomy, contraceptives, warning signs for exploitation & abuse
      2. Defensive Sex Ed Is **NOT**
         1. Pornographic
         2. Encouraging minors to have sex
   5. Let the parents, not the State, be the filter for their **OWN** children
      1. Libraries are public institutions
         1. Not governed by the theology or moral values of a single group of people.
         2. Must recognize and represent the diversity of its community

**Conclusion**

An important distinction to make when confronting book bans and censorship is that there can be a significant difference in the quality of sex-ed materials. One can acknowledge that a challenged may be a weaker resource than another without condoning censorship. Not every self-help book offers good information; if they did, they would all be contradicting each other in some way. This is why it is so important for librarians and educators to be familiar with the content of controversial materials. When displaying books on sex-ed, ensure that the materials advertised are the best you have to offer. It is far better to face book challenges on materials by merit of the information within it, rather than by principle of always being against censorship.