

National  
Coalition  
Against  
Censorship



October 18, 2012

Bill Ptacek  
Library Director  
King County Library System  
960 Newport Way NW  
Issaquah, WA 98027

Dear Mr. Ptacek,

We are writing to express our appreciation and support for the King County Library System's response to recent objections to *Hero Heel 2* by Makoto Tateno. We understand that a patron raised concerns after his 10-year-old niece checked out the book, despite the fact that the book was shelved in the adult section and has a clear parental warning.

Some parents may not object to their children checking out anime and other graphic novels with mature content, while others do. Your policy explicitly states that the responsibility for setting those boundaries lies with the parents, not the libraries. Given that parents differ widely in their views of what books are "appropriate" for their children, this is the only practical approach for the library. Asking the library to act *in loco parentis* is neither fair to library professionals, nor to parents, nor to children who deserve to have engagement and dialogue from their parents on a wide range of subjects.

Comics, graphic novels, and manga often face challenges from those who think any book with comic-book style drawings must be for children. That certainly seems to be the case here, as Mr. De Nevers expresses surprise that "an anime comic book section is where people go to read porn." Manga, or Japanese comics, and its sister art form anime, or Japanese animation, are a combined global phenomenon that appeals to readers of all ages. That's because manga is as diverse a literary form as prose, film, or theater with more than 60 years of content comprising millions of books that address audiences from young children to adults. As more manga reaches American shores, the demand for this work is rising among all audiences. We commend the library for respecting the diversity of its community and serving its patrons' interest in this popular form by stocking and correctly racking *Hero Heel 2*.

We hope that, in time, misconceptions about comics, graphic novels and manga will change as they are seen for what they are – illustrated books, addressing a wide range of human emotions and often containing serious content, for readers of different ages and interests. As more people realize the value of the genre and its appeal, incidents like the one in White Center Library will happen less frequently and incite less alarm. We will,

however, always need the strong voices of libraries and librarians in support of open and equal access to information.

We applaud you for respecting the rights of your patrons to make decisions for themselves and their children about what to read, and for rejecting the notion that the views of some readers may be imposed on all. Including a wide range of materials in the library demonstrates respect for readers and their choices, for the professionalism of the librarians who serve the reading public, and for the First Amendment and its importance to a pluralistic democratic society.

Please do not hesitate to contact us about this issue or in the future if we can offer any assistance.

Sincerely,



Joan Bertin  
Executive Director  
National Coalition Against  
Censorship



Chris Finan  
President  
American Booksellers Foundation  
for Free Expression



Charles Brownstein  
Executive Director  
Comic Book Legal Defense  
Fund