

“Tweet of the town”: Synthesizing Local and Social Media Discourse on Book Bans

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ABSTRACT

This project explores the intersection of local and online discourse around book bannings. I use the McMinn County School Board’s decision in 2022 to remove Art Spiegelman’s graphic memoir, *Maus*, as a case study for this discourse. Through a combination of interviews with McMinn County residents and data collected from Twitter, I argue that social media has altered local community discourse and responses to book bannings. Interviews with local residents asked them to discuss their experiences when *Maus* was removed by the school board and to reflect on how the local community responded amidst worldwide scrutiny once the event reached digital spaces via social media. Online discourse on Twitter involved collecting tweets mentioning the McMinn County Schools Twitter account along with tweets discussing *Maus* to understand the broader online response to the board’s decision. I use Danielle Allen’s discourse flow model as the theoretical framework for this project and in my initial findings, discourse around the *Maus* ban has traveled as described by Allen. In the age of social media, discourse frequently begins at the local level before traveling online and then back into local spaces. Ongoing data analysis has shown that locally, residents were concerned with not only the board’s decision, but also the perception of their community once news of the banning spread. This is supported by online discourse on Twitter, where initial analysis shows frequent characterization of the McMinn County community in a negative light based on the school board’s actions.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

Censorship; information ethics, community engagement; social media

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

Censorship; intellectual freedom, social media

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