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In wake of the announcement that six of Dr. Seuss' books will no longer be published, the Minot Public Library says the number of people on the waitlist for the author's children's books has greatly increased, including the six controversial titles.

Written By: Michelle Griffith | 7:00 am, Mar. 5, 2021



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BISMARCK — Six of Dr. Seuss' novels will no longer be published due to racist imagery and insensitive content; however, many of North Dakota's larger public libraries have no plans to remove them from their shelves.

Known for his nonsensical words and hyperbolic phrases, Dr. Seuss has brought joy to millions of families with his light-hearted children's books. But a few of the author's books have not aged well, prompting the business that protects his legacy to discontinue publishing six of them, including "And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street" and "If I Ran the Zoo."

Almost all libraries in North Dakota have some kind of policy that dictates situations in which a book can be taken off the shelf, said State Librarian Mary Soucie. Some, like the Minot and Fargo public libraries, have policies in place that state there is no situation in which a book could no longer be offered to the public unless the book itself is in bad physical condition.

"They will stay on the shelves until they're physically not available based on wear and tear and what have you," Fargo Public Library Director Tim Dirks said about the discontinued Dr. Seuss books.

Dr. Seuss Enterprises, the business that protects the author's legacy, announced on Monday, March 2, that it decided to quit publishing six titles after a panel of educators and experts evaluated the author's books.

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"These books portray people in ways that are hurtful and wrong," Dr. Seuss Enterprises [said in a statement](#).

In "And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street," the children's book contains a character, referred to as a "Chinaman," who has slanted lines for eyes and is carrying chopsticks and a bowl of rice, [according to The New York Times](#). In "If I Ran the Zoo," two characters who are from Africa are depicted to resemble monkeys, the Times wrote.

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"The presence or absence of the titles by Dr. Seuss does not define the overall quality of district libraries or negate the desire to continually improve access to diverse and inclusive reading material," AnnMarie Campbell, district spokesperson, said in a statement.

Soucie said libraries regularly consider books they should have in their collections. In the case of the six Dr. Seuss books that are no longer going to be published, it's important to consider the relevance of the book, she said.

"As we're looking at them now with a different lens ... we understand implicit bias, and we understand why those images are not acceptable," Soucie said. "If you choose to leave them in the collection, why are you doing it and how are you going to use it?"

She said the North Dakota State Library only has one of the six titles in its possession, and leadership will examine whether the book is still relevant and should be kept on the shelf.

The **Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library** said in a statement that it carries four of the six books, and they will continue to be available to the public.

"While I support the publisher's decision to cease publication, our library will not remove the books from our collection. Our library takes seriously the citizen's right to information free from censorship," **Christine Kujawa, Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library director**, said in a statement.

The Minot Public Library will also continue to keep the Dr. Seuss books available to the public. Not only that, but since the announcement that six Dr. Seuss books will no longer be published, the Minot Public Library has seen the number of people on the wait list for checking out the author's books, including the controversial titles, greatly increase, said Minot Public Library Director Janet Anderson.

Anderson said the library offers many children's books written by people from marginalized groups to give children many perspectives.

"It's really important that children feel that they are being represented in a good way, so we are happy to still have quite a variety of Dr. Seuss books," Anderson said. "... Develop your own thought and have conversations, but don't let the media make up your mind."

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