

Cary Siegfried

From: Corine Barberena
Sent: Monday, July 26, 2021 3:42 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts)
Attachments: Jack of Hearts 7.26.21.docx; Jack of Hearts Professional Reviews.docx

Dear Mrs. Norman,

Attached is my response to your June 28, 2021 Request for Reconsideration of the book, Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts) by L.C. Rosen. Also attached are reviews on the book from professional library review journals.

Thank you for your time and your input into our library collection.

Sincerely,

Corine Barberena

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Dear Mrs. Norman,

I am writing this email in response to your June 28, 2021 submission for a Request for Reconsideration of the Young Adult book, *Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts)* by L. C. Rosen, and published by Little, Brown and Company. This title was put into the Young Adult Fiction collection in November 2018. The Irving Public Library selects books in the Young Adult Collection primarily for high school students.

As per the Irving Public Library's Request for Reconsideration Policies, I appointed an Ad Hoc committee ("the Committee") and tasked the Committee to undertake a firsthand review of the book and to prepare a report concerning their proposed actions on this reconsideration request. This Committee was comprised of three librarians with Master of Library and Information Science degrees, knowledge of Young Adult literature, and the principles of public library collection development.

The Committee read the book, consulted professional and popular review sources, checked the current shelf location, reviewed checkout and hold statistics, and researched holdings of other libraries in our area. They also met to discuss their findings and sent me their final report on July 21, 2021.

The Committee's recommendation is to keep the title *Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts)* in the Young Adult collection. I concur with this recommendation. I did read the book and I base my conclusion on a combination of my own review of the book, the Committee's report, the assessments from professional library review sources, the publisher's age categorization of the material and the Collection Development Policies of the Irving Public Library.

Your Request for Reconsideration objects to this book as "obscenity to minors". The Irving Public Library is not a law enforcement agency and does not make legal determinations regarding alleged violations of the Texas Penal Code. However, as public library professionals we do make determinations about the literary and cultural quality of the materials in our collection based on established professional standards such as utilizing professional literature journals, publisher recommendations, and established booklists.

Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts) comes with overwhelmingly positive book reviews by recognized journals in the library profession. I have attached some of those reviews to this letter. The publisher has classified the title as Young Adult, which explains its intended audience and subsequent placement in that collection. The book is described as "sex-positive" by School Library Journal and Kirkus Reviews. *Voya* states, "This book talks about sex and queer sex in a positive, open way through great pacing and character development." *Publisher's Weekly* writes "The ethnically diverse, authentic characters model multiple approaches to being gay and being sexually active (or not)..."

After reading the book as well as the book reviews, it is apparent the term “sex-positive” refers to an approach to sex that is not shameful and is not ill-informed. Within Jack’s sex advice column there are solid underlying themes about honest communication, consent, practicing safe sex, and self-acceptance. There will be readers of Young Adult Literature, older teens, and the LGBTQ+ community who will find the book to be a positive and candid perspective that will dispel some assumptions, giving it continued cultural and literary value.

I also realize that there are those who will see no value in this book. It is important to note that the Irving Public Library collection, as most public library collections, is not curated so that all books will appeal to all readers, but with the intent a diversity of readers will find themselves reflected in parts of the collection. The existence of a particular viewpoint and/or subject in the collection does not constitute an endorsement by the Irving Public Library.

The book also appeared on the following lists: The Guardian’s Best Books of the Year, American Library Association’s Rainbow Book List Top 10, Barnes and Noble’s Favorite YA of 2018, Booklist’s Top 10 Crime Fiction for Youth, and Book Riot Best of the Month. A book is chosen for inclusion in these lists by booksellers, other authors, editors, and librarians, and this broad range of recognition does further its credibility as having literary and cultural value.

While this book’s story and content will not appeal to everyone, and the reviews sources do qualify this book to be for older teens, its initial selection was supported by collection development standards.

Although the circulation statistics are not high, there are currently thirteen customer requests for the title, six non-staff and seven staff. This includes the two physical books, the e-book and the e-audiobook.

As per our Request for Reconsideration Policy, if you are not satisfied with this decision you have the right to appeal within thirty (30) days of the date of this letter by asking in writing that it be referred to the Library Director.

To further review the parameters surrounding the decision to keep the book, and how the decision is in line with our Collection Development Policy, I have included a couple excerpts from the Ad Hoc Committee below.

Sincerely,

Corine Barberena
Senior Library Services Manager

Consistency with the Library's Collection Development Policy

The Committee found *Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts)* to be consistent with the Library's Collection Development Policy. The Committee discussed several specific parts of the policy, noted below with the committee's notes.

- Access to library materials will not be restricted, prejudiced, denied, or abridged by the Library because of a customer's origin, race, age, abilities, gender, background, or views.
 - The committee agreed that denying teens access to this book would violate this section of the Collection Development Policy.
- Freedom of choice in selecting materials is a necessary safeguard to the freedom to read, to hear, and to view.
 - The committee agreed that denying teens access to this book would violate this section of the Collection Development Policy.
- It is the essence of democracy that citizens shall have the right of free inquiry and the equally important right of forming their own opinions. In a free society, each individual is free to determine for him/herself what he/she wishes to read, to hear, or to view.
 - The committee firmly agreed that individuals have the right to decide whether or not this book is an appropriate or desirable choice for reading material for themselves or their children.
- The Library and its associated authorities do not serve in loco parentis. Only the parents or legal guardians may restrict their children, and only their own children, from access to library materials. Selection will not be inhibited by the possibility that materials may inadvertently come into the possession of children.
 - Parents may or may not choose to restrict their children from reading *Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts)*. However, the Library does not make that choice for parents.
- The Library will provide materials for all members of the community the library serves without exclusion. Diversity will be pursued by providing materials for all ages and educational levels, in as many subject fields as possible, including alternative and/or opposing viewpoints, and by providing a variety of materials reflective of the diversity existing in our culture and society.
 - The inclusion of this book falls in line with providing materials for all members of the community without exclusion. Other books in our teen collection reflect differing viewpoints.
- Quality will be pursued by the application of the professional discretion and standards established by the library profession and through the use of appropriate selection aids, such as reviews in professionally recognized periodicals, standard bibliographies, booklists, and recommendations by recognized authorities.
 - The Committee gathered and read the professional reviews that were used as selection aids when this book was selected for inclusion. The committee agreed that,

based on the selection aids available, this book was appropriately selected for inclusion in the teen collection.

Cultural and/or Literary Significance and Quality

The Committee agreed that *Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts)* demonstrated equitable quality with other mainstream YA literature. *Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts)* is a coming-of-age story that revolves around a blackmailing mystery at a New York private school with a diverse cast of characters. Main character Jack writes a sex advice column for a popular blog, and his sex-positive advice focuses on consent, safe sex, and self-acceptance.

Audience for the Material

After reading the book, the Committee members concluded that this novel was written with a teenage audience in mind. It features many hallmarks that differentiate young adult literature from adult literature: a teen protagonist and cast of mostly teen characters, a story told from the viewpoint and in the voice of a teenager, and a focus on teen situations and emotions. Like most teen novels, it deals with adversity, change, and personal growth. It is fast-paced and of a similar length to other contemporary or realistic YA novels. Based on these qualities, the Committee agreed that shelving this book in the teen collection was the correct choice. Furthermore, eight other libraries in the Dallas/Fort Worth area also have physical copies of this book in their collections, and in each case, it is shelved in the teen collection. The publisher has also categorized this book as a young adult book.

Professional Review and Awards

Professional reviews for this book were overwhelmingly positive. The Committee read reviews from Booklist, School Library Journal, The Horn Book, Kirkus Reviews, VOYA, and Publisher's Weekly (see below). The book also appeared on the following lists: The Guardian's Best Books of the Year, American Library Association's Rainbow Book List Top 10, Barnes and Noble's Favorite YA of 2018, Booklist's Top 10 Crime Fiction for Youth, and Book Riot Best of the Month.

- **Booklist: *Starred Review*** Tales get bigger in the retelling, but generally what people say about Jack is true: he gets laid a lot. His private New York high school is pretty liberal, but out gay kids are still the minority, and Jack is often the subject of his classmates' gossip and, occasionally, vitriol. When his friend convinces him to write a sex-advice column for her website, Jack reluctantly starts to get into it. But then the letters arrive. Initially, they're just creepy-ish fan notes, but soon they get threatening, demanding he change his lifestyle and tone down his persona. With the school unwilling to help (the principal suggests Jack was asking for something like this), it's up to Jack and his friends to find the blackmailer—or give in. This is a bold, inclusive exploration of teen sexuality that, propelled by Jack's brazen voice, never feels preachy. Jack doles out sex tips to teens of all orientations, but he also advises those who aren't sure about sex at all and checks a group of girls more interested in gay men as props than as people. Most sex happens off-page, although language and the prep-school party scene make this best suited for older readers. The mystery adds truly compelling drama, and if things wrap up too neatly, it hardly matters next to all that Rosen gets right. Fresh, sex-positive, and unabashedly entertaining. Grades 10-12. Copyright 2018 Booklist Reviews.
- **School Library Journal: Gr 10 Up**—Contemporary sex advice meets mystery in this high school story of bullying and being true to oneself. Jack is out and proud, unashamed of his love of fashion or his voracious sexual appetite. When his friend asks him to write a sex-advice column for a blog, he is happy to help. Mysterious pink notes then start appearing in his locker, and soon they turn from playful to threatening. Jack begins to shrink into himself until he is barely recognizable to his friends and classmates. This sex-positive story is interspersed with the emails Jack's advice column receives, his responses to those questions, group chats among Jack and his two friends, as well as the eerie letters he gets in his locker. An upbeat, conversational writing style makes this story move quickly, and the understandably creepy atmosphere surrounding the unwanted notes is punctuated by his adventures with his friends, supportive relationship with his mother, and sexual exploits. **VERDICT** The death of sex-positive YA literature—particularly sex-positive queer literature—makes this book an essential addition to library collections that serve teens.— Jenni Frencham, formerly at Columbus Public Library, WICopyright 2018 School Library Journal.

- **Hornbook:** Jack, an out-and-proud queer seventeen-year-old, receives anonymous love notes from an obsessive admirer, who then blackmails Jack after he starts writing an online teen-sex-advice column. This sex-positive, unapologetic celebration of the gay community strikes a good balance between an intriguing mystery and inspiring, no-holds-barred social commentary about sex education, homophobia, consent, and integrity. Copyright 2019 Horn Book Guide Reviews.
- **Kirkus:** When a secret admirer becomes a stalker, how much will Jack give up to make it stop? Everyone at 17-year-old Jack Rothman's private New York City high school knows he's gay and that he has a lot of sex (though the gossip is often far juicier than the reality). When Jack, a white boy, starts getting pink origami love notes in his locker, he and his besties, Latinx Jenna and African-American Ben (who is also gay), speculate on who they might be from; but they are far more focused on Jack's agreeing to write an "anonymous" advice column for Jenna's news blog and partying. Jack keeps subsequent notes a secret when they start threatening Jenna, Ben, and Jack's mom. Only when the stalker's threats become explicit does he tell, and the trio start investigating. As the creep factor rises and the investigation falters, Jack realizes he will have to do something drastic to save the ones he loves. The only weakness in Rosen's racy mystery-cum-sex manual is the deus ex machina discovery of the culprit. The characters are believable in their milieu of privilege. Jack's frank (and responsible) advice in his columns may not be for the easily shocked, but it's related as if from a peer. Booze, smoking, explicit language, and pot use make this one for mature readers. A sex-positive and thoughtful romp with humor and heart. (Fiction. 15-18) Copyright Kirkus 2018 Kirkus/BPI Communications. All rights reserved.
- **VOYA:** Jack Rothman is a seventeen-year-old high school student who is out and proud. He loves sex and is not ashamed of it. However, when asked by his friend Jenna to write a sex-advice column for her blog, he is hesitant at first. He finally agrees, as long as he is not identified as the author. After the first article is uploaded, Jack begins to receive anonymous notes in his locker. He initially thinks the notes could be from a secret admirer, but then the notes take a dark turn. This secret admirer becomes a stalker, knowing intimate details about Jack and threatening to hurt people Jack loves if he does not follow through with their demands. With the help of his friends and his supportive mother, Jack works to identify the stalker and determine why he or she is targeting him. This book talks about sex and queer sex in a positive, open way through great pacing and character development. Another plus is the genuine and unique relationship between Jack and his friends. And for a young adult book, it is refreshing to have a positive relationship between a teen and parent. Readers will also enjoy the emails Jack receives for the advice column, his responses, and

the group chats among his friends. One downside of the book is the plot line involving the stalker. It is creepy at times, and when the stalker is finally revealed, it wraps up too quickly, with too many unanswered questions. — Allison Richmond 3Q 2P S Copyright 2019 Voya Reviews.

- **Publisher's Weekly:** Being gay and out, given to wearing eye makeup, and having a pretty active sex life—although not nearly as active as the rumor mill insinuates—means that Jack is already pretty well-known at his New York high school. But when he starts writing a personal, detailed, and sex-positive advice column for his friend Jenna's blog, his public profile rises, and attention from his secret admirer turns increasingly controlling and threatening. The principal refuses to take action, blaming the situation on Jack's being provocative, so Jack, Jenna, and their friend Ben decide to find the stalker themselves. The forced stalker plot and its outcome disappoint, but Rosen (*The Memory Wall*) creates memorable protagonists and brings a fresh, frank voice to his YA debut. The ethnically diverse, authentic characters model multiple approaches to being gay and being sexually active (or not), and though the affluent private-school milieu seems a little made for TV, Jack's efforts as a high school Dan Savage feel genuinely helpful and important. Ages 14–up. Agent: Joy Tutela, David Black Literary. (Oct.)

Irving Public Library
Reconsideration of Materials
Ad Hoc Staff Review Committee Report
***Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts)* by L.C. Rosen**

The Ad Hoc Staff Review Committee, consisting of librarians Kristin Treviño, Rachel Feltenberger, and Mandy Aguilar, met on Wednesday, July 14, 2021. All three committee members had read *Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts)* by L.C. Rosen prior to meeting. The members have also consulted professional and popular review sources, checked the current shelf locations, and reviewed the checkout statistics of the materials, as well as researching the holdings at other area libraries.

The Committee discussed the book in accordance with the Library's Reconsideration of Materials Policy and the criteria for reconsideration therein.

Recommendation

It is our opinion, as professional librarians, that this book should remain in the collection of the Irving Public Library at its current shelf locations. Its retention is in line with our Collection Development Policy (attached to this memo in its entirety), specifically, the parts excerpted below. Removing this book would be in violation of our library policies. It has positive reviews from both professional and popular review sources (below) and has observable literary and cultural value. It is of interest to our residents and should remain in the collection.

Consistency with the Library's Collection Development Policy

The committee found *Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts)* to be consistent with the Library's Collection Development Policy. The committee discussed several specific parts of the policy, noted below with the committee's notes.

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- The committee firmly agreed that individuals have the right to decide whether or not this book is an appropriate or desirable choice for reading material for themselves or their children.
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 - Parents may or may not choose to restrict their children from reading *Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts)*. However, the Library does not make that choice for parents.
- The Library will provide materials for all members of the community the library serves without exclusion. Diversity will be pursued by providing materials for all ages and educational levels, in as many subject fields as possible, including alternative and/or opposing viewpoints, and by providing a variety of materials reflective of the diversity existing in our culture and society.
 - The inclusion of this book falls in line with providing materials for all members of the community without exclusion. Other books in our teen collection reflect differing viewpoints.
- Quality will be pursued by the application of the professional discretion and standards established by the library profession and through the use of appropriate selection aids, such as reviews in professionally recognized periodicals, standard bibliographies, booklists, and recommendations by recognized authorities.
 - The Committee gathered and read the professional reviews that were used as selection aids when this book was selected for inclusion. The committee agreed that, based on the selection aids available, this book was appropriately selected for inclusion in the teen collection.

Cultural and/or Literary Significance and Quality

The Committee agreed that *Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts)* demonstrated equitable quality with other mainstream YA literature. *Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts)* is a coming-of-age story that revolves around a blackmailing mystery at a New York private school with a diverse cast of characters. Main character Jack writes a sex advice column for a popular blog, and his sex-positive advice focuses on consent, safe sex, and self-acceptance.

Audience for the Material

After reading the book, the Committee members concluded that this novel was written with a teenage audience in mind. It features many hallmarks that differentiate young adult literature from adult literature: a teen protagonist and cast of mostly teen characters, a story told from the viewpoint and in the voice of a teenager, and a focus on teen situations and emotions. Like most teen novels, it deals with adversity, change, and personal growth. It is fast-paced and of a similar length to other contemporary or realistic YA novels. Based on these qualities, the

Committee agreed that shelving this book in the teen collection was the correct choice. Furthermore, eight other libraries in the Dallas/Fort Worth area also have physical copies of this book in their collections, and in each case, it is shelved in the teen collection. The publisher has also categorized this book as a young adult book.

Circulation History and Customer Requests for the Material

The Committee reviewed the circulation history for this book. There were a total of six circulations for this book prior to the Committee checking it out for review: four in 2019, one in 2020, and one in 2021. Compared to other books in the teen collection, this is not a very popular book, though the prior circulations do demonstrate interest. There are currently five holds for this title in our system.

Professional Review and Awards

Professional reviews for this book were overwhelmingly positive. The Committee read reviews from Booklist, School Library Journal, The Horn Book, Kirkus Reviews, VOYA, and Publisher's Weekly (see below). The book also appeared on the following lists: The Guardian's Best Books of the Year, American Library Association's Rainbow Book List Top 10, Barnes and Noble's Favorite YA of 2018, Booklist's Top 10 Crime Fiction for Youth, and Book Riot Best of the Month.

- **Booklist:** *Starred Review* Tales get bigger in the retelling, but generally what people say about Jack is true: he gets laid a lot. His private New York high school is pretty liberal, but out gay kids are still the minority, and Jack is often the subject of his classmates' gossip and, occasionally, vitriol. When his friend convinces him to write a sex-advice column for her website, Jack reluctantly starts to get into it. But then the letters arrive. Initially, they're just creepy-ish fan notes, but soon they get threatening, demanding he change his lifestyle and tone down his persona. With the school unwilling to help (the principal suggests Jack was asking for something like this), it's up to Jack and his friends to find the blackmailer—or give in. This is a bold, inclusive exploration of teen sexuality that, propelled by Jack's brazen voice, never feels preachy. Jack doles out sex tips to teens of all orientations, but he also advises those who aren't sure about sex at all and checks a group of girls more interested in gay men as props than as people. Most sex happens off-page, although language and the prep-school party scene make this best suited for older readers. The mystery adds truly compelling drama, and if things wrap up too neatly, it hardly matters next to all that Rosen gets right. Fresh, sex-positive, and unabashedly entertaining. Grades 10-12. Copyright 2018 Booklist Reviews.
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his locker, and soon they turn from playful to threatening. Jack begins to shrink into himself until he is barely recognizable to his friends and classmates. This sex-positive story is interspersed with the emails Jack's advice column receives, his responses to those questions, group chats among Jack and his two friends, as well as the eerie letters he gets in his locker. An upbeat, conversational writing style makes this story move quickly, and the understandably creepy atmosphere surrounding the unwanted notes is punctuated by his adventures with his friends, supportive relationship with his mother, and sexual exploits. VERDICT The dearth of sex-positive YA literature—particularly sex-positive queer literature—makes this book an essential addition to library collections that serve teens.—Jenni Frencham, formerly at Columbus Public Library, WI Copyright 2018 School Library Journal.

- **Hornbook:** Jack, an out-and-proud queer seventeen-year-old, receives anonymous love notes from an obsessive admirer, who then blackmails Jack after he starts writing an online teen-sex-advice column. This sex-positive, unapologetic celebration of the gay community strikes a good balance between an intriguing mystery and inspiring, no-holds-barred social commentary about sex education, homophobia, consent, and integrity. Copyright 2019 Horn Book Guide Reviews.
- **Kirkus:** When a secret admirer becomes a stalker, how much will Jack give up to make it stop? Everyone at 17-year-old Jack Rothman's private New York City high school knows he's gay and that he has a lot of sex (though the gossip is often far juicier than the reality). When Jack, a white boy, starts getting pink origami love notes in his locker, he and his besties, Latinx Jenna and African-American Ben (who is also gay), speculate on who they might be from; but they are far more focused on Jack's agreeing to write an "anonymous" advice column for Jenna's news blog and partying. Jack keeps subsequent notes a secret when they start threatening Jenna, Ben, and Jack's mom. Only when the stalker's threats become explicit does he tell, and the trio start investigating. As the creep factor rises and the investigation falters, Jack realizes he will have to do something drastic to save the ones he loves. The only weakness in Rosen's racy mystery-cum-sex manual is the deus ex machina discovery of the culprit. The characters are believable in their milieu of privilege. Jack's frank (and responsible) advice in his columns may not be for the easily shocked, but it's related as if from a peer. Booze, smoking, explicit language, and pot use make this one for mature readers. A sex-positive and thoughtful romp with humor and heart. (Fiction. 15-18) Copyright Kirkus 2018 Kirkus/BPI Communications. All rights reserved.
- **VOYA:** Jack Rothman is a seventeen-year-old high school student who is out and proud. He loves sex and is not ashamed of it. However, when asked by his friend Jenna to write a sex-

advice column for her blog, he is hesitant at first. He finally agrees, as long as he is not identified as the author. After the first article is uploaded, Jack begins to receive anonymous notes in his locker. He initially thinks the notes could be from a secret admirer, but then the notes take a dark turn. This secret admirer becomes a stalker, knowing intimate details about Jack and threatening to hurt people Jack loves if he does not follow through with their demands. With the help of his friends and his supportive mother, Jack works to identify the stalker and determine why he or she is targeting him. This book talks about sex and queer sex in a positive, open way through great pacing and character development. Another plus is the genuine and unique relationship between Jack and his friends. And for a young adult book, it is refreshing to have a positive relationship between a teen and parent. Readers will also enjoy the emails Jack receives for the advice column, his responses, and the group chats among his friends. One downside of the book is the plot line involving the stalker. It is creepy at times, and when the stalker is finally revealed, it wraps up too quickly, with too many unanswered questions. — Allison Richmond 3Q 2P S Copyright 2019 Voya Reviews.

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Area Library Holdings

20 Largest cities in Dallas/Fort Worth area, in descending order by city size

Jack of Hearts (and other parts)	Own	Collection	# of Physical Copies
Dallas	Yes	Teen	6
Fort Worth	Yes	Teen	2
Arlington	Yes	Teen	2

Plano	No	*	*
Garland	Yes	Teen	1
Irving	Yes	Teen	2
Grand Prairie	Yes	Teen	1
McKinney	No	*	*
Mesquite	No	*	*
Frisco	No	*	*
Carrollton	No	*	*
Denton	Yes	Teen	2
Richardson	Yes	Teen	2
Lewisville	Yes	Teen	2
Allen	No	*	*
Flower Mound	No	*	*
N. Richland Hills	No	*	*
Euless	No	*	*
Desoto	No	*	*
Grapevine	No	*	*