

2015 Downs Award given to HP Kids Read

The group [HP Kids Read](#) is the 2015 recipient of the [Robert B. Downs Intellectual Freedom Award](#), given by the faculty of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and cosponsored by Libraries Unlimited.

HP Kids Read was formed in 2014 by parents of students at Highland Park (TX) High School in response to challenges by other parents to several books in the school's curriculum, including *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls, *The Working Poor: Invisible In America* by David K. Shipler, *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison, *Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse, *The Art of Racing in the Rain* by Garth Stein, *An Abundance of Katherines* by John Green, and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie.

HP Kids Read promotes academic excellence and defends the role of experts, such as teachers and librarians, to select diverse reading materials that challenge their students to think critically, teach them empathy, and prepare them for the challenges of adulthood. They have done this by collaborating with teachers and advocating for policies at the level of the individual student that prevent a small group of parents from altering the curriculum for all students.

"This is the most effective parent group I have ever encountered," said Barbara Jones, nominator and director of the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom. "To me, this is the ideal model of parent/student/librarian/teacher/administration collaboration to support the freedom to read. It is not an absolutist position, but one that allows for parents to choose for their own child but not for other children."

In support of Robert B. Downs and his efforts, Libraries Unlimited honors award recipients each year by providing an honorarium and cosponsoring an awards reception held during the midwinter meeting of the American Library Association (ALA). The reception to honor HP Kids Read will be held on Saturday, January 9, 2016, from 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. in room Flagship A of the Seaport Hotel at One Seaport Lane, Boston.

The Robert B. Downs Intellectual Freedom Award is given annually to acknowledge individuals or groups who have furthered the cause of intellectual freedom, particularly as it affects libraries and information centers and the dissemination of ideas. Granted to those who have resisted censorship or efforts to abridge the freedom of individuals to read or view materials of their choice, the award may be in recognition of a particular action or long-term interest in, and dedication to, the cause of intellectual freedom. The award was established in 1969 by the GSLIS faculty to honor Downs, a champion of intellectual freedom, on his twenty-fifth anniversary as director of the school.

With Libraries Unlimited, an imprint of ABC-CLIO, assuming cosponsorship of the award in 2012, ABC-CLIO has been dedicated to supporting the Downs Award for more than thirty years. As a publisher committed to advancing library professional development and independent critical thought, Libraries Unlimited and the entire ABC-CLIO family are strong advocates of intellectual freedom rights and the dissemination of all ideas. GSLIS is very honored to share sponsorship with Libraries Unlimited and appreciates the contributions it and the other imprints of ABC-CLIO have made in defending intellectual freedom through the years. For a list of the prior award recipients, visit the [Downs Intellectual Freedom Award web page](#).