

**Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee, I am Keith Boehm
the Senator from District 33.**

I stand before you to introduce senate bill 2278 which addresses a matter of vital importance to the preservation of knowledge and history in our state: the retention of original library materials.

This bill calls for a comprehensive study to explore whether state-maintained libraries, including those in our educational institutions, should retain copies of books and written materials in their original form, even when publishers release updated versions with modernized language.

Let me begin by acknowledging a fundamental truth: language evolves, and society progresses. These are positive and necessary aspects of cultural growth. Updates to language can make texts more inclusive, relevant, and accessible to contemporary audiences. However, these updates should not come at the expense of preserving the original context in which these works were created.

Consider, for example, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain. This classic has been both lauded and criticized for its portrayal of race and its use of language that is deeply offensive by today's standards. Some modern editions of the book have replaced racially charged terms with less inflammatory language. While this can make the book more palatable to contemporary readers, it also changes the historical lens through which we understand the societal norms and prejudices of Twain's time.

Another example comes from the works of Roald Dahl. Recently, new editions of his beloved children's books, such as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, were edited to remove language deemed insensitive. While the changes aimed to make the stories more inclusive, they sparked a global debate about censorship, historical accuracy, and the preservation of an author's original intent.

If we lose access to the original versions of these works, we risk losing a vital record of our cultural and historical evolution. These texts—unaltered and in their original form—offer us invaluable insights into the ideas, struggles, and values of the past, even when they challenge or contradict today's norms.

Furthermore, this study will examine the growing role of artificial intelligence in updating and modifying library materials. AI technologies are increasingly being used to rewrite or adapt texts for modern audiences. While AI offers exciting possibilities for efficiency and innovation, it also raises important questions about transparency, accuracy, and historical integrity.

For instance, if an AI model rewrites a historical text to remove "outdated" language or ideas, how do we ensure that the revisions are faithful to the author's intent? How do we prevent the erasure of important historical contexts, even if they are uncomfortable? And most importantly, how do we guard against a future where AI-driven changes make it difficult—or even impossible—to access original materials?

This is not a matter of choosing between progress and preservation. It is about striking a balance. By initiating this study, we can develop thoughtful policies that respect both our heritage and our future. North Dakota's libraries have long been trusted keepers of knowledge, and it is our responsibility to ensure they remain so for generations to come.

As legislators, we have a duty to safeguard the resources that inform and educate our citizens, and to make decisions that uphold the integrity of the historical record. I believe this bill represents a step in that direction.

I ask for your support in moving this bill forward. Together, we can ensure that North Dakota's libraries remain institutions of learning, discovery, and truth, preserving the richness of our past while embracing the promise of our future.

Thank you. I stand for questions