

7-15-2003

## UNH Professors Agree Harry Potter Has a Place in Public Schools

Erika L. Mantz

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.unh.edu/news>

---

### Recommended Citation

Mantz, Erika L., "UNH Professors Agree Harry Potter Has a Place in Public Schools" (2003). *UNH Today*. 1947.  
<https://scholars.unh.edu/news/1947>

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Administrative Offices at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Media Relations by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact [nicole.hentz@unh.edu](mailto:nicole.hentz@unh.edu).

## UNH Professors Agree Harry Potter Has a Place in Public Schools

Contact [Erika L. Mantz](#)  
UNH News Bureau  
603-862-1567

July 15, 2003

---

DURHAM, N.H. -- Public school children are in no danger from the likes of Quidditch hero Harry Potter, say two University of New Hampshire education professors. And recent court decisions upholding the right of educators to use texts like the popular fantasy books in their classroom is important for teachers struggling to keep children reading.

In "Harry Potter, Wizards, and Muggles: The First Amendment and the Reading Curriculum," published in a recent issue of Education Law Reporter, UNH professors John Carney and Todd DeMitchell argue - backed up by two circuit appeals court rulings - that constitutional challenges to the inclusion of fantasy stories in public school classrooms are misguided. Potter and his cohorts are helping many children enjoy reading.

"Fantasy is part of the child's world," the two professors say. "Teachers use a rich source of genres and characters to entice and sustain student interest in reading. Educators should not easily give up those tools that may help children just because someone disagrees with their decision."

Carney says that "it is often a challenge for teachers to find books that will motivate poor readers. The Harry Potter series is an example of how highly engaging literature - whether it be fiction or fantasy - can foster an interest in reading by even the most reluctant readers."

Worldwide sales of the Harry Potter books have topped 190 million in more than 200 countries. The bespectacled boy's adventures are read in more than 45 languages. In the United States, there is one Harry Potter book for every four people. That's 80 million.

Data from the American Library Association for the years 1999-2001 indicate that the Harry Potter series topped the list of most challenged books three years in a row.

Challenges to the series' inclusion in school curricula or libraries

center on the books' purported promotion of the occult through a positive portrayal of wizardry and magic.

In the two cases looking at censorship, the courts held that "parents simply do not have a constitutional right to control each and every aspect of their children's education and oust the state's authority over that subject." The use of fantasy, similar to Harry Potter, passes constitutional muster.

Carney, who is a faculty member in the department's reading program, says that public school curriculum is a hot topic, and that the role of Harry Potter in it is indicative of the importance of the public school curriculum and the struggle to control it. What is taught matters.

"It is not so much that Harry Potter is important; rather, it is the way in which we address and resolve the issue of Harry's place in our curriculum that is important," he says.

[Back to UNH News Bureau](#)