

TO: PARMLY BILLINGS LIBRARY BOARD

**FROM: BILL COCHRAN, LIBRARY DIRECTOR
DEE ANN REDMAN, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**

RE: STATEMENT OF CONCERN ABOUT *SECRETARY*

MEETING DATE: FEBRUARY 14, 2013

Attached is a "Statement of Concern About Library Resources" submitted by Adria Riggles.

STATEMENT REQUEST

Ms. Riggles states that she viewed the beginning of this DVD. She described the film as having a lot of sexual content. She asks that the Library take it off of the shelf.

BACKGROUND

Secretary is a 2002 film directed by Steven Shainberg, starring Maggie Gyllenhaal and James Spader. A smart and somewhat eccentric woman in her twenties returns to her hometown in Florida after a brief stay in a mental hospital. Trying to escape from her troubling home life, she starts to date an old friend, and then takes a job as a secretary in a one-man law practice. She quickly develops an obsessive crush on her boss. Through their strange relationship, she follows her deepest longings using masochism into a place of self-affirmation.

The film received generally favorable reviews, with universal praise for lead Maggie Gyllenhaal. *Newsweek* said "'Secretary' manages to be simultaneously subversive and sweet ... sadomasochism may leave you utterly cold, but the movie's surprising warmth is hard to resist." *New York Magazine* commended it for "a quirky, captivating style, yet never losing sight of the darkness of the material." Negative reviews usually found the seriocomic film's tone off-putting. *SF Gate* said the film was "a story about two people we're expected to snicker at, and then ultimately endorse. But endorsing is not the same as caring."

The film was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award as Best Feature, and Maggie Gyllenhaal was nominated for a Golden Globe for Best Actress – Comedy or Musical. The film was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival, and won a Special Jury Prize there for originality.

This film was rated R for strong sexuality, some nudity, depiction of behavioral disorders and language.

The Library acquired the film in February 2009. In those four years, *Secretary* has checked out 81 times. According to the worldcat.org database, there are 3 public libraries in Montana and 315 around the United States carrying *Secretary*.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Ms. Riggles asks that the DVD be taken off of the shelf.

The DVD case does not show overtly sexual images, and the description of the film is a bit coy, which could be misleading to the casual observer. But there are snippets from reviews describing it as “sexy” and “quirkily erotic”, as well as the rating description to indicate to the browser that this film is on a mature topic. This film is definitely not to everyone’s taste, but it has been positively reviewed nationally and has been checked out of the library almost continually, indicating ongoing local interest.

Staff recommends that the Board retain the DVD into the adult collection.