Annotated Bibliography

The United States incarcerate more people every year than any other nation in the developed world. Prisons and jails are the primary weapon against crime and drug abuse. Educational support programs that might prevent crime and subsequent incarceration have been cut.

But penitentiaries are no longer just places where criminals are held securely. Rehabilitation and education play an important role in many detention facilities.

If information professionals believe in the right for everyone to have access to information needed to make informed decisions, then this right should not stop at the gates of jail and prisons. It is necessary to take a closer look at existing standards and philosophies towards library services for the incarcerated and think about how to improve them.

This bibliography provides resources that describe library services to prisoners and highlights the importance and challenges of professional library and information services in correctional settings.

American Library Association (2007). Federal prisons to return religious books.

*American Libraries* (online version)*.* http://www.ala.org/ala/alonline/currentnews/ newsarchive/2007/september2007/prisonsclp.cmf. Retrieved 13 June 2009.

This article, posted on the web site of *American Libraries*, describes the Standardized Chapel Library Project initiated by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. It strives to restrict religious books to 150 titles per denomination in an attempt to limit the spread of radical Islamic material. The choice of authors seems arbitrary. It includes authors such as T.D. Jakes and N.T. Wright but excludes the book *Jesus of Nazareth* written by Pope Benedict. American Library Association President Loriene Roy pointed out that the removed publications may help prisoners to rethink and change their lives and is therefore counterproductive to the idea of rehabilitation. Working in a prison library I can confirm that a lot of prisoners find comfort in reading religious material. I agree that militant and radical material should not find its way into a prison library due to security concerns. But purging hundreds of books related to a specific denomination just because one piece of literature presents extreme views is not consistent with the ideals of democracy. If we were to restrict sensitive publications and be prepared to defend this action, people in charge have to think about better ways to do so.

Asher, C. (2006). Interlibrary loan outreach to a prison: Access inside. *Journal of Interlibrary*

*Loan, Document Delivery & Information Supply, 16,* 27-33.

In his article, Asher presents his view on college courses in prison and the difficulty to access research material. In his position as interlibrary loan coordinator for the Stiern library at the California State University he is responsible for an outreach program serving the Taft Correctional Institute. The author claims that correctional libraries often cater to recreational readers and GED candidates than to college students. Access to computers is restricted, and prison administrators are far from allowing internet access. Although education and rehabilitation efforts are promoted, they are always secondary to controlling the inmate population. Asher argues that academic libraries should be encouraged to develop interlibrary loan programs to help prisoners who want to educate themselves.

This article is important to my research as it introduces the idea of collaboration

between prisons and academic libraries. It provides grounds for further

research such as the number of prisons that already have an interlibrary program in place. Although I believe that these programs are valuable for inmates, it might not be feasible to implement them in every facility. Security levels, book theft and destruction are of major concern. A good alternative would be mail correspondence classes, i.e. offered by the Ohio University. For these classes the student receives the necessary study material via mail.

Bashore, M. L. (203). Behind adobe walls and iron bars: The Utah territorial penitentiary

library. *Libraries & Culture*, *38*, 236-249.

Melvin L. Bashore, senior librarian at the Church History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, presents the story of the library at the Utah Territorial Penitentiary in 1879. His article is based on detailed inmate writings and offers a glimpse of the educational and intellectual life on a unique inmate population. The library was not established by prison officials but by Mormon inmates who yearned for education and knowledge. This article is very helpful for me as it demonstrates the need for information while being incarcerated. It also counters the prejudice that inmates in general are stupid and not interested in gaining knowledge. It raises the question whether a library should be founded on religious grounds. This may limit the resources that are available to whatever is acceptable to the founder’s religion. Libraries should provide unbiased access to information, even to sensitive material that might be of interest to one person but might offend another (i.e. religious or political literature).

Bouchard, J., Winnicki, A. (2000). You found what in a book? Contraband Control in the prison

library. *Library & Archival Security, 16,* 57-61.

This article examines the work environment and duties of correctional librarians when working with incarcerated offenders. Additionally to their traditional duty of providing meaningful information services, they are also obligated to control the inmate populations’ use and spreading of contraband. The term contraband describes all items inmates are forbidden to acquire, possess and trade, according to the facility’s policies and regulations. Libraries are preferred places to hide and exchange contraband. Library supplies make excellent parts for weapons and other items that might compromise the security. Correctional librarians must be aware and remain on alert while inmates visit the library. Failure to comply with security standards can result in disciplinary actions or in staff members getting hurt.

This article, although not directly related to the importance of library services to inmates, is valuable as it demonstrates the unique work environment for correctional librarians. Everyone involved in the planning process must exercise caution when setting up a library within the secure perimeter. Furniture and supplies must be chosen mindfully as these items can be destroyed and/or used for other purposes. Library staff must receive careful and extensive training, and must be aware that they need to adapt their reference and research skills in order to provide good service without ignoring security measures.

Bouchard, J., Kunze, L. (2003). Teaching diverse students in a corrections setting with assistance

from the library. *Journal of Correctional Education, 54,* 66-9.

Bouchard and Kunze emphasize the role of correctional libraries in partnership with educational staff. Because of the nature of detention facilities, teachers have to deal with people who do not want to participate. However, classes are often mandatory; students who refuse to participate are subject to disciplinary actions. Teachers must therefore not only educate effectively, but also make sessions interesting. Cultural diversity can become a problem if teachers use only educational material that appeals to white Americans. This is where the library as a partner comes into play. Librarians are trained to assess and provide information that is appropriate for groups consisting of members with different cultural heritage. Library staff might also be able to maximize the budget and help planning the curriculum.

This article encourages the reader to think about other possible collaborations between librarians and teachers. It also gives a broad overview of planning steps that both the library and the school have to take in order to ensure a fun, educational and secure environment for inmates and staff. From my own experience I know that inmates who experience the library as a welcoming place enjoy coming back and want to learn what the library has to offer.

Deacon, J. (2006). Throwing the books at them – Lots of books. Montgomery County’s

correctional facility library. *American Jails, 20,* 25-8.

In her article, Joan Deacon, a correctional librarian, describes the relationship between public and correctional libraries. The author’s philosophy is that just because people are locked up, they should not be locked out from services that can help them to successfully re-enter the community. Of great interest to me is the pilot project that is described in this text: Collaboration between the prison, some city departments such as Health and Human Services, and the Department of Public Libraries. Inmates who are to be released soon are issued a temporary Reentry Identification Card. Valid for 60 days, this card enables ex-offenders to use services offered by the departments above. Prior to their release, they receive information about their card from the prison librarian. Most released inmates might never find their way to public departments or libraries simply because they are left alone right after their release. The prison librarian acts as a liaison between the library “on the inside” and the public library. I believe that the prison and the public library act as a bridge between life in prison and life in a community. It makes me wonder if there are other comparable programs out there.

Futcher, G. (2008). How Literacy programmes help rehabilitate young offenders. *The New*

*Zealand Library & Information Management Journal, 51*, 50-9.

This article describes the current state of literacy among young offenders in New

Zealand and overseas, and suggests a connection between incarceration, recidivism, and literacy. The author introduces literacy programs employed in the United States and England, and lists several studies that report a positive relationship between educational participation and reduced recidivism. The author’s main concern is the high recidivism rate of young offenders. Structured programs that focus on changing an offender’s attitude and beliefs are in place, but change is unlikely to occur unless someone believes in the offender and his ability to change. Although this article is mainly concerned with education, librarians as service providers can help promoting a positive attitude towards reading and obtaining information, which can turn into knowledge and confidence. Libraries play an important role in providing material for literacy classes, assist teachers in their selection, offer a welcoming atmosphere to new readers and spark their interest in various types of literature. I was pleased to see that the author mentioned the project *Changing Lives through Literature*. I have implemented the core ideas of this program at my workplace while planning a book club for inmates with minimum security status and have seen that this program does not only work for teens but also for adults.

Gilman, I. (2008). Beyond books: Restorative Librarianship in juvenile detention centers. *Public*

*Libraries, 47*, 59-66.

In his article, Gilman, an access/instructional services liaison at the Pacific

University Library in Oregon, introduces correctional libraries as integral partners of juvenile courts. He believes that libraries should expand their mission beyond literacy and recreational reading. To do so, it is necessary to understand the court’s mission, identify library strengths that can support this mission and find solution for possible challenges that might harm a successful partnership. According to Gilman, it is common perception held by communities, teens and even some correctional staff that a library’s most important function is to provide books to “pass time”. As rehabilitation becomes increasingly important, correctional librarians and prison administrators need to rethink the library’s role. By working directly with the teens, offenders can focus on restorative outcomes and assist the courts in their rehabilitation efforts. Inmates can discuss choices made by fictional characters, outcomes and consequences. They can use this cognitive knowledge to their advantage by evaluating thought patterns, habits and choices they made. This article made me consider the role of today’s librarians. Education and information services increasingly overlap. Prison staff and librarians need to consider their positions, adapt facility policies and protocols and most of all need to reconsider their idea of what a prison library and its staff truly has to offer.

Lehman, V. (2000). Prison librarians needed: A challenging career for those with the right

professional and human skills. *IFLA Journal, 26*, 123-8.

Vibeke Lehman is the Library Services and Education Technology Coordination for the Department of Corrections in Madison, Wisconsin. In this article she introduces the historic and current role of prison libraries in the United States, Canada, and Western Europe and today’s purpose of incarceration. She then focuses on skills and aptitudes a successful correctional librarian should possess. In a setting that strives to balance public safety and offender rehabilitation, librarians need to have 1) the necessary qualifications in library science and 2) the ability to work effectively in the prison environment. This includes following policies and procedures, treating every inmate the same way (firm, fair, and consistent) and being able to manage the entire library, sometimes just with the help of inmate assistants who need constant supervision. This article provides valuable insight in what the correctional environment demands from a librarian. There are many similarities to public libraries (i.e. collection development according to the community’s needs), but applicants must be prepared to accept certain restrictions. Censorship is one of these touchy subjects. Certain materials pose a threat to security and are therefore not allowed to be added to the collection. Generally true-crime books and magazines that display nudity are considered inappropriate, but the prison system lacks guidelines regarding this issue. Therefore this kind of censorship often happens arbitrarily.

Lehman, V. (2003). Planning and implementing prison Libraries: Strategies and resources. *IFLA*

*Journal*, *29*, 301-7.

In her article, Ms. Lehman, who is responsible for the administration of 29 libraries in correctional and psychiatric facilities, presents the results of a workgroup who researched the current status and level of development of prison library services. Researchers gathered data from facilities in North America, Europe, Australia and a few countries in Africa and Latin America. The level of development varies widely. Countries with a long history of service to prisoners have adapted standards or guidelines. But in many countries there is little public understanding and government support for incarcerated offenders. In these countries the idea that prisoners have rights is not widely accepted. The concept of education and rehabilitation for offenders is unheard of, let alone the right to read and freely access information. This article is important to my research in two ways. Firstly it provides a broad view on the level of development of prison libraries in different countries and highlights the gap that exists in regards to the treatment and confinement of offenders. Secondly it enforces critical thinking about educational strategies and how they could be used to educate other countries that do not yet support rights for prisoners.

MacArthur, B. (2005). Books as solace in captivity. *Logos, 16*, 95-7.

Brian MacAuthur, British author of eight books and employed with the Daily

Telegraph, discusses the importance of books for Japanese prisoners between 1942 and 1945. Books were treasured. The mental disciplines of reading, thinking and writing kept their intellectual curiosity alive. Prisoners shared information and challenged each other by arguing different points. Reading was knowledge, and knowledge was power.

The same is true even 60 years after the war. Most inmates are thankful for the opportunity to read. Prisoners are bored, and this can provide the grounds to get them to read, which is not an easy task. Most don’t know what to read and don’t care to try something new. Or they simply don’t know that reading can be fun because they did not grow up with a family that treasured reading. All of those reasons pose challenges to correctional librarians. They need to think about ways to introduce prisoners to books. Librarians, teachers and counselors can cooperate to use the library and its services add educational value and rehabilitation opportunities to programs offered by the facility. This article also raises the questions of how much power we want inmates to have. They always try to play games and manipulate staff. Books that specifically describe manipulation methods might therefore be inappropriate in prison.

McCook, K.d l. P. (2004). Public libraries and people in jail. *Reference & User Services*

*Quarterly*, *44*, 26-30.

In her article, Kathleen McCook presents her view on library services to incarcerated people. As editor of *Reference & User Services Quarterly* she assesses library philosophies and standards used in the correctional setting. She presents an overview of the history of library services and how these are accomplished in various detention facilities around the country. The author’s main concern is that, although there are some articles providing insight in library programs for incarcerated, no comprehensive assessment of library services is available. There is not enough information and not enough is being done to improve the situation. Librarians should be encouraged to work in jails as they often open the door to literacy, critical thinking, reflection and the chance to participate in the life of democracy. This article helps me to understand the history of prison libraries. It also demonstrates the need to look at current standards and philosophies. Information professionals need to determine if they still appropriate or if they need to be changed to reflect the change penitentiaries are undergoing.

New York Times. (2005). Defendant denied access to prison library. *American Libraries, 36*, 11.

The article describes a ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court. It states that a defendant’s right to pretrial access to a law library is not covered under the Sixth Amendment to represent himself. According to the justices each defendant has the right to be represented by a lawyer who has unlimited access to legal material. Hence the state does not owe legal aid to offenders who chose to represent themselves. This article gives good reason to think about access to legal material in prisons. Inmates should have access to sentencing guidelines as well as the state and federal code, which governs the rights of imprisoned offenders. But it should be clear that prison libraries and self-representation have limitations. Publications available to inmates are limited, and access to online databases is non- existent. This limits the ability to research similar cases and court opinions. Furthermore law libraries and law librarians should not and cannot be seen as substitutes for public or private defenders. The administration of a prison has to carefully consider how the library and legal materials are presented to the inmates. It is imperative that they do not mistake the library and the staff for legal counselors.

Selnick, S. (2004). READ/Orange County: Changing lives through literacy. *Public Libraries, 43*,

53-6.

Selnick examines the successful implementation of a literacy program in Orange County. With help of the Orange County Public library, the program READ provides tutoring in English; ESL classes, it teaches reading, writing and speaking through family activities, and provides assistance in the county jails. The library understands that they need to serve the entire community to make an impact. This includes incarcerated citizens. Among private patrons, schools and other groups the county jails profit from the library’s engagement. According to Selnick, research shows that reconviction, re-arrest and re-incarceration rates are lower for inmates who had participated in a correctional education program. To assist in keeping recidivism low, the public library sends tutors to five county jails to provide one-on-one sessions. This article shows that it does not have to cost a lot or require an infinite amount of planning to make a difference. People who are willing to dedicate a few hours per week are welcome in most correctional facilities. Due to budget cuts some facilities might even have to rely on volunteers. It would be interesting to see how many jails and/or prisons in a certain state utilize volunteers to offer educational classes.

Shirley, G. L. (2003). Correctional Libraries, Library Standards, and Diversity. *Journal of*

*Correctional Education, 54*, 70-4.

The author Glennor Shirley, Coordinator for Correctional Education Libraries, is employed with the Maryland State Department of Education. In his article he presents the results of s survey conducted among prison librarians. The study focuses on how they cope with the increasing cultural diversity in prisons, how material is selected and how security concerns limit their ability for good services. The race and culture of inmates sometimes poses communication difficulties, some inmates have problems accepting female staff as authorities. Education programs are mostly designed for English-speaking inmates. Programs celebrating heritage are offered in some facilities, others argue that it may pose problems if one group is allowed to celebrate their culture while others are not. A major concern for librarians working in prisons is censorship. For security reasons the administration tries to ban certain books, a procedure which in violation of the Library Bill of Rights. It challenges my view that libraries, no matter in what setting, have the freedom to acquire material they deem appropriate. In prison libraries, the librarian may order the books, but the Warden or Superintendent might limit the selection due to security concerns.

Sutherland, T. (1997). Freedom in captivity. *Logos, 8,* 83-4.

The author Tom Sutherland was kidnapped in 1985, held prisoner in Beirut for six-and-a-half years. Shackled to a fellow prisoner, he had nearly no access to reading material for the first four years. He now holds a chair at the American University in Beirut. This article is an excerpt from his book *At Your Own Risk* describing the last two years of his captivity in which he was given the opportunity to read. Although this article does not describe library services to prisoners, I found it invaluable for my understanding of a prisoner’s mind. Professor Sutherland vividly describes what impact books had on his mind and his ability to cope with his situation. The books were his portal to the world. He read adventure books, mysteries, biographies, science books and more. Reading kept him from going insane; it kept his mind going and made him feel alive. I believe that a lot of prisoners might have the same feeling. Being locked away, with no real purpose, their daily lives dictated by the facilities schedule, they yearn for something that takes their mind off and takes their thoughts beyond the walls of their cell. This article is not concerned with the educational value of a correctional library, but with the fact that books literally provide freedom in captivity.

Wilhelmus, D. W. (1999). A new emphasis for correctional facilities’ libraries. *The Journal of*

*Academic Librarianship, 25,* 114-20.

In this article, Wilhelmus, director of a college program offered in the Indiana Women’s Prison, claims to examine problems that correctional librarians encounter while selecting academic materials to support college classes administered within the prison and making these materials accessible to inmate students. While reading this article, I had the impression that the author does not quite stay on track and presents a lot of details that eventually go astray and do not really support his thesis anymore.

However, this article, although several years old, proved valuable for my research for two reasons: 1) It shows that even in 1999 the need for education and rehabilitation in prisons was obvious. 2) Wilhelmus incorporates a quote from Charles Perrine, where the latter describe the role of a correctional library nearly perfectly. In his article *A Correctional Institution’s Library,* printed in the Wilson Library Bulletin 30 (1995), he promotes prison libraries as centers of cultural diversity. They ought to be staffed by library professionals rather than overworked education staff. This observation has even more validity nowadays as U. S. prisons and jails house inmates with a variety of cultural backgrounds.

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