

**THE ROLE OF THE PRISON LIBRARY  
IN THE REFORM AND  
REHABILITATION PROCESS**

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## CHAPTER 7

# RECREATIONAL USE OF THE PRISON LIBRARY

In Chapter 4, it was shown that the prison library can have an important rehabilitative role in supporting the work of the education department and can also be used as a resource by inmates themselves to assist in their self education. In Chapters 5 and 6, the importance of the library as an information provider was analysed. However, for many inmates, and indeed for many staff, the prison library is not seen primarily in these terms, but instead regarded as simply a recreational facility. For example, this library orderly considered that the library's main role was to help people develop fantasies in order to pass the time:

"People get books to fit themselves with a different world, they don't get books from the library to get knowledge from them. They just want fantasy. They know they're going to be banged up, so instead of sitting there with nothing, just the four walls, they'd rather be sitting there with a book, and if they read a 100 pages of that book, by that time it's association time. It takes a gap out of the day. That's another gap gone. And next thing you know, it's bang up, night time, read another 50 or so pages, it's 10 or 11 o'clock, time for bed, it's the day gone. That's how people look at it, and that's how they do it".

Similarly, this prison officer librarian argued:

"Basically it's here for blokes to borrow books for escapism. They come down, borrow a book, sit in their cell and then they can read and disappear into a world of their own".

### 7.1 THE DURATION OF READING

Recreational reading accounts for a significant part of many people's leisure time (Nell, 1988, p250). Most individuals find it uncomfortable to sit for longer than a few minutes with nothing to occupy them. For example, when people go on holiday, ostensibly with the objective of "doing nothing", they will often take a supply of books or magazines with them. Similarly, at airports, rail and coach stations, there are bookshops and newsagents, to provide people with the necessary reading matter to help sustain them through the one or two hour journey. Faced with a 10 year sentence therefore, it is perhaps not too surprising that many inmates will begin to read, as this prisoner recalled, in an interview conducted by Tony Parker:

"I'd never read a book in my life till I came here. So having a big sentence I thought I might as well start, and I've read hundreds now. Books have introduced me to all sorts of things I never knew existed - ideas, the way different people think about different things, music, art, religion, politics. A whole new world's woken up inside me. All my life before, I'd just been existing, not thinking or seeing or being aware of anything. It's exactly like being born or coming alive" (quoted in Snape and Curtis, 1980, p230).

Recreational reading certainly does play an important part in the lives of many inmates, and this was recognised in the Library Association Guidelines for Prison Libraries:

"The library stock should provide for and encourage recreational reading...Even those who think they have little use for reading have interests which could be extended and enhanced by the library service" (Library Association, 1981, p15).

Many inmates will spend long hours reading, as inmates who were interviewed for this study said:

"During the day it'll probably be about 2 hours, and 2 or 3 hours in the evening, so it's getting on for 5 hours in a 24 hour period. Yesterday, my cellmate and I were awake at 4, so we put the light on and we were both reading from 4 till 7 in the morning, just because we'd had enough sleep and we were awake, so we had a cup of tea and carried on reading" (Inmate, Prison H).

"Six o'clock till 8 in the evening we sit in a group in a cell and I'm always picking up something to read, there's always a magazine or something that catches your eye, so say half an hour in the evening there. Then dinner time, tea time, you've got another hour. So with the night as well, probably 6 or 7 hours a day. Some nights I'll pick up a book and it's that good, I'll start off at 8 o'clock at night and I'll still be there at 8 in the morning, and going to breakfast finishing it off" (Inmate, Prison J).

Furthermore, these 5 or 6 hours a day spent reading are not simply part of a sporadic exercise devised to fill up a two week holiday or a brief journey - this is a pattern of activity which will be replicated for months, and in some cases, even years. For many prisoners, this may be the first time they have read anything since they left school, and they now find themselves reading for long periods, during both the day and night.

## 7.2 THE BENEFITS OF READING

An important question to address is whether these long hours spent reading have any effect other than serving as a means to pass the time more pleasantly than gazing at the light bulb. Within the confines of a prison, there is often an unexpected link between motivation and consequence. For example, as noted in Chapter 4, with regard to participation in educational activities, prisoners often commenced an activity with no other objective than simply to kill boredom or pass the time, but in some cases genuine enthusiasms were awoken. And in the environment of a total institution, where all activity is constrained and controlled, the levels of interest shown in the limited number of outlets or opportunities which are available will tend to increase, as this inmate pointed out:

"A lot of people haven't got time for reading outside, reading is a chore, you've got your work to do during the day, you've got the telly to watch, conversation - if these kinds of inputs are taken away from you while you're in prison, you have to find another sort of input, and a lot of people gravitate to reading, and through that reading discover other interests they never thought they had. You've got time to catch up on things you thought you were only slightly interested in and can become more interesting when you're not in prison. It may have been something that's cropped up in the news - let's say Ireland. I'd say 9 out of 10 people wouldn't understand who the sides are in Ireland, what the struggle is about, what the problems are. Someone who's in prison, with time on their hands may pick up a book in the library, say "Harry's Game", read it and find it pertinent to the news on the telly at the moment and decide to read in to that subject more. From that point onwards, he'll have a greater understanding of something he hears every day. So in fact you may well find that a lot of prisoners will use a library, and rely on a library, far more than people on the outside do. And certainly, the majority of people will use the library while they are in prison and do things, look into things, read things, that they never would have dreamed of. They might not do it when they get back out again - it doesn't mean that every Friday night they are going to be nipping down the library, but you've still

got the fact that you've learned something from it while you've been inside" (Inmate, Prison D).

Furthermore, when such activities are taken up within prison, the impact that they make upon the individual may be heightened, as this governor pointed out:

"Books can confirm things, elaborate on things, so people can build a world view and develop values and beliefs. I think people model their views according to the number of variables within their life. I would argue that if you are in a prison environment, where a book is very important to you as a means of passing the time and enjoying yourself, then the reading experience could potentially be a much more intense experience" (Governor, Prison H).

Hence, inmates will do things in prison which they would never have done while at liberty, and do so with a vigour which they would never have imagined they possessed. The experience of imprisonment forces individuals to draw from their own inner resources. They have to find new ways to occupy their time - some draw, others paint, some make models from matches. Learning to make stuffed toys is often a particularly well attended class in the education department. Cooking classes too, are invariably very popular, although this may have more to do with the quality of the prison diet than any desire for self-improvement. Nevertheless the fact remains that these inmates, at least while they are in prison, are doing something new and which invites their active engagement. This governor argued that library use by inmates fell into a similar category:

"Prisoners use facilities in prison that they don't use outside, like the gymnasium. They use it to fill their time in, to enjoy what they're doing - when they get out, they'll never go near a gym or a keep-fit class again. And I think to some degree the library is a little like that. The only

thing one hopes is that the library will stimulate something inside them" (Governor, Prison E).

This inmate expressed a similar view, but argued that the benefits of library use tended to have more permanence than participation in gym activities:

"It's like a lot of them that go in the gym, I'm not saying all of them, but a lot go in to relieve boredom, and you find out that when they go out they never go anywhere near a gym. So at least when they're reading they're doing something constructive, so they can be increasing their vocabulary, their knowledge. And that stops with them forever. But fitness goes to flab" (Inmate, Prison C).

Baxendale, a former Chief Education Officer in the Prison Service, addressing a conference of prison librarians, expressed his belief in the "powerful influence" that books can have on inmates, and he concluded:

"The potential for change in prisoners is there, as in all of us. We cannot afford to ignore it" (Baxendale, 1985, p12).

Similarly, Heeks has identified several factors which inmates must address as part of their rehabilitation. He argued prisoners must attempt:

"to make sense of their lives so far, to frame an attitude towards imprisonment, to keep a link with the past, to use the present constructively, to sustain personal relationships, to find a credible self image, to plan a life outside prison" (Heeks, 1985, p39).

Heeks advocated that literature be utilised to help in these complex, individual learning tasks and that identifying the books that can meet these needs is "the essence of a librarian's work" (Heeks, 1985, p40).

Many other critics have also argued that recreational reading can help stimulate and facilitate this change process. Bacon, who himself was imprisoned for heresy, argued that reading was implicitly desirable because it promoted the development of the "full man" (quoted in Thompson, 1974, p47). Perrine has stated that fictional and biographical texts should be carefully selected for inclusion in prison libraries in order that "the inmate may gain some perception into ways of life previously beyond his sphere of knowledge" (Perrine, 1955, p249). Landheer has argued that the existence of a library and having the time to use it, are essential factors in the development of the human personality (Landheer, 1957, p248). Hendry has written that books can have a "catalytic effect" in awakening consciousness and reason (Hendry, 1984, p98-99). Gillies has expressed the view that novels can help individuals develop a deeper understanding of themselves and others (Gillies, 1988, p36). Murison has stated that "very often it will be much easier for a moral to be conveyed in fiction than in any other literary form" (Murison, 1988, p183). Nell has argued that escapist reading may have a cathartic effect, it can relieve stress, can assist in the development of coping strategies and it helps divert the individual from morbidity (Nell, 1988, p245). Usherwood and Hamshere have asserted that the reading of fiction offers insight through identification (Usherwood and Hamshere, 1993, p166). Furthermore, they argue that particular types or genres of reading matter are not inherently "better" or more "useful", from the reader's point of view, than any other. Allred has argued that fiction tests our theories even without our knowing, by providing new information and different perspectives



(Allred, 1995, p15). Van Riel has also argued in favour of the power of fiction to improve language skills and has stressed the value of vicarious experience through reading, whereby "individual attitudes are reinforced by, or defined against, alternative experiences" (Van Riel, 1993, p84).

These views were affirmed by a tutor, who argued that reading could benefit prisoners, even subliminally:

"It can only be beneficial. Even if it just improves basic things like spelling, actually seeing words written helps you to remember how they are spelt. Even if you only subconsciously assimilate it, it helps with the structure of sentences, their grammar and their speech. So even if they don't realise they're actually learning something while they're reading something, they will be. And it can open up your mind to the possibility of views other than your own. It can open your horizons. Certainly, people can change the way they behave when they leave here and reading must play some part" .

Finally, an inmate who was interviewed gave examples of how his diverse reading tastes, in different ways, enabled him to satisfy his overall need for a personal, intellectual challenge:

"Oh yeah, definitely. One I've just finished, a brilliant book, Umberto Eco, "Foucault's Pendulum" [1990, London:Picador]. "Name Of The Rose" [1983, London:Secker and Warburg], that's blinding as well. But the other one's brilliant. Right opened my eyes up. Sartre, he changed my life, but then I've read other books and they've changed it. Tolstoi, "Resurrection" [1966, London:Penguin], that was a book that changed my life. All sorts of books changed my life and opened my eyes. Even Batman, "Dark Night Returns", Frank Miller [Batman:The Dark Night Returns, 1986, London:Titan], graphic novel, that's blinding really. I won't read a rubbishy book, the Wilbur Smiths or anything like that. I won't entertain it. Don't like all them moody thrillers. I like a book, I like literature. For me, to class anything as literature, it's got to be educational, an eye opener, a mind opener, however you want to say it. Anything decent, I don't care, I'll read it".

### 7.3 CRITICISMS OF THE BENEFITS OF RECREATIONAL READING

Other critics have taken an opposing view, arguing that popular fiction is read as a soporific, in order to hold consciousness at bay, rather than to heighten it. This use of reading may nonetheless, have a role in the prison environment, and is discussed below (see 7.6). However, it is argued that literature read in this way can reinforce stereotypes, constrain moral awareness and limit knowledge because complex issues are reduced to simplistic, formulaic conventions (see O'Rourke, 1993).

Some respondents interviewed were totally opposed to the idea that recreational reading could be in any way rehabilitative. It was argued that inmates read principally to pass the time and the content of the material was of little importance and thus could have no positive effect. Others felt that too much recreational reading left no time for the inmate to reflect on his crimes. Some said that prison was the wrong environment in which to absorb new ideas or begin to challenge attitudes, or that people tended to read material which confirmed their prejudices rather than material which presented alternatives. Several respondents thought that positive change in an individual could not simply be induced through the written word alone. It was also argued that the stock of the prison library was limited to poor quality genre or "pulp" fiction. Finally, a point made many times was that the type of recreational reading favoured by many inmates could induce, or reinforce, further anti-social behaviour. In particular, true life crime books and books which glamourised the drug culture,

were identified by some respondents as being potentially harmful, particularly to young offenders:

"I've read books in the past as a youngster in prison - you're impressionable and you can read a good crime book and you think he's reached a stature in his community, of thieves or whatever, and you sort of emulate that. He's a role model for you, and you try and get where he is, and obviously you end up here. Because a young mind, you take on anything don't you - you look at it, read it, think "I want to be this guy. This is what I want to be" " (Inmate, Prison B).

"Certain books have influenced me, for better and for worse. Aldous Huxley, Carlos Castaneda, things like that - when you're reading books dedicated to drugs, sometimes you tend to think, oh well, it's OK, this guy has got the ability to write a book, and he's done all of this, it's an OK thing. So I think it can affect you for better and for worse" (Inmate, Prison C).

Not all those interviewed shared these views about the negative consequences of reading this kind of material. Some argued that those individuals who might possibly be influenced by a particular book would be likely to have sociopathic tendencies in any case, and furthermore, any attempts to control access to literature perceived as potentially harmful, would fail:

"I wouldn't say an Ed McBain book would reinforce the idea that you can go out on the street and kill a cop. It's inherent in the individual, it's not that they're picking up ideas by reading and then going out to try them. But if you try and cap what is to be seen, things go underground, sub-cultures. Then there's no control" (Inmate, Prison J).

The prisoner concluded:

"At the end of the day, they're reading about people who've been caught and are in prison, and they know exactly what that feels like".

## Evaluation

However, assessing conclusively the benefits, or otherwise, of fictional reading has so far proved impossible, primarily because of the subjectivity of the reading experience. Different people may read the same text and get very different things from it, for they interpret it through the filter of their own experiences, beliefs, values and attitudes:

"A prisoner who has low levels of concentration would probably benefit zero from reading 20 hours a day, whereas someone who can get lost in a book and has imagination, can use what he's reading in the book for his benefit" (Prison Officer, Prison K).

## 7.4 BIBLIOTHERAPY

As shown in Chapter 6, self-help material can sometimes be used to promote certain attitudinal and behavioural changes. Attempts have also been made to use fictional material in a similar way. Cohen and Taylor, for example, in their study of long-term prisoners, used books as a vehicle to initiate discussion among inmates about particular behavioural problems. They argued that 'literary identification' by inmates enabled them to provide "a more sensitive indication of the significance of the behaviour than would have been obtained from a general discussion of a topic" (Cohen and Taylor, 1981, p36).

However, instead of material being offered in a passive way to individuals, some critics have taken a more interventionist

approach, advancing the argument that controlled exposure to literature can be "a primary source of instruction and healing" (Schrank and Engels, 1981, p143). Through guided reading, it is believed that individuals may undergo three distinct experiences - identification, when readers identify with characters or situations, catharsis, a release of emotions and conflicts through discussion with others, and finally, insight, where individuals derive an awareness of their own motives and behaviours (Monroe, 1978, pp257-267). These processes have been collectively termed bibliotherapy. In the context of the rehabilitation of offenders, Brown has argued that:

"reading the right type of books may well change his thinking from schemes for revenge upon society for his incarceration to constructive thinking that 'crime does not pay' " (Brown, 1975, p152).

Floch has argued that the role of the librarian in bibliotherapy initiatives is one of the highest importance, in order that the most apposite selection of books is made. Furthermore, Floch has stated that works of fiction would comprise the majority of texts:

"Only fiction has the concrete and dramatic approach required for emotional conditioning...It would be the function of the librarian to digest a number of books and classify them with reference to the possible role they might play in group therapy" (Floch, 1952, p454-455).

Some attempts have been made to try and measure in a quantifiable way the changes which may occur in an individual after reading prescribed texts. Unfortunately, the evidence in support of bibliotherapy has often amounted to little more than an act of faith. Most of the attempts to prove its effectiveness within

correctional institutions have occurred as a result of research within the United States, and have "amounted to very soft science indeed", with few studies having any methodological rigour, and many drawing unfounded conclusions (Coyle, 1987, p46). It has been argued that because bibliotherapy studies lack external validity, they may not reflect the extent of attitudinal change, but the institutional adjustment of the inmate, who is able to manipulate the test to his own advantage (Barone, 1977, p295; Hartz, 1987, p7). There is also the danger that individuals may believe that simply reading about a problem will resolve it, resulting in facile rationalisations, while some disquiet has also been expressed that bibliotherapy may result in the reinforcement of some anxieties, such as concerns about mental health problems (Howie, 1988, p31). Other critics have noted that because the process is so subjective it lacks any predictive capability (Clarke, 1988, p11). Finally, in a comprehensive review of published bibliotherapy research, it was concluded that "the positive recommendations of the value of bibliotherapy exceed available documentation of its usefulness" (Schrank and Engels, 1981, p146).

However, the interviews conducted for this study revealed that a great many respondents felt that, in a number of ways, what they read had changed their attitudes and views. The nature of the prison environment may itself contribute to this change process, in two particular ways. First, it offers people a break from the the criminal sub-culture that they may have been immersed in whilst outside:

"I think looking generally at imprisonment, very often unfortunately it's a damaging experience for many, but I think it can for some have the potential benefit of being a time away, it's a chance to pull away from the routines they've got into, and so it's an opportunity to see life in a different way. It can be a chance to broaden horizons. I think it would be foolish to think that all those habits which widen horizons will simply be dropped on release" (Governor, Prison H).

Second, the agencies and programmes which are working towards rehabilitation within each establishment can offer a new set of socially acceptable values and attitudes which may seem attractive, particularly when observed from the isolated perspective of the prison:

"Because they haven't got a lot of other things to do, they've got time to read, and they haven't got outside distractions, they probably absorb more. Books assume more of an importance in a place like this. They're much keener to have them" (Librarian, Prison E).

The comments of this inmate sum up many of the arguments outlined above as he detailed some of the benefits which he has gained from his reading, which ranged from diversion, literacy skills, education, identification and insights:

"I find I can get more into reading a book in prison than I can on the out - because obviously there's work to consider, there's your family around you. When we're in prison, a lot of people can get a lot out of reading a book and a lot of experience through reading that's learning them. At the moment, I can spell little words, but I can't spell big words. I'm a lazy speller, so by reading and looking at a word it's helping me with spelling. I'm reading quite a lot lately - I'm reading about the history of wartime airfields in this area, and the librarian has actually got me quite a lot of books in. Reading gives you time to think about what other people have gone through, to learn from their lives. I personally wouldn't be without it, because I've learned a lot through reading books, and also a lot about the area where I've been forced to live at the moment. Reading has changed me, because it's learning me a lot more subjects than what I wouldn't have learned on the out. I get a lot of enjoyment out of reading and a lot of information. You can

combine your own ideas with other peoples' and you can read a book and say, yes, well, there's got to be something" (Inmate, Prison G).

Some of the ways in which reading was reported to have affected prisoners' attitudes and beliefs are described in more detail below.

### 7.5 READING AS A STIMULUS

Absorbing other people's ideas can stimulate ideas in the reader themselves. This may subsequently motivate them to engage in other activities. For example, access to new thoughts and images coupled with time to reflect and articulate one's own perceptions, has resulted in some prison writing of the highest quality. Dostoyevsky wrote "The House of the Dead" while confined in a prison from 1849 to 1854, Verlaine wrote "Romances Sans Paroles" in 1874, during his 2 year confinement, while Gramsci's notebooks written whilst he was imprisoned from 1926 to 1937, are regarded by many as one of the most important political texts of the twentieth century. Solzhenitsyn and Oscar Wilde drew upon their prison experiences in writing "One day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich" and "The Ballad of Reading Gaol". Koestler's spells of imprisonment under Franco's regime, and again by the French in 1940, were powerfully retold in his works "Spanish Testament", "Dialogue With Death" and "Scum of the Earth". Genet, serving a life sentence in Fresnes jail, wrote many novels, plays and poems which portrayed the prison sub-culture in a ritualistic and almost mystical way. The legacy of Brendan Behan's three years in



borstal and his prison terms in Dublin and Manchester, where he read "voraciously" (Chambers Biographical Dictionary, 1990, p129), is evident in his autobiographical novel "Borstal Boy" and in his play "The Quare Fellow". Likewise, Jimmy Boyle's account of his experience in the Barlinnie Special Unit, and his subsequent rehabilitation, are vividly described in "A Sense of Freedom". On the other hand, however, Hitler wrote "Mein Kampf" during his 9 months in Landsberg jail in 1925.

In his own book "A Product of the System", Leech has written how reading a book from the prison library first gave him the idea to write drama, his "legitimate outlet":

"In mid-October 1989 I went along to the prison library as I did once every week. As it was only open once a week great care had to be taken in selecting books that could not be changed for another 7 days. I had already selected 5 out of my 6 books. I reached out and took the first book that came to hand, "How To Write Radio Drama", and returned to my cell. Four days later when I put down my pen, I had written my first ever play for radio and discovered the sheer beauty that comes from stringing words together. Despite its failings I was delighted with it. There was no stopping me after that. All the frustrations of therapy were taken out by using the pen and I wrote and wrote. I went through A4 pads faster than the Home Office goes through roof tiles and I stared at a VDU until I was green in the face - and I loved every minute of it. Like Jimmy Boyle with his discovery of sculpture, I had found a legitimate outlet for my energies, which I enjoyed tremendously, which enabled me to achieve something good, and which, if others are to be believed, I'm not too bad at! I spent my hours typing up the play "The Facts Speak For Themselves" and after three re-writes sent it to the BBC as a 90 minute Saturday Night Theatre - it was accepted. I also entered the play for the 1990 Koestler Awards, where it won a prize of twenty pounds - we all have to start somewhere" (Leech, 1993, p163).

Several inmates reported that reading had prompted them to begun writing:

"One thing prison has encouraged in me I suppose, it's given me time to read, and from that encouraged me to write. One thing I am definitely going to get out of prison is a very funny book" (Inmate, Prison D).

Some inmates took a fairly pragmatic approach to their literary creations:

"I have thought about starting to write my own stories. After reading all the other books, it gives you some ideas of how to go about it. I've taken a couple of books out on creative writing and things like that. I do try and write the odd poem now and again as well. It always helps me to write a letter to the missus if you can bung a quick poem in there" (Inmate, Prison H).

The importance of this kind of writing should not be understated. Particularly on a long sentence, it can be very difficult for prisoners to keep up contact with their family. Many prison librarians keep a stock of suitable romantic poems at hand in order for inmates to copy out and send to their loved ones. For prisoners who find it difficult to express their emotions during the regulated mayhem of a 30 minute visit or in a short telephone call, communications through verse can be especially important.

## 7.6 READING AS A COPING MECHANISM

Prison is a stressful environment. For some offenders it can be a criminogenic one. The Woolf Report noted that:

"A substantial number of prisoners leave prison more embittered and hostile to society than when they arrived.

They leave prison, therefore, in a state of mind where they are more likely to re-offend" (Woolf and Tumim, 1991, p243).

In order to minimise the negative effects of imprisonment it is necessary that individuals develop coping strategies. Failure to do so will almost certainly lead to increasing levels of frustration, and possibly disciplinary infractions. Furthermore, research by Sinclair and Clarke (1982), found that establishments which had lower rates of misconduct also tended to have lower subsequent re-conviction rates. These findings imply the existence of a transference of pro-social behavioural patterns established within the institution to the post-release environment - if individuals can cope successfully with their time in prison, it is more likely that they will be able to cope in society outside. However, later research by Thornton (1987a), failed to find any link between institutional experience and post-release behaviour.

For many offenders their first experience of imprisonment is in a local prison, on remand, and this is likely to be a traumatic event. In the past, this has involved long hours of confinement, while even during those times when prisoners are unlocked, there has only been sparse provision for "constructive or therapeutic activities, or even simple pastimes" (Twinn, 1992, p53). Furthermore, for prisoners isolated in segregated wings within these establishments, conditions have tended to be even more spartan and uncomfortable. If the charges the remand prisoner is facing are serious, it is not uncommon for their trial to be a year, or even longer, from the date of their first court

appearance, so this can be a prolonged and stressful period of inactivity. Boredom levels are high among many inmates (Tumim, 1993, pp6-18), and this may lead to further problems such as aggressive behaviour, sleeplessness and increased use of drugs. This inmate recalled how in the early stage of the sentence, the act of reading itself was valued because it served as both a calming influence and some kind of constructive activity - whereas the actual content of the book was often immaterial:

"I think without reading there'd be a lot more unrest than there is, particularly in the early stages of one's career in prison, on remand, that sort of thing. Unless you've got access to something to do, because there's a great deal of lockup, and people can get very pissed off, not really surprisingly. I used books initially in the first five years of my sentence I guess to hide in. Didn't matter what sort of book it was, could have been any book, I didn't read them really. I read the words but they didn't go into my head. I just used them as an escape - I think I probably read for about nine hours a day, constantly, seven days a week, for five years, yet really I couldn't tell you about any one of the books I read. It was easier than thinking about myself, so I just used it to dive into. If I hadn't have had books to dive into, I guess I'd have dived into something else - that's about the long and short of it" (Inmate, Prison A).

Once the judge has passed sentence, and the offender begins to realise that he has to serve a term of imprisonment, self esteem is likely to be very low. Furthermore, the environment of a prison inherently tends to exacerbate pre-existing strains and pressures, as well as constructing new ones, so finding a way to relax can be very important, yet particularly difficult, for some prisoners. The prison library, as the principal source for material to occupy the inmate while locked up, obviously becomes very important. Reading at this stage can also help raise motivation levels and increase feelings of self worth, as this prisoner related:

"Getting sent down was obviously a bit of a shock. Coping with it was to keep your mind occupied, not let yourself go downhill. In a local prison, keeping your mind occupied was done by a lot of reading, you have to read and read and read. It comes natural when you're locked up and there's nothing to do apart from reading, so you take to it. Books. Plus you feel you're learning something, you're improving yourself in some way. And that's how you get into libraries. I suppose on the out, I probably wouldn't use a library" (Inmate, Prison E).

It is usually assumed that within most total institutions, the existence of an inmate sub-culture prescribes a strict code of behavioural norms which ensures conformity of action among prisoners (see Clemmer, 1958; Sykes and Messinger, 1960). For example, a prisoner interviewed as part of the current study commented:

"This jail is a prisoner's jail. Prisoners run this jail and run it well. There's occasional outbreaks of violence, but as far as prison morality goes we run that ourselves. You can't attempt it, it's just not going to work, to try and make us virtuous. It's only going to work for individual prisoners on their own, but as a general rule, no" (Inmate, Prison J).

Coming to terms with the inmate sub-culture and being forced to mix with people who, on the outside, they probably would have tended to avoid, is a situation which requires a great deal of adjustment for some prisoners, particularly those serving their first custodial sentence. This inmate had rapidly become aware of the necessity for the appropriate learned response to be given in front of other inmates and took care, quite consciously, to always associate with the most deviant leaders:

"There's a pressure to talk to people, you talk, you're forced to talk with people who you'd not necessarily associate with on the out" (Inmate, Prison J).

For other prisoners though, the composition of the inmate sub-culture may closely mirror the criminal sub-culture of their domestic environment. For example, a year before the major riot at Wymott jail, the Chief Inspector of Prisons said in his annual report that "at Wymott we found the backstreet drug culture of Manchester replicated in the living units" (Daily Telegraph, 30/10/1993, p6). In October 1994, the official report into the riot itself stated the prison was ruled by a "gangland culture" (Daily Telegraph, 22/10/1993, p6).

Despite this congruency of both cultural norms and population, some research has suggested that the influence of these sub-cultures within prisons do not necessarily ensure total compliance by all inmates, with many prisoners only adhering in terms of their "surface conduct" (Blomberg, 1967, p164). Cloward has argued there is a state of "pluralistic ignorance" as inmates deny to their fellow prisoners their own belief in staff values (see Cloward, 1960). Wheeler has suggested that, in private, many inmates actually dissented from the code, but assumed their peers internalised the deviant norms (see Wheeler, 1961). Glaser has written that while most inmates privately favour pro-social behaviour, the most aggressive and/or articulate inmates consistently advocate and portray a more negative image (see Glaser, 1964).

What this means for new prisoners is that they must learn a complex array of appropriate behavioural responses, to give the impression to other inmates that they share a common social reality. Another

set of responses are also required to be learned in order that they can be presented to staff to give the impression of conformity to institutional values. For many inmates, participating in these overt displays of compliance, particularly those to other prisoners, becomes an increasingly arduous responsibility. Being alone in their cell was the only chance they had to avoid their fellow inmates, and an Education Co-ordinator interviewed argued that at such times, inmates were particularly responsive to ideas presented to them through literature:

"Many, many prisoners will say they that they are quite happy to be in their cell. They don't like to be out, because when they are out, they are not themselves. When they are locked up, they are themselves, they can read or whatever. If they're reading, they're within the culture of the book. Then they are available, they make themselves available to other thoughts" (Education Co-Ordinator, Prison F).

Longer term prisoners especially, soon begin to realise that the easiest way to serve their sentence is "to keep their noses clean and their heads down". They may develop feelings of deep antagonism to other inmates, particularly those serving short sentences, and actually look forward to the time when they are locked up in their cells. Some long term prisoners may not even want to come out of their cells for association:

"I'd be going off my mind if I couldn't read in here. I know I'd be going round the bend, I really would. I don't want to sit and watch TV all the time, and I don't really want to associate with anyone in here to tell you the truth - I'd prefer to be in my cell on my own, reading. That's all I do" (Inmate, Prison H).

In this case, reading had helped the prisoner come to terms with his self imposed desire for solitude caused by his desire for

avoidance of any integration with the sub-culture. Other prisoners however reported using reading in a different way, in order to help mitigate their feelings of isolation, brought about by the nature of the prison experience itself:

"In prison, first and foremost, you've got to come to terms with loneliness and then you've got to come to terms with aloneness. Loneliness is an incredibly painful thing. Few people experience it until they get very old, but for a young feller...A lot of the troubles that occur in prison are born of loneliness - that's where it comes from. The library can help dispel that loneliness and frustration. If you think, you can get a book and you can go anywhere in the world, in the universe, and for that time, you're not here anymore, and you're not alone" (Inmate, Prison H).

Helping prisoners reduce their levels of stress is beneficial not only to that individual, but it also helps, as this governor reported, contribute to a calmer, more positive environment within the jail, freeing officers from tasks of discipline and control, toward those of increased interaction with inmates:

"That is one of the key things we're here for - simply keeping them entertained. There's nothing wrong with that as an aim. We do have to provide them with decent, humane and safe conditions, and part of that is keeping them happily entertained, and there's nothing perjorative about being part of an entertainment aspect of it" (Governor, Prison H).

Some librarians considered that the inmate's view of the library as a neutral area was an important factor in assisting the reduction of levels of stress:

"Prisons can be quite pressured places. I would have thought sometimes the library would be a useful place to come and let off steam, and know that nobody is going to report back to your landing officer exactly what you said" (Librarian, Prison F).



An Education Co-Ordinator took this argument a little further, noting that encouraging inmates to use time positively was also part of a wider objective toward maintaining pro-social behaviour upon release:

"All of us in our lives actually need relaxation as a good and healthy part of a rounded lifestyle, and if we are going to talk about rehabilitation, then we've got to be talking about a healthy lifestyle" (Education Co-Ordinator, Prison B).

However, some officers argued that the influence of the prison library was minimal in calming prisoners, because the time that most prisoners tended to read were the times they were locked in their cells anyway. This prisoner disagreed:

"I suppose if you take a book back to your cell at night and you are into it, you'd probably think twice about kicking off if you've had a bad dinner, you know what I mean?" (Inmate, Prison E).

Other inmates reported that reading was both relaxing and therapeutic:

"I look at reading and what it does for me - if I'm depressed or unhappy it makes me feel better. And I think for a lot of the guys in here, it does the same, it makes them feel better about themselves. People in here can get very depressed and down, so it's good for them to be able to take their mind off things. You'd be surprised at how many people are kept sane through the use of a library" (Inmate, Prison H).

As prisoners move progressively through the system into less secure establishments, their reading needs change and different reading patterns may emerge. Reading may have been used initially as a coping mechanism to kill time, but later in the sentence it may be

used as a coping mechanism to help sustain time, to develop particular interests and serve as a source of new ideas.

"On remand, you're locked up for up to 23 hours a day, not always. Sheer boredom - you will read anything, you read the label on the bedsheets to keep the mind active. In a bang-up I would have read L. Ron Hubbard till the cows came home if that's all I had. Coming to an open prison like this, you're suddenly free to do what you want, within reason - so anybody who reads in this environment wants to read. I think if you read a book and can't get an idea out of it, you're wasting your time. I think in every book I look for something, even if it's a quotation in the frontispiece. I think you should always get something out of it. It's the whole idea - basically that's what books are for, to enhance your understanding of your situation, life, relationships, everything. I've read books that have left me shattered, I've really got somewhere where the author's coming from. If you can get that out of anything in life that's not bad" (Inmate, Prison G).

Prison forces many inmates to cut themselves off from their emotions - they tend to become alienated, desocialised and depersonalised (Jones, 1992, p16). Furthermore, important tenets of the inmate code are that prisoners should restrain their emotions and never show any signs of weakness (Blomberg, 1967, p162). However, reading can offer the inmate a chance to vicariously participate in the emotional lives of others:

"I actually started reading some Danielle Steele at one point and I got really quite into it, because in prison you're so far away from emotions and it's very cold at times, very lonely, it gave me a real buzz to be reading those sorts of stories. The other thing is like action stuff - it takes you away from the drudgery and monotony of prison life which is basically the same day in, day out in most prisons. So something sparkling and exciting is quite a treat" (Inmate, Prison D).

Reading can also help by presenting parallel experiences, which offer the inmate, particularly those serving long sentences, some degree of hope for the future:

"Reading has been very, very important. It's helped me a lot. Tremendously. It's very important. To say that is an understatement. It helps. It helps. Very educating. Very, very educating. I've read a lot of books since I've been here. Yeah. Because with no reading material, with nothing to read you become redundant. Once you're reading your brain is working, you become active. Without reading you become rather dormant. Yeah. I did a couple of Shakespeare - Macbeth, Julius Caesar. We read them. Yeah. All of that. Then you get on to biographies - you learn about people. Yes. It helps a lot. Eases out. Now I'm reading a book, Papillon [Charriere Henri, Papillon, 1970, London: Hart Davis]. Yes. He was sentenced to life imprisonment - all those things he went through, all those hardships. And he came back. So if you read things like that, it makes you feel, well, no matter what, you'll be out there. And it helps. It helps to a large extent" (Inmate, Prison E).

Some prisoners also reported that they found reading was useful as a coping strategy in helping relieve aggression:

"Speaking for myself, reading a violent book can neutralise a lot of violent feelings, yes. If you have fantasy enough to dive into the book, into the story, as I can do, I can live through the book, I can really live through the book" (Inmate, Prison B).

Finally, books may also be used as a coping strategy in providing the opportunity for mental escape, which can be especially useful in a prison environment, as this prisoner acknowledged:

"I go behind my door at night and get stuck into a book and I'm not in prison. I'm not here. Whether it be the Western Front or some fantasy land, that's where I am. Prison no longer exists for me from 8 o'clock until 8 o'clock in the morning. Simply by being in prison is hard enough. Even outside, people need to escape sometimes. You need some distraction. Especially if you're in an establishment that hasn't got much work facilities and you're banged up. You can't be facing that 24 hours a day - you've got to have some relaxation. If you don't get that, you just suffer stress" (Inmate, Prison F).

## 7.7 READING AS A CREATIVE USE OF TIME

Providing constructive and meaningful activities for prisoners is of vital importance, both in maintaining a stable equilibrium within the establishment, as well as contributing toward the individual's rehabilitation. Judge Tumim's recent report "Doing Time Or Using Time", made this point clearly:

"In a dynamic, rather than passive, environment it is the total activities on offer within an establishment which will determine how well prepared a person is for return to the community" (Tumim, 1993a, p66).

Similarly, Rentzmann has argued that:

"In most prison systems it is extremely difficult to make positive meaningful use of leisure time. This means that inmates' thoughts and interests are easily led in the wrong direction i.e. opportunities to get hold of drugs, or to commit the perfect crime" (Rentzmann, 1992, p12).

In the limited, and limiting, environment of prison, reading offers the inmate two unique benefits. First, he is able to free himself, albeit temporarily from his surroundings, and second, it presents the opportunity to use his emotional and cognitive faculties (Iser, 1974, pxiii). The experiences of this prisoner would seem to confirm this:

"For me reading's been almost an escape route through my sentence, because the humdrum daily life of living in a prison and all the rubbish that goes with that, you need some sort of outlet, something that keeps your mind occupied, whether it be studies or just trash fiction, not terribly edifying, but you get into the book, you're away, you're not in the cell, you're enjoying a fantasy world for that hour or whatever it is you're reading, you're not in this situation, it takes the pressure off" (Inmate, Prison A).

For many inmates reading becomes their primary creative activity:

"To keep your mind stimulated, away from the outside world, you have to obviously put your mind at something else. During the day you can put your mind into work, but in the evening, when you're closed, that's when you take your book out and start reading. So the library's very important. For example, if we didn't have any books, we would not have anything to do, apart from have a conversation out of the window. It does keep people occupied, the most important thing in prison. When you come in here, you lose a part of your self-functioning and you need to keep your mind active and the library does keep that part of you going" (Inmate, Prison F).

Through the medium of the written word they are invited to construct their own reality through their own imagination. As Wolfgang Iser has commented:

"Every moment of reading is a dialectic of protension and retention...a process through which the aesthetic object is constantly being structured and restructured. As there is no definite frame of reference to regulate this process, successful communication must ultimately depend on the reader's creative activity" (Iser, 1974, p112).

For some inmates literature, and imagination, served as a reminder of reality:

"In prison, my eyesight is sealed to just the beauty that I can see - like I can just see the tops of some trees, things like that. So I enjoy the benefits of whatever I can get out of that library. I'm able to feel and see more, and that's a great relief" (Inmate, Prison J).

Even the act of visiting the prison library, let alone selecting and reading material, is of some importance in stimulating and motivating inmates to use their sentence constructively, as this governor argued:

"There are spin offs from any activity. If prisoners go to work, it puts them in a work ethic - they may not be able to get a job sewing shirts when they get out, but they've actually had that experience of getting up, getting washed, getting shaved, going to work with other people, taking some sort of responsibility for their behaviour. Libraries are very similar - they actually themselves have gone somewhere, selected something, made a decision that's what they want to do, taken it away and made a decision they want to read it. That can have very positive effects" (Governor, Prison H).

Inmates are often very reluctant to be coerced, or even cajoled, into participating in any activity promoted as being "good", that is, in any way connected with the "establishment". Blomberg has stated that collusion in such activities is perceived as a violation of the inmate code, and subject therefore, to the sanction of other prisoners. To avoid taking part, therefore, inmates may promote a superficial adjustment which obviates any requirement to participate in any such activities, or their may be a "normative opposition" to any involvement. Blomberg concludes that, as a result, the effectiveness of most rehabilitative initiatives are likely to be constrained, with "negative effects on post-release behaviour" (Blomberg, 1967, p186). In some cases however, these activities are typically seen by prisoners as either a chance to portray to the authorities a contrived version of the inmate's institutional adjustment, or as legitimate opportunities to exploit staff, programmes or circumstances for their own benefit. However, use of the prison library tends to be perceived by inmates in a very different way - rather than something which is imposed on them, or something which they should be seen to be participating in, it is a service being provided, something there for them to use and perhaps benefit from. Prisoners argued that in this respect, the library service held a unique position within the prison, in that inmates' use of it was

not monitored, it was not part of any regime programme and therefore not a target for manipulation by either inmates or staff:

"The library is the only source of self-motivation in the prison. No amount of lecturing, deprivation of privileges, that won't have any effect, because all you'll do is make a man more stubborn. That's been tried. But the library can provide the motivation for people to change themselves. In this particular prison, the library is the only thing that's doing any good. There is education - but it is a workplace, they're getting paid for it" (Inmate, Prison J).

In a recent survey of 980 young people, 81% thought boredom was the main cause of juvenile crime (Times, 1/11/1993, p7), while Home Office research into car theft also found that boredom was one of the key offence motivators (Nee, 1993, p1). Many prisoners interviewed for the present study reported high levels of boredom. Inmates argued this inactivity resulted in feelings of negativity and frustration, a greater use of drugs, and increased tendencies to either indiscipline or institutionalisation:

"Even when I'm asleep I have boring dreams. It's what prison does to you. Long term prisoners especially get very bored. You get frustrated and angry. It's them and you, because they're frustrating your actual outlook, and then you get frustrated towards them. That's when you start going to the block" (Inmate, Prison C).

"I'm bored every day, but not the whole day. All weekends I'm bored. You can guarantee from Friday night until Sunday night, all the time, even if I'm doing things I'm bored. So about three days out of every week I'm bored, so what's that - about 40% of the time I'll be bored. I think that's about normal, 'cause there's nothing to do, you just wander about listlessly in the end. No, I can't do anything about it. Just smoke drugs that's about all. I suppose if there was a decent regime people wouldn't have to get out of their heads to get out of the monotony of the place. As to reforming an individual, I think a person needs to be off drugs to address their own problem. I think drugs are more available in prison than ever they were outside. I'm offered drugs all the time in here - I'd never be offered drugs so frequently outside. If a guy's skinning a joint or just

smoking it, the screws know they've got to leave it alone, they've got to carry on" (Inmate, Prison B).

"I've done 2 years, but it doesn't feel like 2 years, because all the days are the same. When you look back, a month feels like a week, because all the days are identical. When you're living them they drag, but when you look back, you think "It doesn't seem like a month". It's an illusion in your mind. The days are so alike, you have a set pattern every single day. You soon become institutionalised. Here you can't even control what time your lights go off. I like my own space now more and more, it's what it does to you really. You're more happier on your own. You just get more and more isolated" (Inmate, Prison K).

Relief of boredom through access to books was seen by both inmates and staff as particularly important:

"You have a lot of time, a lot of spare time in prison. A lot of it is wasted. You can sit there and dumbly watch a TV screen for hours on end - it's totally mind-numbing. With a book you can get involved in your own time. It's more part of your education and creativity" (Inmate, Prison J).

The sterility and paucity of the prison environment can be oppressive for some prisoners, and one source of relief from the tedium is television. However, many inmates commented they watched much less television than when they were outside and some consciously avoided the television rooms because they were considered a potential flashpoint for disruptive behaviour. Reading was preferred because it required active engagement:

"You can get books that really get your imagination going, really feel it, feels more solid than say watching TV. I can sit and watch 'Neighbours' and think 'yes, great', but at the end of it, there's nothing, it's just gone. But with reading, it sticks more in your memory than something off TV. You can get ideas by the way somebody writes - you think 'yes, that's right, he's got a point there'. It gives you pause for thought. Like 'To Kill A Mockingbird' [Lee Harper, To Kill a Mockingbird, 1987, London:Macmillan] - that was something that stuck in my mind and made me think" (Inmate, Prison C).



One governor argued that stimulating inmates' interests through reading could have significant and enduring positive effects:

"I think many of the people who've slipped into crime, it's actually partly a boredom factor. So if you can introduce them to anything which occupies the time, be it a good read of a novel for interest's sake, or be it they've suddenly discovered it's gardening that gets them - reading those books, that's what they want. Anything which enables them to use their mind while they're inside, to keep them alive mentally, so they are ready to engage with society when they go out" (Governor, Prison H).

Reading is also an activity which can be pursued individually and does not require an allotted time in the regime, or supervision by officer staff:

"I guess what we get out of it is a lot of inmates occupied, doing a lot of constructive activity for long periods of time" (Governor, Prison D).

Many inmates reported they used the library to obtain material to support their hobbies, or to supplement courses they may have taken in the education department. Perrine has argued that in providing such stock, "latent talents may be developed constructively and positively" (Perrine, 1955, p249). Books about artistic techniques and handicrafts, such as soft toy making, woodwork, carving are often very popular within prison libraries:

"The only thing I've really gone down to the library for is when I was in the woodwork shop, to get a carpentry book and to look for pictures of ducks, because I can carve ducks about the size of my thumb. So I got books for that. Or any pictures - squirrels, things like that, and I'll make them up and carve them. When I first came in here I couldn't even carve, then I looked in the book and that was it. Done" (Inmate, Prison E).

Some inmates argued that the kind of reading they had been doing would have a direct influence on their post-release behaviour:

"It does help when you get out. Let me tell you how it's going to help me. For a start, I do quite a lot of oil paintings now. Now before I came into prison, I'd never painted in my life - I've been painting for two and a half years now and what I've learned, I've learned from books out of the library. I would say I'm quite good - I'd go so far as to say I could make a living out of it. That will help - not only for the living. Because before I came into prison, I'd been drunk for fifteen years, I had never been sober. I get more pleasure out of art than I would ever do out of drinking. So art now is going to be my saviour. When I get out now, the art will take the place of the drinking. So really it's all down to the availability of the library - because otherwise I would never have learned so much. That's only one case - I think we all get so much out of it" (Inmate, Prison G).

Another inmate had become interested in pottery whilst in prison, had received a Koestler award for some for his work and had even made plans to set up in business when he was released. He argued that access to pottery books within the prison library had been essential in sustaining and expanding his interest:

"I started doing pottery 2 years back. Here we haven't got much facilities, but the library has helped me a lot. If I didn't have the books, I wouldn't know the actual technicalities, I wouldn't have the knowledge. If the library wasn't there, I couldn't afford to buy the books on my own. I've bought some of my own books, but to buy all of them would cost you hundreds of pounds. But I can get them from the library and then make my own notes from it and then bring the book back. Definitely, most definitely, it has supported my education and it will help me when I am released to go into pottery. I've already bought two wheels. The way I look at it, it's going to help me when I get out" (Inmate, Prison C).

## 7.8 READING AS EMPOWERMENT

Prison takes away control, responsibility and power from inmates. Many prisoners reported that reading gave them a feeling that their time in prison wasn't being wasted and that they had some control over the way they used it, by choosing to spend it, constructively, in a particular way. For some prisoners, almost unknown to themselves, an activity which may have started as a simple time killer takes on a new and empowering dimension resulting in an increased awareness of both self and society.

"Knowledge has increased my awareness of the world and the people I'm dealing with, but also about myself, it's made me a lot more rounder person. I feel more confident, more able to do things and think things and say things and have an opinion. These are all part of the whole purpose of rehabilitation. So because of libraries and education, yes, it's helped me no end to broaden things. I've realised I'm not as unique as I thought, but I'm not as strange as I think I am as well" (Inmate, Prison K).

For some inmates, empowerment manifested itself in a reduction of their frustration, as library resources were used to assist in the development of literary skills:

"Two guys in here have learned to read - what's the library giving them? For one guy, when he went on his home leave, he could read the name on the front of his train without having to ask anyone. That's important. That's pride. His mother's in hospital, he can read her cards, that kind of thing" (Tutor, Prison F).

Use of libraries was identified by some staff members as fostering critical reasoning and abstract thinking, cognitive deficits which have been identified in many offenders (Williamson, 1993, p55). This kind of empowerment through personal growth was regarded by

one Education Co-ordinator as a particularly important facet of the library's role:

"I've always seen the library as a focal point - it's where all different strands of the institution come together in, I hope, a very pleasant and supportive atmosphere, which can help people, very much in a social and developmental role" (Education Co-ordinator, Prison A).

Reading becomes, for many prisoners, a new leisure activity, and one which becomes equated with a sense of personal achievement, and which is inherently educative. While low levels of self esteem may not be a determinate factor, evidence suggests it may be a pre-disposing factor, in some patterns of offending behaviour (McGuire and Priestley, 1985, p55). Encouraging inmates to develop a more positive self-image is, therefore an important rehabilitative objective:

"It's time and opportunity. Where I had time outside, that was given over solely to leisure. But sitting in the library, I read something and I learn, something I never did before. You've achieved something at the end of it - even if it's only a science fiction book, you've achieved something by reading that book, it's got something in there, which one day you might come back to use. You've learned something" (Inmate, Prison A).

Other inmates said they felt reading had given them a greater awareness of their own actions, a reduction in aggressive impulses, an increased ability to adopt the perspective of others and a tendency to engage less in externalising and rationalising their own behaviours:

"I've read thousands of books since I've come into prison and now I consider myself pretty well read. And I feel pretty good about that. It broadens your horizons, makes you know what's going off around you, makes you more aware. Now I want to achieve something with my time" (Inmate, Prison D).

## 7.9 READING AS A DIVERSIONARY ACTIVITY

Most prison environments are characterised by an inversion of status associated with offending and an inmate sub-culture embracing a clearly defined behavioural code. It has been noted earlier that the operation of the inmate sub-culture is probably more complex than originally thought. Nevertheless, it seems clear that whilst leadership typically centres around recidivists and those with a higher visibility of deviance (Bean, 1976, p125), it is predominantly the younger, shorter sentenced inmates, and those on remand, who tend to be the most unstable and disruptive group within the sub-culture population (Home Office, 1994b, p2). For example, in March 1993, the governor of Wymott prison, where rioting prisoners were to cause damage estimated at 20 million pounds a few months later, noted in his journal:

"I am becoming concerned at the volatility of our population, 20% are 22 or under. To fill up rapidly is a recipe for trouble" (quoted in Daily Telegraph, 22/10/1993, p6).

Most prisoners interviewed claimed that the inmate sub-culture, which sadly tends to attract most strongly the younger offender, was inclined to reinforce or promote patterns of criminality:

"Prison is creating its own monsters. All prison does is encourage you to be a worse person. The fact that you're throwing all these pretty mixed up people into a big mixing pot, and not really having very much to do with them, from a staff point of view, just letting them get on with it, creates chaos really. And the drug culture is so rife that people, if they're not already involved in drugs before they came into prison, like I wasn't, they come in prison, they're turned into junkies and they're actually a part of

that culture. When you throw all these people together, the peer pressure, people are doing what other people want to do, which is why they can never actually confront themselves. When I was first in prison, I used to hang around in gangs and things like that, which I thought was the done thing. Whereas then I thought, "Well sod you lot, you're not going to be here in 20 years time, when I'm ready for being released". That's when I started facing up to myself" (Inmate, Prison B).

For some inmates "facing up to themselves" usually involves some degree of isolation from the more negative aspects of the sub-culture. Hartz has, in fact, argued that the only therapeutic benefit prison libraries have may lie in their diversionary effect - whilst occupied reading, prisoners are not "assaulting, stealing from or otherwise generally hassling other inmates" (Hartz, 1987, p9). Some prisoners interviewed for this study however, adopted a more positive view, and reported that they viewed reading as a displacement activity, away from the offending culture of the prison environment, and offering them instead an opportunity for self-examination and self-development:

"My offence was a domestic one when I came in, so I've never sat around with people planning to do things, crimes and what have you, so when I came in here, I've not got the same mentality. I know I'm still a criminal, but I don't think about committing crimes and all that, robberies what have you. It has no appeal to me, so I've got to find something else to do with my time. And I've developed myself to such an extent through reading that I could never have done outside" (Inmate, Prison D).

In dormitory accommodation, in particular, inmates argued that reading a book constituted a signal for others to observe that, in effect, privacy was being sought, and this was one of the few ways of becoming isolated from the environment:

"It amazes me that in a prison with dorms that people read. It's the only type of privacy they can get. The library provides a book for them to read and a tape for them to listen to. It is the only way of ignoring being in prison" (Inmate, Prison J).

Furthermore, in the daily monotony of prison life reading can provide new topics of interest and conversation:

"People often say 'try reading this', 'try reading that'. That's where the conversation changes. They aren't talking about crime, they're talking about something they've read. It gives them something else to talk about and gets them away from crime. The thing that cracks people up in prison is prison conversation - you just imagine it, the same conversation year after year after year. Every time you go to a cell, people are talking about what they've done, it's so exaggerated. It becomes so boring, soul destroying - you feel as if you're going mad. You want to try and get away from it. They're probably feeling the exact same. The conversation always goes to either drugs or crime. Other people, all they talk about is music, but you're limited with just music, whereas somebody starts talking about books - that's something different" (Inmate, Prison A).

Many inmates commented that the library acted as a diversionary influence in that it had a calming effect on prisoners within the establishment:

"This library is the best officer they've got. Without this library, it's the only thing that stops them letting go" (Inmate, Prison J).

"Control. Oh, yes. Like the telly. I suppose telly is just like a cheap library" (Inmate, Prison C).

Furthermore, this ex-offender argued this diversionary effect was in some cases transferred to the release environment:

"The habits they learn, going to the library every week, picking up a pile of books, taking them back to their cell, they carry through. These are the chaps who before they went into prison didn't read, but you learn that when they are

outside, they're reading books or types of authors they've been reading in prison. From that point of view, it has educated that person and they have developed a reading habit which has carried on outside. And these are the guys who would normally be down the pub as soon as it opened or be engaged in other activities that wouldn't bring them near a book".

Staff responses to the idea of the library as a diversionary activity however, were very mixed. One governor argued that the high proportion of time that inmates spent reading also had a beneficial effect from the point of view of security:

"It reduces the time they have for watching officers, and plotting trouble when they're inside. A lot of the time they know the officers' patterns and weaknesses, because they've got nothing else to do but sit and watch them" (Governor, Prison B).

This governor took the opposite view, and tended to view the library as a possible location of tension within the establishment:

"Libraries are also an agent of misdemeanour, a meeting place to do business, for concerted indiscipline. From a prisoner's point of view, it's very low on staff in there and a vast space where they can hide behind and store things. If there's any control in it, it's reverse control - it's where prisoners will go to control themselves while they're playing others off. Acts of heroism or whatever you want to call it" (Governor, Prison E).

Most officers who were interviewed, tended to be dismissive of the library as a diversionary activity, arguing that those inmates who were likely to be users of the library were likely to be those who were not considered threats to security or inclined to breaches of prison discipline:

"I don't see it as keeping them out of trouble. I have heard people saying "While they're using the library they're not getting into trouble". That may be the case, but to be honest, the guys that are reading are not the guys getting



into trouble anyway - they'd read something else irrespective of whether a library was there" (Prison Officer, Prison E).

An Education Co-Ordinator took the opposite view, arguing that the prison library had an important diversionary role in channelling the energies of the most intelligent and potentially, the most unstable, inmates:

"If you look at it in education terms, many dyslexic children are labelled as disruptive, and have a bad school history. One of the theories is that they're often highly able children who have a difficulty in communicating on the school's terms, and therefore hit problems. I think, by the same token, some of those who use the prison library are the highly able inmates and who are the most dangerous ones. If you keep the brain stimulated they won't pose a threat, and be the most co-operative and helpful men, but if you allow an intelligent man to become bored and frustrated, you've a recipe for disaster. I think prison is also getting the benefit of humanising their population - anything which gives men the concept of being in touch with the outside, anything where the men are in touch with civilian staff, is actually helping the humanising process. It takes it out of the harsh military discipline and in doing that can reduce confrontational attitudes" (Education Co-Ordinator, Prison B).

#### 7.10 READING AS A MENTAL CHALLENGE

Many research reports have testified to the negative effects of imprisonment on the psychological disposition of the individual and there is also evidence that once offenders have become institutionalised it is more difficult for them to be successfully re-integrated back into society (Wineman, 1969, p1095; Woolf and Tumim, 1991, p242-243). Hacker has asserted that detention produces "no good psychological effects", creating instead an

increasing irresponsibility, infantilisation, regression, obstinate helplessness and a paralysis of initiative (quoted in Middendorff, 1967, p206). Fox argued that prison simply teaches the inmate to behave like a "courteous automaton" (Fox, 1975, p198). The U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons (cited in Dunbar, 1985, p113), has classified the rapid social degeneration processes which occur in prisoners, in terms of dehumanisation (loss of individuality) and institutionalisation (loss of independence). Gonsa cites "disturbances in comprehension and ability to think" (Gonsa, 1992, p14). Roberts has written that prison abrogates individual responsibility and decision-making powers, creating an inappropriate learning environment (Roberts, 1992, p14). Gonin, in a 5 year study of inmates in Lyon prison discovered a deterioration in their physical and moral wellbeing. After one year in custody, Gonin found 33% of prisoners were unable to concentrate, 50% had memory impairment, 40% experienced sudden "mind voids" and 75% experienced dizziness. Lack of visual stimulation resulted in eyesight deterioration, while other inmates reported ulcers, hypersensitive development of hearing and a reduction in tactility. Gonin concluded these symptoms derived from "the deformation of time on the one hand, and the suppression of communication on the other...They are determined by imprisonment per se: by any prison" (quoted in Ruggiero, 1993, p61). However, recent longitudinal research with prisoners in Canada, found few general or chronic deteriorative effects and concluded that "the effects of prison on individuals are impermanent and situational" (Zamble and Porporino, 1988, p146).

Many prisoners interviewed for this study were aware of their mental deterioration:

"In here you don't do nothing - all you do is kill time. Your food is provided, everything is provided and when you come out, you go out with that attitude, and then you can't cope. So then they go and do something stupid and end up back again. That's what prison does to you. It's not really being locked up - it's just the fact that you can't do nothing for yourself. That's the problem" (Inmate, Prison C).

"Sometimes you think "I'm not institutionalised", and then as soon as a bell rings, you trot off down the corridor. I've noticed a number of things, I know I'm rambling a bit here, for example. I've not exactly lost, but I've less of an ability to communicate verbally. You see, most inmates, because they're packed in, in very close proximity, tend to, as a safety valve, not discuss things that are likely to cause arguments - we don't discuss religion, politics, that sort of thing, not very much anyway. And certainly I've noticed it's very much more difficult to concentrate on serious questions, or even just say reading the newspaper. It's not difficult, but it's less satisfying or connected than it was previously" (Inmate, Prison K).

However, some inmates reported that reading could help mitigate some of the above experiences - it offered them choice, an opportunity to think about things that were tacitly omitted from daily conversation and an intellectual challenge:

"From the moment you walk in the library, you're using your imagination - what trip you're going to go off on. You're in charge, no one else is there telling you what you are going to learn or do. The choice is yours. That's a big thing to offer in prison" (Inmate, Prison A).

Concentration and creativity are essential components of the reading process and many inmates will deliberately set out to read literature which poses the greatest difficulty. Much as Verlaine read-Shakespeare in the original while incarcerated at Mons prison, some inmates reported that they had begun reading books which they

would not have read outside, simply because they required a greater claim on their attention and would occupy more of their time:

"Well, you might as well read the classics in here, you've got the time. In fact, you daren't pick up too many light ones, because then you'll be left with nothing to read until they call library again. Look, I've just come back from the library now and I've got Dickens, couple of Hardy, Dostoyevsky and a couple of light ones" (Inmate, Prison B).

### 7.11 CHANGES IN READING PROFILES

Although the Library Association Guidelines for library provision in prison state that "custody does not of itself change the reading needs of that person" (Library Association, 1981, p9), many prisoners did however report a change in their reading patterns since they had come into prison. Some commented that their reading profile had altered because the limited range of books available had forced them to read material they would not normally have taken up:

"I think the variety I read has increased. Because of the limited amount of material I found that - I read horror stories a lot - because there'd only be so many, you'd run out of decent reading material in horror, so I'd go on to something else, science fiction and go through that. So it becomes wider. I can remember getting a book out on Frank Lloyd Wright, which perhaps I wouldn't normally have read. I think it improves yourself - that you're not being biased to one medium. I usually go for horrors, but since I've been inside, I've started varying it now, reading Thomas Hardy and things" (Ex-offender).

Often inmates found their capacity to absorb written texts increased rapidly and their tastes changed, often quite dramatically:

"The only reading I'd ever done before I came in to prison was at school. When I first started coming in to prison in the mid seventies, I'd just be picking up trashy novels, that's what I started off on, but that generated the interest back in education again, just by reading novels. You read a novel, something strikes home and it takes you further and further, and to me it was just a natural progression. Now I like the South American writers, like Isabel Allende, and oh, who wrote "One Hundred Years Of Solitude" [Garcia Marquez Gabriel, 1970, London:Cape]. People like that. A book has got to mean something to me, to be inspiring, to take you out of your own misery, if you like" (Inmate, Prison E).

Some prisoners reported that their appreciation of the reading experience had evolved - as the context of their reading had changed whilst in prison, so had the way they approached and understood the literary form:

"What has changed is the way I appreciate what I'm reading - I can appreciate good analogies in Mills and Boon that before I would have been ripping the pages out as I was going through them, so I wouldn't have to read it again. It was just because I wanted to read something and that was all there was. Whereas now I can read say Mills and Boon and dissect it, take out the good parts. Not that I read Mills and Boon all the time, but I can also see the same in a textbook - it might be something I'm not actually interested in, the information, but the way it's written and set out, is pleasing, because it carries you along" (Inmate, Prison J).

For those inmates whose low literacy skills were improved during their prison term, their reading profile did not change, it began to emerge, and for many of this group the act of reading itself constituted a mental challenge:

"Well, I've only been in 31 months, but when I came in I couldn't read or write. I've learned how to read, I've learned how to write. I can read books same as anyone else

can now. So I thank the library for that, you know what I mean?" (Inmate, Prison F)

Other inmates argued that the reading of large amounts of escapist fiction in prison tended to result in a diminishing appreciation of this kind of material. As a result, they became more discriminating in their choice of reading matter, and in addition they also found the purpose behind their reading had changed:

"It was only when I came into prison that I started reading regularly, getting to know different authors. It's definitely changed the kind of things I would have read. Definitely. When I first started getting into reading, I was into things like James Herbert, things like that, which I look at now and think, "Hmm, it's very superficial". I still enjoy reading them now occasionally, and if James Herbert writes a new book, I'll probably read it, but I class that as a timekiller, it won't affect my way of life, whereas other books and classics, things like that, do have a longer lasting effect on me" (Inmate, Prison A).

Some inmates said they became particularly interested in biographical works, which previously they would not have been considered. The lives of particular individuals are often thoroughly absorbed, in order that the meaning that other people have found to structure their lives can be utilised to impose some control over the inmate's typically directionless existence, in which any idea of planning for the future is often an anathema:

"I find the way it works is, if you're reading crazy books, you know like mad fiction, Stephen King and all that, they're not really reading anything apart from escapism. I don't believe they do any harm, but at the same time, you usually find that as time goes on, you become fed up with them and you start reading other things, autobiographies, people's lives, nonfiction books. You can actually start to say to yourself "What am I doing?", you know, "Where's my life actually gone?" You start to compare your life alongside other people's lives, and you begin to realise where you've gone wrong" (Inmate, Prison C).

However, some prisoners said that there was a tendency not to read "serious" material in prison, often because such literature was not available in the prison library, but rather to read, simply in order to forget about the present or to pass the time:

"Outside I do a lot of serious reading, but I've found that since I've been in prison the classics have gone out of the window and it's the pulp stuff I'm into now. I've started reading cowboys, I've got into science fiction since I've been in - the diversity of stuff I read now, crime dramas, thrillers, which wasn't the kind of stuff I used to enjoy reading, but since I've been in prison my needs have changed. You need to divert your thoughts from staring at your cell, and these pulp books are marvellous for that, you can get lost in them and a couple of hours have gone by" (Inmate, Prison G).

"I read more rubbish now, because outside I'd only read books if I were on a train, or somebody had recommended a book, you know. Now there's only so many good books in the library, so you have to read rubbish. I always take a book even if I can't find one that I really like, because there's nothing worse than having no books. When I was in a local prison, I used to go to the library and choose books by how thick they were. I'd only choose books that were very thick, so they'd take up more time" (Inmate, Prison G).

Other prisoners argued that while they considered reading was a mental challenge, it was an activity which was specifically confined within the institution. Furthermore, the possibility of obtaining any gains through the reading experience were deliberately ignored, for it was implicitly assumed such gains could not be transferred to the post-release environment, nor could these gains be generalised to impact on other activities:

"I don't read on the outside at all, but since I've been reading in here, I'm picking up more words, definitely. Although sometimes if I do look them up to see what they mean, I don't store the knowledge, because I think it'll be no use to me, unless I'm back in prison again" (Inmate, Prison J).

It is evident therefore, that an individual's reading patterns may change whilst they are in prison for a variety of reasons. For some inmates, literature was used to displace time by selecting particularly difficult or complex texts. For other prisoners, who in this study tended to be the more widely read, or better educated, literature was used to negate time, by immersion in escapist fiction. The reason for these differing approaches may lie in the fact that for the first group of inmates, prison often becomes to be viewed as a second chance for education or improvement. This is particularly true for those inmates who are getting older (that is, typically in their late twenties), or those who are serving a longer sentence and progressively working their way through the prison system, where as they move to less secure establishments, access to, and provision of, inmate activities, including the library service, tends to improve. As this process occurs, many prisoners welcomed the chance to renew their acquaintance with the reading habit:

"It helps a lot of people rediscover books for the first time in a lot of years, because of the way we've lived our lives on the outside - with TV and that you just forget about books really, from the time you leave school. And then you come into prison and you've got nothing to do and then the library is a focus of entertainment, an escape, for your hobbies, for technical books" (Inmate, Prison E).

Some inmates considered that the opportunity they had been given to pursue their own interests through reading would have a direct influence upon their future behaviour when released:

"I believe that everyone should have access to literature, to have the opportunity to study and to try and better themselves. I feel through the library you've got communication, it's a whole world of knowledge opened up to you. These are books that I wouldn't have read outside, I'm



far too busy. I don't really have the opportunity to read. I certainly wouldn't use the public library outside. I see this as an opportunity to not only better myself, but when I'm released from prison it may afford me the opportunity to reflect on what I've done and gain a better position in society" (Inmate, Prison G).

However, for the second group of prisoners, who tended to read more escapist literature, prison far from being perceived as an opportunity, is regarded as a confirmation of failure. Such fiction, while providing a new literary form, is not a mental challenge, but a mental cosh:

"When I was outside going to college, I'd only read because I had to read, because of my education. But when I came here, it's different hours. I ain't going anywhere, so you develop your own personal routine. So as I walk into my cell, there's 3 books there, so I'll get into them. Outside, I wouldn't even have known these things I'm reading existed. I never had the time to read science fiction, and now I've been reading a lot. That's been something new for me" (Inmate, Prison F).

## 7.12 READING AND INSIGHT

The written word has enormous power. It can disturb the emotions, it can transform attitudes, change values and help offer personal insights. Being in prison can force people to look at themselves and any catalysts which assist this process are important:

"What I read is something that soaks in and is beneficial to me, to build up my character in the long run, so when I hit the street now, I'll probably be more in tune than I was before. Rather than be sat on a shelf for a year until release, now I can be more productive" (Inmate, Prison J).

For a number of prisoners, their experience in custody may be a time of intense personal self-examination. While this may lead

some inmates to fervently adopt particular religious beliefs, as outlined in Chapter 8, others may adopt a more secular perspective, and reading is often an important resource in this endeavour:

"A lot of men want to know more about themselves, searching for their inner consciousness and a particular way of life they can adopt. We don't come across the whole scope of ideas, even on the outside, through direct experience, so reading even, well I shouldn't say even, fiction, sometimes is very enlightening as to people's behaviour. I think that can only be enriching in some form" (Librarian, Prison E).

Rigid, concrete thinking, egocentricity and impulsiveness, are cognitive deficits that have been recognised in many offenders (Williamson, 1993, p55). Helping inmates address these poorly developed thinking patterns requires a change in the subject's conceptualisation, ordering and processing of private events (Huff, 1987, p231). One inmate found that the essentially private act of reading, because it presented a range of alternatives, could help overcome some of these deficits:

"Through reading you might come onto other people's ways of thinking - the way they put something over and their reaction to it. You stop and think "Would I do that, would I not do that?" I don't know if it changes you so much, but you go through a lot more thought processes before you come to the decision you come to. You'll consider things a lot more, because you've got so many decisions you could come to. You might come to a decision you would have made anyway, but you'll think about it more. It's got to improve your brainpower to a certain extent, it must do" (Inmate, Prison J).

Other prisoners said that they found books useful in a therapeutic sense, enabling them to compare their own experiences, which may never have been articulated to anyone, against those of another:

"You absorb things all the time. But there's different sorts of reading isn't there? There's reading just to entertain yourself, and there's reading to study, but all the time you're thinking, using your mind. I think everyone has got ideas inside them, but they can't articulate them, but by seeing someone else's mind who's gone through the same struggle and come out with some sort of clarification of it, it suddenly hits you and you can put it into words better. I think it makes you think and be more articulate in general, reading different things" (Inmate, Prison F).

Similarly this officer considered that reading was useful in helping prisoners derive insight into their own behaviour, by developing cognitive skills:

"Reading gives you something to think about. And if you think about it, you can perhaps understand it. Instead of seeing things solely in black and white, you now see them in grey areas, and perhaps give a little more thought to them. And that would widen your perceptions" (Prison Officer, Prison F).

Some inmates did say that they felt reading certain material had helped them address particular aspects of their offending behaviour. In Chapter 6, it was noted that many sex offenders reported that they found reading psychology books was helpful. Inmates held on normal location also commented that they found such material to be useful in promoting self-analysis:

"Through books people learn about themselves - like you get people who read psychology books, stuff like that, it helps then learn about why they lose their temper or whatever. You'll hear them talk about it and discuss it in the evenings when you sit around. I mean that's taking it simplistically, but they'll start to look into themselves and start to realise perhaps why they have come round to being in prison. That's got to be good" (Inmate, Prison A).

Other prisoners said reading just one particular book had made such an impact on them that it had completely altered their views of

themselves and society, and it had stimulated them to become voracious readers:

"I found a book in the prison library, written by Brian Leslie Weiss, "Many Lives, Many Masters" [1994, New York:Piatkus], brilliant book. Read it seven times actually - I always go back to it. He's an eminent psychoanalyst in America this guy. From there, I started getting into other books, it sort of opened up a whole new world, just starting from this one book. And you can better yourself. It certainly broadens your horizons, but I think this is what the library's all about - the books are here, all the knowledge in the world is there to be read. It snowballs from one book to another. Out of these books a whole new world has opened up" (Inmate, Prison A).

Some argued that reading offered them insights into the lives of others more disadvantaged themselves, and enabled them to develop a more rational perspective about their own existence:

"It started off when I read about Christy Brown, it gave me a whole new perspective on situations and helped me to cope with my own burden. And I've actually carried that on, because here I work for charity. I'm the rep on our wing for a local charity, and we raise funds for them, we have them in here for parties. So it's altered my approach to all sorts of different areas of life" (Inmate, Prison D).

Other inmates reported that as they had begun to read more, their understanding of, and their ability to use a library, had increased:

"I'm reading a lot more different authors. I'm widening my branch - I've had to read so many, because you've got so much more time to read. It's widened my horizons. Also one thing I discovered which I didn't know outside was how useful a reference library can be. To someone who's not used them, and thought of them as highbrow places for consultants, professors and eggheads to dig their noses into. But a lot of the books I've come across are eminently readable, even the law books, by anybody with a basic education, and it's taken a little bit of my fear away that certain areas of books which perhaps I would not have been bothered to read before, because I thought it's no good getting into that, I'll never understand what's in it. But with time on your hands, you

pick it up anyway and start looking through it, and "Oh, I understand that", and so on. So it's helped me there. And I've used Archbold's - I didn't really know why I was sent down, not the ins and outs of it, because apparently my money ran out at the meter and the solicitor switched off. It happens. And I wanted to find out a bit more. And so that's been very, very useful" (Inmate, Prison J).

### 7.13 NON-BOOK MATERIAL

While providing inmates with access to reading material constitutes the major part of the recreational provision of most prison libraries, there have been some initiatives to provide a range of other services. Although only three prisons of the ten studied, offered a cassette collection, on a national scale the Prison Service has expressed a desire to "expand prison libraries into information centres", by exploiting for example, multi-media technology (Blunt, 1994, p163). Hopkins, in a survey of prison library service provision, cited the "development of CD-ROM resources from Gloucestershire, Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire; development of viewdata services and community information databases in Kent, Durham, Lincolnshire and Gloucestershire...and wider development of spoken word cassettes in a range of authorities and establishments" (Hopkins, 1994, p161).

Unfortunately, provision of such resources is only likely to be effective if inmates are permitted enough time to visit the library. For prisoners on remand, or vulnerable prisoners, this may be a particular problem. The issue of access will be examined more fully in Chapter 9. In this study, some public library authorities reported that they refused to consider placing a

cassette collection, or even language tapes, within a prison, for fears of loss and/or damage, but also because they would be unable to charge for its hire:

"Any audio-visual material, as far as this authority is concerned, is money making, and they don't make money on it in here. And they definitely don't make money on it if you lose it" (Librarian, Prison E).

However, where prisoners did have access to non-book media, they tended to have positive views on this element of stock provision:

"This library here is one of the most brilliant I've ever come across, because not only can you get facilities for books, you've got computers, videos, tapes and they're very helpful people in there" (Inmate, Prison K).

Inmates reported using these facilities to help them learn foreign languages:

"I learnt German. The library had the books, and ordered you the courses. They'd got Talk German, Deutsch Direkt - the tapes and the books. There was also a TV in there, for watching videos. People could put their earphones on and put a nature programme on, something like that. Occasionally I put the Deutsch Direkt video on. You could book it through the librarian" (Ex-offender).

Other inmates said that talking books were useful for inmates with low literacy skills or for use at night time, when the lights were shut off:

"There's quite a demand for books on tape - either because some people find it difficult to read the printed word, or because you're often in the dark here. The lights are switched off at 11 and you're still wide awake, and if you've got a tape, you can play it and hear a book, so the few that are here are extremely well used" (Inmate, Prison K).

#### 7.14 READING AND SEGREGATED PRISONERS

Inmates who may seek the protection that Rule 43 offers include prisoners who have been, or who are at risk of being, bullied by other inmates, inmates who owe money to other inmates and inmates whose previous profession may not be overly popular with other prisoners - for example, prison officers, police officers and members of the legal profession. In addition to these groups of offenders, prisoners may also be segregated against their will if it is felt they are behaving in a violent, subversive or threatening way.

These prisoners may be transferred to punishment cells or a segregation unit where they can be held in conditions where their behaviour can be monitored more closely and contained more effectively. The physical conditions of cellular confinement may vary according to the perceived problems of control which individual prisoners are thought to present. At one end of the scale are strip cells where inmates are held in the most basic conditions, while at the other, some inmates may be permitted some of their personal possessions, including books. The Prison Act of 1952 does not provide for punishment cells as such, instead stating that "in every prison cells shall be provided for the temporary confinement of violent or refractory prisoners". Furthermore Rules 2 and 3 of the Prison Act state that "order and discipline shall be maintained with firmness but no more restriction than is required for safe custody and well-ordered community life" and that such confinement should not mean that a

prisoner is "deprived unduly of the the society of other persons" (quoted in Plotnikoff, 1988, p81). Nevertheless, within the segregation units themselves, some of the poorest conditions within the whole prison system exist and provision of the most basic facilities is limited:

"Opportunities for constructive or therapeutic activities, or even simple pastimes, have been almost non-existent, not only because such activities are sparsely provided in local prisons anyway, but also because of the practical difficulties of providing parallel segregated activities" (Twinn, 1992, p53).

For those prisoners who already have very aggressive personalities or who feel the need to assert themselves within the prison subculture, and who find self-control difficult, or even consider it unnecessary, they almost inevitably end up in the segregation unit on a charge. Within these units, reading may have an essential role to play in calming the prisoner and acting as a diverting influence. This can also assist officer staff in the management of these potentially violent and disruptive inmates. In the isolation of segregation units, particular books may have a profound, cathartic effect on their readers. Jimmy Boyle for example, wrote about the power he gained from reading fictional texts whilst a segregated prisoner:

"Books became a very important aspect of my survival in solitary and I would always try to get ones that would be emotionally fulfilling, books that would become a partner, that I could read time and time again; they were mostly by authors like Dostoyevsky, Victor Hugo, Dickens, Tolstoy, Solzhenitsyn and Steinbeck. I concentrated on the works of these men and whenever I got one of their books I felt I'd discovered a new treasure as the mere possession of it delighted me" (quoted in Baxendale, 1985, p12).



However, the nature of provision of the library services to segregation units in many prisons is little more than a fortnightly visit by the librarian to replenish the collection with a few discarded paperbacks. Library staff argued that the high level of damage to material in segregation units precluded any enhancement of the stock beyond this most basic level:

"The books in the block tend to be damaged ones anyway, ones that have come back to here damaged and we don't feel that they are still in a good enough condition to go on the shelf. The reason for that is if they are took down the block it's usually that they've committed some offence, or they are going to be shipped out, and the mood of them often tends to be aggressive. If they did get a book, they'd be likely to tear it up. So we don't recommend that good condition books go down the block" (Librarian, Prison E).

It is certainly true that many inmates in segregation units present a difficult control problem to staff, but simply isolating these individuals and reducing their sensory inputs, is likely to further increase levels of stress and reinforce patterns of aggressive behaviour. Reading however, may be an effective way of occupying an individual's time and reducing tension, as this chaplain commented:

"I've just come from the segregation unit and one of the lads there was reading a great thick novel and it was certainly relieving a great deal of frustration and monotony for him" (Chaplain, Prison J).

Likewise, those inmates with a poor disciplinary record who were frequently transferred to the segregation unit argued that the provision of reading material was very important for prisoners in the block:

"It's the difference between life and death. I've done a fair bit of time in seg units, and they usually have a metal cupboard with dog-eared paperbacks in. And the Jesus freaks have a nasty tendency to fill them with their material. If you get lucky, you might find something that's worth reading. But especially in segregation, that's one place you need more books than anywhere else" (Inmate, Prison D).

One prisoner, previously regarded by many officers as particularly dangerous and unpredictable, recalled how important books had been to him in absorbing his attention whilst he was in the segregation unit:

"I spent a lot of time in solitary confinement - I used to do a lot of reading there. It was hard to get books there sometimes. And they were bad ones as well. Things I'd read, I'd be living the experience with them. Because when you're in solitary, over a period of time everything recedes, and you do become very, very insular and when you're reading something like that you can be touched very easily by it, you're transported there very, very easy, whereas outside people in the hustle and bustle, that can't really happen - you're always going to be distant from it, conscious all the time - how could this guy do that, whereas in solitary, you can really relate to it. In that respect, books were invaluable. Take them away and there'd be a big hole left" (Inmate, Prison D).

#### 7.15 READING AND THE LONG TERM PRISONER

Inmates who are serving long terms of imprisonment may need to develop specific kinds of coping mechanisms in order to fully accept their sentence. Lifers, in particular, can tend to become very isolated as they see other prisoners, entering the jail and then being released. To compensate for this lack of worldly interaction, long sentenced prisoners will try to absorb experiences indirectly through surrogate means. For these inmates, literature is often used quite deliberately to help them establish a world of intellectual detachment, where their own

worries and concerns are sublimated. For example, Willie Sutton, a life sentenced prisoner, has written:

"I'll spend the rest of my life reading, and because I'd rather read than do anything else, I don't look forward to years of hopeless, black despair. Most men who are in for life are filled with bitterness and hatred for the unkind fate that led them to such a horrible end. My reading has given me the ability to judge my life, my actions and my present situation with a considerable degree of detachment. I can't repeat often enough that there is not a soul in the world I can blame for what happened to me" (quoted in Suvak, 1978, p30-31).

Likewise, an inmate interviewed as part of the present research, expressed similar motives behind his desire for reading:

"I've been in like 20 years and I spent a lot of years just trying to come to terms with myself, with my sentence. I was very unworldly when I came in and I got to a point where I needed to expand my knowledge of the world, what it was about outside, history and everything. So I did a lot of reading and personal studies. The library was definitely helpful while I was learning. If the books hadn't been there, I wouldn't have been able to do that really" (Inmate, Prison D).

Another life sentenced prisoner argued that reading helped as a displacement activity, ameliorating the feelings of negativity and powerlessness, which many long termers begin to experience:

"There's a lot of people in here doing long sentences, like life sentences. They need something to help them pass the time, because in my mind, I think that prison is more psychological than anything else, you can't help get bad thoughts in your head, so the best thing you can do is read a book, take your mind off it" (Inmate, Prison H).

## 7.16 EVALUATION

By identifying with, or sharing part of someone else's life, or even their world, prisoners can use the act of reading in many different ways, while some inmates may even use books to indirectly experience the sense of freedom:

"Reading gives you bit of a haven, bit of an escape. That's probably why there's so many books on fantasy, other worlds. When I first came into prison, I'd spent all my life at sea, as a merchant seaman, I got into books on round the world yachtsmen. But because I'd been at sea, I just felt like I was back at sea reading them. I was reading book after book like that, lighting one with another. And there were a few other lads from Liverpool who were seamen and they were doing the same thing. I would follow it, it was like a diary with some of these books and you go from day to day - I was actually living along with them. It helped me a lot at the time - I would imagine it would be doing the same for the others. Fantasy of a sort, getting away from the awful present. Because I found the situation very hard going in my early days. First five years are the worst" (Inmate, Prison D).

Some critics however, have argued that if prisoners have committed offences so serious as to warrant a custodial sentence, they should not be experiencing any degree of freedom, vicariously or otherwise. They argue that the recreational aspect of the prison environment has been over emphasised, and it is certainly not part of the librarian's role to provide inmates with the material to forget where they are and their purpose in being there. For example, Coyle, while recognising that recreational library services may help foster a more stable or less stressful prison environment, insists this detracts from the primary purpose of incarceration:

"prison is, after all, in a very real sense, the purposeful manufacture of stress - goal directed in terms of punishment

and deterrence...The purpose of correctional work is not to mitigate punishment by working for the happiness and comfort of the inmates" (Coyle, 1987, p96).

Likewise, the Home Secretary has recently advocated the tightening of prison discipline, and has expressed the view that prisons should be "austere" and "must not be places where prisoners enjoy excellent facilities and simply while away their time at leisure" (The Independent, 4/11/1993, p5).

However, ever since the Gladstone Report of 1895, it has been almost axiomatic that prisons are not intended to compound any sanction already imposed by the courts whereby an individual has already been deprived of their liberty. For example, Leon Brittan, who could by no means be described as a bleeding heart, during his announcement of tougher penal measures when he was Home Secretary in 1983, felt compelled to also state:

"Whatever we think of the people we send to prison, we send them there as punishment and not for punishment" (quoted in Stern, 1989, p45).

The Chief Inspector of Prisons, Judge Tumim has recently argued that prison regimes should have "active regimes", beyond a punitive or custodial function, whereby prison could be "a constructive experience, preparing inmates to take on the responsibilities and demands of liberty with a chance of succeeding" (Tumim, 1993, p2). The prison library is able to offer inmates, through the opportunity to read, an important constructive activity. Recreational reading may be an extremely important, yet consistently underrated, factor in an individual's rehabilitation. For example, one inmate argued that reading

could help expand the inmate's narrow view of the world, and in doing so help break the cycle of offending:

"Often people who commit crimes, it's because their parameters are very narrow, and they can't look outside those parameters, because they're afraid to. The library can do that, it can widen the parameters that you have" (Inmate, Prison A).

A Pre-release officer considered that reading could be helpful even for the "bed and breakfast" prisoner, who are typically the most disruptive group within the inmate population:

"Particularly the short termers that keep coming back and back and back, it may be possibly they've got a narrow outlook on life, so if they can start reading and widen that, then it may be beneficial" (Prison Officer, Prison B).

Whether these links are indeed possible, and whether they are achieved in practice, are the salient questions to address: how many of the benefits that inmates have obtained from their reading will they take out of the establishment with them, and will there be have any impact on their subsequent behaviour? One inmate said:

"I don't know whether it's going to stick or just be a passing phase. Either way it can't be bad" (Inmate, Prison F).

Some critics would agree that the act of reading is a beneficial activity in its own right. For example, Garceau thought that "there is a fundamental belief, so generally accepted as to be often left unsaid, in the virtue of the written word, the reading of which is good in itself" (Garceau, 1949, p50), while Shera said "the act of reading itself contributes to the moral and

intellectual welfare of both the individual and the community"

(Shera, 1972, p46). Similarly, this Senior Librarian observed:

"I take it for granted that a library will do something positive for whoever is using it. Librarians like to think literature is a good thing - it helps promote an awareness of what's going on, and gives an insight into a person's own lifestyle" (Senior Librarian, Public Library Authority, Prison F).

However, because for many inmates, the physical act of reading is situation specific - they will read in the prison environment and probably nowhere else - some researchers have argued that any benefits are likely to be negligible. This is because it is considered that the adoption of new learned behaviours and attitudes requires interaction with, and feedback from, the environment in which the new behaviours are going to be practiced, particularly when the two environments are very different. Zamble and Porporino conclude that "to expect criminal offenders to change their behaviour on the outside while confined to a cell is at best chimerical" (Zamble and Porporino, 1988, p155). Harry Houghton, an ex-prisoner; in his book, "Operation Portland", put it a little more directly:

"Short of shitting on the carpet twice a day and leaving it there, I can't see how any ex-prisoner can dutifully practice what he has learnt inside" (quoted in Priestley, 1989, p24).

Furthermore, because prison is a controlled environment the changes in inmate behaviour that do occur are artificially induced, principally in response to the force of stated regulations, and subsequently maintained, but only temporarily, by the threat of punishment, rather than reward or reinforcement. Once these

controls are removed therefore, upon release for example, they are likely to be replaced by the pre-existing negative, maladaptive behavioural responses. Thus, although inmates may volunteer to undergo therapy or take part in pre-release courses, for many prisoners the primary object is to secure release, not necessarily to adopt new learned behaviours, as this prisoner pointed out:

"Many inmates see therapy as just satisfying the system they're within - if they do the therapy they're keeping the screws happy, therefore they're more likely to get their parole" (Inmate, Prison K).

However, reading, unlike many other activities undertaken in prison, is a wholly optional activity with no hidden agenda attached. In this respect, the context of the experience is important. For many inmates, reading becomes, as we have seen, almost an unconscious learning process, and is not perceived as being subject to particular regime controls. Prisoners may not associate any of the experiences they have gained through reading with any of the formal measures of discipline or control employed in other parts of the establishment. Indeed, reading is one of the few things in prison which inmates can do which replicates an outside activity. Furthermore, as inmates make use of the prison library to obtain their reading matter this process of normalisation may be reinforced. For example, the ways in which inmates tended to perceive the library as a neutral area within the prison, and the advantages resulting from that perspective were discussed in Chapter 6.



Given these perceptions, the likelihood of the transference of new learned attitudes gained through the experience of reading becomes more likely, because it offers prisoners the opportunity to maintain and develop their links with the outside. Reading offers inmates the unique experience of being "simultaneously absent and present at the same time" (O'Rourke, 1993, p13). Thus, even though deprived of some of their choices, and constrained in their access, to much of the popular media, prisoners can utilise the written word to interact with the outside world. This can be done from within the inmate's cell, creating a private space within an institution specifically designed to enable prisoners to be constantly monitored and observed.

Prisoners reported that reading had given them many tangible benefits. For some inmates, using books to relax and relieve stress may be a new experience, and encouraging offenders to utilise non-criminal ways in dealing with their leisure time is important. For others, it provided a new perspective on their offending behaviour and helped them come to terms with the effects of their own actions. In addition, inmates reported positive developments in their literacy skills, an improvement in their job prospects, changes in negative attitudes, an increase in self awareness and a stimulus to their own self education. Even at perhaps the most basic level, most prisoners felt that reading had, at some time, helped them through their sentence, either by combatting boredom or by providing a diversionary activity, away from involvement in other more negative pursuits.

The Council of Europe Report on education within prisons concluded that "the values and possibilities of libraries are often underestimated" (Council of Europe, 1990, para8.6), but went on to emphasise that:

"Given their disadvantaged backgrounds, many prisoners will be unfamiliar with books and hesitant to use the facility. It is important that special efforts be made to attract such prisoners to the library and to make them feel at ease within it" (Council of Europe, 1990, para8.6).

However, from the results of this study, it seems clear that in many cases, library use in particular and reading in general, were activities that inmates did on their own initiative, and which received little encouragement or promotion within the prison environment. Some of the reasons why this should be so are examined in Chapter 9.

## CHAPTER 8

# RELIGIOUS MATERIAL AND THE PRISON LIBRARY

As detailed in Chapter 3, from the beginnings of the modern prison system, the provision of religious books figured prominently in attempts to reform prisoners. These early efforts to change the moral and spiritual horizon of criminals were initially associated with philanthropic organisations and then co-ordinated through the activities of the prison chaplain. However, as the century passed, prisoners were permitted to read more secular literature, but the nature of this was strictly controlled. For example, in 1823, the Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline maintained that "all books placed in the hands of prisoners should have, even while they are amused and instructed, a direct tendency to better the morals and correct the vices of those who read them" (quoted in Fyfe, 1992, p9).

## 8.1 RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND MORAL ACTION

Today there still remains the basic belief, held by both individuals and organisations involved in the dissemination of religious and morally uplifting literature to prison

establishments, that by changing the person, in terms of helping them develop a new belief system and a perspective of moral action, then those individuals will be strong enough to resist any of the other social and environmental pressures which may otherwise have precipitated criminal behaviour. This chaplain for example, made clear the relationship that he considered to exist between religious belief, morality and criminality:

"From a Christian perspective, I think the fundamental motivation to wrongdoing comes from moral attitudes and there needs to be some major change there before there is any subsequent change in behaviour" (Chaplain, Prison F).

However, many of the inmates interviewed perceived no clear association between a lack of moral principles and criminal behaviour. Some inmates were perfectly happy with their moral outlook, and indeed some said they would resent any attempts to change it:

"My morals are nothing to do with anybody - they're me. I'm an individual, with freedom of choice, freedom of thought. If they turned round to me and said "We want to change your moral attitude", I'd be straight down the block, you know what I mean?" (Inmate, Prison C).

Some argued that their crime, though illegal, was not immoral, and receiving a custodial sentence had not changed their moral values, nor had they any intention to refrain from committing further offences upon their release:

"It hasn't changed my moral perceptions at all, being here. Because I'm in here for importation of cannabis and I didn't think there was anything wrong with it before I came in and I don't now. I genuinely don't want to end up in prison again - I hope it means that I won't. Or at least I'll adjust my lifestyle in such a way that I don't get caught" (Inmate, Prison E).

Some offenders exhibited a distorted moral perspective which directly contributed to their criminality:

"Well, there's no real stigma now about going to prison - I don't think people think it's that wrong to commit crimes now. Me personally, I was taking money from banks and that. What I was doing was petty - they crucify people, people are killing themselves, the banks are putting them under so much pressure. They send you a letter and charge you for it. You read it every day - the High St. banks are being slaughtered with their attitudes. I don't think there is anything wrong with taking a few quid out of them. I honestly don't. I read an article on one of the banks, HFC, which I took about 25 grand off, and it said they were more or less thieves, because of the small print you pay treble what you borrow and all that. I sat chuckling away thinking you won't get nothing off me. But I suppose years ago you'd have thought that was wrong. But the younger ones, no way are they going to accept it" (Inmate, Prison E).

In addition, as Ross and Fabiano have noted, there may be dissonance between the content of an individual's moral code in terms of knowledge, beliefs and attitudes, and their process of moral reasoning (Ross and Fabiano, 1985, p169). Sex offenders often exhibit this kind of distorted thinking:

"A lot of people commit sex offences by and large knowing it's wrong and knowing full well what the legal consequences are likely to be. They've probably arrived at something called the "sod it" factor, and they commit the offence despite the consequences" (Inmate, Prison K).

Other inmates argued that according to their scale of moral values, certain offences could be legitimised:

"I knew when I went on this importation lark, there was a likelihood I might get caught, but the inducement I had to take up this bit of work with, we're talking about millions of pounds - every time I brought a load in, it was a ton and a half of cannabis - we're talking about 4 million pounds every trip. It takes a strong man to walk away from the sort of profits we're talking about on that scale. But if

somebody was to say to me "Let's go and blag a shop down the road", I'd tell them to piss off, I ain't interested in anything like that. Or "Let's go and commit an armed robbery for 30 grand", I'm not interested, but when somebody comes to me and says "You ain't got to bash nobody on the head and we can bring in a load of cannabis and quadruple our money", I was interested. I'm not what you call a villain, I'm a toerag, but not a villain. That's the way I interpret it. I don't go round with shooters and bash people up. It's like white collar crime. And I thoroughly enjoyed doing it. I got caught, so I'll do my bird" (Inmate, Prison E).

Other inmates argued that although offenders are fully aware of the distinctions and boundaries of criminality and morality, these are often overwhelmed by other pressures:

"Every crime every lad does - they know it's wrong. Like stealing cars, they all know it's wrong. "Let's just take this car for a buzz". That's all they get out of it is a buzz. They know it's wrong whatever they do. When I did my burglaries, I knew it was wrong, but I needed some money" (Inmate, Prison J).

It is the articulation of precisely these kinds of attitudes, distorted reasoning processes and rationalisations of criminal activity that has caused many chaplains, religious and voluntary organisations to set a high priority on providing prison establishments with a wide range of literature in order to address these problems. A large number and a wide variety of groups have become involved in this area, and significant amounts of literature are regularly donated to prison libraries by these bodies.

## 8.2 THE STATUTORY PROVISION OF RELIGIOUS MATERIAL WITHIN THE PRISON LIBRARY

Within this broad agenda, the provision of specifically religious material within prison libraries varies greatly between different establishments. The only provision with respect to religious material that prison libraries are required to fulfil is to comply with Circular Instruction 20/1992, issued under the auspices of the Chief Education Officer's Branch of the Prison Service, which informs all Governors that libraries should have the "Directory and Guide on Religious Practices in H.M. Prison Service", and copies of "standard religious text books".

Whatever religious material is stocked beyond this minimum provision is at the discretion of the librarian. Thus, some libraries will contain a wide variety of material - including not only stock which has been purchased by the public library authority, but also texts which have been donated by outside organisations. Some libraries will only stock material which deals with religious issues on the basis of providing information about different faiths and beliefs: Other librarians will argue that it is the responsibility of the chaplaincy to provide religious material. These three approaches will be examined in turn.

### 8.3 THE PRISON LIBRARY: A COMPREHENSIVE STOCK OF RELIGIOUS MATERIAL

Some prisoners were of the view that religious material should be available in the prison library as well as the chaplaincy:

"A lot of people are closet Christians - they won't come up to the chapel because of peer pressure. I've heard it - they won't go, because they might have the piss taken. If the reading material isn't there in the library, they're not going to go looking for it, but if it is there, then there's the opportunity available to read it" (Inmate, Prison B).

However, in spite of such attitudes, in some prisons visited there was little or no evidence of co-operation between the chaplaincy team and the librarian regarding the provision of religious material. For example, one chaplain interviewed said:

"I hadn't considered putting books myself into the library. Maybe that's something I could offer the library. It's certainly something I will bear in mind and talk over with her" (Chaplain, Prison A).

The next day the chaplain sent a large box of books to the library. As the librarian examined "The Cross and the Switchblade" (Wilkerson, 1988), she said:

"Oh, this would be just the kind of thing that would go down well" (Librarian, Prison A).

However, the question may arise, particularly in regard to some of the more extreme evangelical and testimonial texts, as to whether this material should be critically examined as part of the library authority's standard stock selection procedure. In some prisons, achieving this balance of stock management has created difficulties - the kind of religious text which a librarian may



consider acceptable for example, may not find favour with the chaplaincy, and vice versa. One chaplain, for instance, considered material published by some fundamentalist religious groups, which are stocked in some prison libraries, to be positively harmful:

"I get really annoyed if I've gone to prison libraries and I've seen very little on intelligent, what evangelists and fundamentalists would call liberal stuff, and it doesn't get a look in. We've got religion totally taken over by the occult, magic and all this other stuff, when we've got university departments of theology throughout Europe, as well as America, that are in the mainstream of historical scholarship and it really hurts me a lot, that stuff which is written for an ordinary intelligent readership, people capable of doing 'O' level sociology and so on, and yet we can't get that stuff in libraries. I've considered donating books to the library, although I'm not sure whether they'd stay in the prison library or get lost elsewhere. You see, sometimes people do think about religion, spirituality and faith while they are in prison, but they don't get any - all they get is witchcraft and the occult, and if they turn to some of the more evangelical people, they get pulp. So I'm quite interested in certain aspects of religious stocking, particularly in regard to the occult, not because I want to raise censorship, but because it worries me that sometimes excellent mainstream stuff published on the Christian religion for example, doesn't get in any sense stocked. What we do get is an awful lot of magic and fundamentalist stuff which I actually think is quite pernicious, because it actually abuses people's minds, particularly vulnerable people, and if they are going to turn to things religious and spiritual, I think it also has to be reasonable and based in some kind of empirical truth" (Chaplain, Prison F).

These views, were echoed by chaplains at many other establishments - great concern was expressed that inappropriate religious, and "occult", material was being stocked by the prison library. Hence, some librarians have preferred to follow the second option with regard to religious literature.

#### 8.4 THE PRISON LIBRARY: A SOURCE OF RELIGIOUS INFORMATION ONLY

Stocks of religious material in other prison libraries reflected the view that this was an area of provision which should be addressed solely through the chaplaincy. The only material which would be stocked would be that providing information about belief systems:

"What we've got in the library at the moment are books explaining what the basic beliefs are. I just see it as another source of information and that's all it should be" (Inmate, Prison K).

This view was reflected by a chaplain at another prison:

"One of the problems of the chaplaincy is to get an even balance and trying to get the more sensible material in. When I came in I ditched most of the testimonial books and spent 200 pounds out of my own budget on books and put them in the library. The books that I put into the library were more to do with information on Christianity, rather than giving a strong message. I would see I'm more into challenging people's lives rather than in converting them in that sense" (Chaplain, Prison J).

#### 8.5 THE PRISON LIBRARY: NO RELIGIOUS STOCK:

Some prison librarians felt that the responsibility for the provision of all religious material should rest with the chaplaincy. Likewise, some inmates argued that other subjects were more important than religion:

"If you've got the money, then do it, but I think there's things that take priority and I think educational books take priority" (Inmate, Prison E).

Furthermore, some inmates expressed the view that the negative effects of stocking religious material in certain cases outweighed the benefits:

"Religion can mask offending behaviour, particularly with sex offenders, but with any offenders. A lot of guys here are born again Christians, they've all seen the light, and none of them want to address their offending behaviour, because that was the old self, and the new self doesn't have that problem. So there's a tendency to mask it, and these sort of evangelical books - I can see the dangers of them. There tends to be a lack of realism there and I think some of those books reinforce that" (Inmate, Prison K).

Some chaplains preferred to supply their own stock of religious material, and not use the prison library at all:

"Normally, I provide religious books here, not the prison library. It's better for us to have a separate library - I can add books to it from my budget as and when I want to, so there's a degree of autonomy. So I might get things on bereavement, which might not come high on the list of priorities in the library, so instead of duplicating resources, I can buy it and put it here. It's a small library, we're a very small establishment - they wouldn't have room for the collection we've got in the chapel library, apart from anything else" (Chaplain, Prison G).

## 8.6 VOLUNTARY DONATIONS

However, most prison libraries tend to fall into the first two categories and thus will have at least some material written from a religious stand-point. This stock may have been bought directly by the public library authority specifically for the prison library, or a proportion of this material may have been donated by the many groups and religious organisations, fundamentalist, evangelical and otherwise, who target prisoners as a particular

group of people especially in need of their own particular brand of salvation. These groups have all received the sanction of the Chief Education Officer's Branch of the Prison Service. Four of the principal groups who donate reading matter to prisons will be examined - these are The Prism Project, The Way to Happiness Foundation, Prison Christian Book Ministries and The Prison Phoenix Trust.

### 8.7 THE PRISM PROJECT

The Prism Project very clearly states in its promotional literature that its main objective is to provide appropriate reading material which can help in an individual's rehabilitation:

"There is a growing thirst for spirituality in prisons, with many inmates beginning to understand that being free is not so much a question of 'where you are' but 'who you are' and that a place of confinement can also be a place for growth. The Project's non-denominational book programme offers prisoners the chance to find new hope, self-knowledge and understanding so that they are encouraged to go forth and lead happier, more rewarding lives".

In an attempt to achieve these goals, the Project, a registered charity, set up in 1989, "provides prison libraries with a range of spiritually awakening and self-help books".

The Project's ideological foundation is based on the work of the spiritualist and psychic Edgar Cayce, and many of Cayce's books are among the texts supplied. The Project has supplied "several thousand" books to prison establishments, and the Project obtains these either from the authors themselves or through liaison with

other organisations. Each prison will receive an initial package of books and then a further donation twice yearly. The Project will give "two or three copies of each book to some of the larger establishments for circulation in second libraries, chaplaincies, hospital wings, punishment wings and education departments". To give some idea of the type of material which is supplied, the October 1993 donation, which was forwarded to 127 prisons, comprised the following 13 titles:

NATH SRI INDAR - Yoga The Classical Way  
 BEK LILLA - To The Light  
 ROMAN SANAYA - Living With Joy  
 EAGLE WHITE - Heal Thyself  
 BACH RICHARD -Jonathan Livingston Seagull  
 ARE PRESS - A Search For God  
 PECK MARGARET SCOTT - A Road Less Travelled  
 PRABHUPADA SWAMI - Bhagavad Gita  
 HAY LOUISE L. - The Power Is Within You  
 REILLY HAROLD - Handbook For Health  
 ST. AUBYN LORNA - Today Is A Good Day To Die  
 ST. PIERRE GASTON - The Metamorphic Technique  
 BUTTERWORTH ERIC - The Power Within

In addition, the following 6 booklets were included in the donation:

PEALE NORMAN VINCENT - The Power Of Positive Thinking  
 YOGA RAJA - Thought For Today  
 WHITE RUTH - Sexuality And Spirituality  
 LAMBOURNE DAVID - The Affirmative Way  
 CROW JOHN - The Death Of Jesus And The Resurrection Of Christ  
 FRASER JUDY - Second Aid

Also included were a selection of back issues of the following magazines:

Cadaceus, Yoga And Health, Kindred Spirit, Link Up, New Humanity, Rainbow Ark, Healing Review, Association for Research and Enlightenment Community News, Human Potential, I to I, Psychic News, Journal Of Alternative And Complementary

Medicine, Prediction, Cahoots, The Middle Way, Cygnus Book Club, The Edgar Cayce Centre

Finally, over the whole of the year, the Project distributed to 65 prisons over 4000 second-hand spiritual books.

Organisations which donated material, which the project then distributed on their behalf, included the Patanjali Yoga Centre, White Eagle Publishing Trust, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust and the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University.

The two main questions to be resolved concerning the work of the Prism Project, and indeed, to a certain extent, of all the organisations providing spiritual literature to prison establishments, are to what extent are they, in practice, providing a non-denominational book programme and is there any conflict between encouraging prisoners to use reading material to increase their self awareness and understanding, and the Project's desire to promote its own ideological and spiritual stand-point? The large number of books the Project donates to each prison which concern reincarnation and spiritualism, and in particular, the significant number of works donated which are essentially extracts and reprints of Edgar Cayce's own books (such as "Edgar Cayce on Dreams", "Edgar Cayce on ESP", "Edgar Cayce on Reincarnation", "Edgar Cayce on the Secrets of the Universe", "Edgar Cayce on the Mysteries of the Mind" and "Edgar Cayce on Remembering Past Lives"), hardly seem to be promoting a "non-denominational book programme". Furthermore, the Project uses its access to prisons to distribute its own magazine, the Association for Research and Enlightenment Community News and also to distribute books published

by its own press, the Association for Research and Enlightenment Press.

Some prisoners did say that the reading of books provided by the Prism Project had made significant impact upon themselves or others:

"A friend of mine had committed every crime in the calendar, including murder, and now he's the exact opposite. He's the leading light in the chapel, he's tremendously interesting to converse with, and the first tentative hold he had on the path was a book from the library by Edgar Cayce" (Inmate, Prison G).

However, providing spiritual material for prisoners requires careful thought and selection on the librarian's part, in order to achieve a balanced availability of different viewpoints, but without necessarily making a value judgement as to the worth, spiritual or otherwise, of particular texts. In this regard, it would seem there is little doubt that the zealous activities of one particular group may disrupt that delicate balance, especially when that group uses its privilege of access to prison establishments to promote its own narrow range of interests and interpretations of spiritual issues. However, it must be pointed out that it remains at the discretion of individual librarians whether they include donations of this sort within their own library. A high level of co-operation between the chaplaincy team and the librarian is essential in this area in order to establish and maintain a suitably balanced collection.

## 8.8 THE WAY TO HAPPINESS FOUNDATION

The principal claim made by this Foundation, based at 6324 Sunset Boulevard, in Hollywood, California, is that they are involved in distributing "the first nonreligious moral code based wholly on common sense...and not part of a religious doctrine" - that is, the text "The Way To Happiness" (Hubbard, 1989). It is argued that the book "The Way To Happiness" provides "the key to more effective criminal rehabilitation within prisons and the criminal justice system" (Hubbard, 1994, p8). The book itself is widely stocked in U.K. prison libraries, and copies in a booklet form are also freely available for inmates to keep. Over 48 million copies of "The Way To Happiness" have been distributed in 17 languages and to 42 countries.

Also closely involved in promoting "The Way To Happiness", is ABLE International - the Association for Better Living and Education, based at 6331 Hollywood Boulevard, Los Angeles. Under the auspices of ABLE, two other organisations operate - Criminon and Narcanon, designed to address, respectively, issues relating to patterns of offending behaviour and to drug dependency. However, perhaps what is not clear from the material distributed to prison establishments within the UK, is that The Way To Happiness Foundation, and ABLE, are both part of the Church Of Scientology.

"Evidence" supplied by The Way To Happiness International indicates that in some American institutions where the book "The Way To Happiness" has been used, it has been very successful. For example, the Director of the Juvenile Court in Butler County,



Greenville, Alabama, argues that the normal recidivism rate for first time offenders is around 70 or 80%:

"However, when we use "The Way To Happiness" in our first contact, first step court referral programme, we maintain a consistent rate of less than 10% that recidivate. Over 90% of the juvenile offenders seem to internalize the values and we don't see them again as court referrals. Frequently youngsters who have been exposed to the booklet, however, will stop by to thank me for helping them and offering a tool with which to base their future on. If it were not for "The Way To Happiness", I don't know what I would use to reach these kids. It is unfortunate that the confidentiality factors of the juvenile system prevent us from disclosing the details of each situation, for here is an almost miraculous story of success and recovery, time and time again" (Hubbard, 1994, p8).

According to The Way To Happiness Foundation, letters such as the following are "flooding in by the hundreds":

"While an inmate in the Arizona State Prison System I saw "The Way To Happiness" booklet in our library and thought "This is something I want". I picked up the book and began my journey. While doing my time I have become a different human being. A stronger, wiser, more sensible lady who is certain she can accomplish whatever she sets her mind to. I'm so very grateful I was able to turn a negative situation into a positive one. "The Way To Happiness" has shown me that any person, at any point in his life, can make changes in his lifestyle that will earn him trust, honour and the respect of others, if only he chooses to draw up a life plan to only allow positive things to guide his life, and daily dedicates his life to being a bit better than he was the day before".

However, doubts have been raised as to the verisimilitude of these claims by former Scientologists (see Attak, 1990).

The basic premise embodied in "The Way To Happiness" is the assertion that crime is caused by a loss of personal pride, coupled with low intelligence, as L. Ron Hubbard explained:

"Do you know there is not a criminal anywhere in any prison who is not a criminal because he was degraded and lost his personal pride? I have done a very thorough check on this - what they call bad women, criminal men. Their badness and criminality is immediately traceable to a loss of their powers and personal pride, and after that they were bad, and after that they were dangerous. If you want to rehabilitate a criminal, just go back and find out when did he lose his personal pride. Rehabilitate that one point and you don't have a criminal anymore. Criminals, as police can tell you, are usually very, very stupid. The things they do and clues they leave around are hallmarks of a very low IQ. The "bright" criminal is found only in fiction" (Hubbard, 1994, p12).

Unfortunately, Hubbard, whose death was reported in 1986, provided no supporting evidence for these claims. In fact, the majority of research which has been done into the causes of crime indicate that offending is the result of a complex interplay of personal, social and environmental factors (Hollin, 1990, p19). In addition, while low self-respect can be one factor in the personality profile of criminal behaviour, researchers have found that some offenders have very high levels of self-esteem (Jones, 1994). As for the relationship between intelligence and crime, there does seem to be some association between low IQ and offending (Eysenck, 1987, p33), but this does not necessarily imply that low intelligence is a causal factor in criminal behaviour. It is not clear from Hubbard's argument whether reading "The Way To Happiness" has any positive effect on intelligence, although as he clearly identifies this factor as a causal component in criminal behaviour, one would presume that it must.

In addition, when these simplistic arguments, advanced by Hubbard, concerning the causal factors of criminality, are formulated to underpin a behavioural code, the end result may be significantly detrimental to the prisoner. The inmate is naively

presented with an opportunity, almost inevitably illusory, to create a new self and a new kind of happiness. Influences which may have a negative impact on post-release behaviour, such as other offender characteristics, and the legal, economic, social and political systems, are barely considered in "The Way To Happiness". Prisoners are simultaneously provided with both an explanation and a very convenient opportunity to externalise their criminal behaviour, while no material challenge is offered to their pattern of individual offending.

Contextualising this material produced by The Way To Happiness Foundation is clearly an important task for the librarian, and again one in which the co-operation of the chaplaincy team is essential.

## **8.9 PRISON CHRISTIAN BOOK MINISTRIES**

The Prison Christian Book Ministries clearly set out their objectives in the literature they distribute within prison establishments:

"Our aim is to take the good news of Jesus Christ to the 90% of prisoners who choose to remain behind closed doors and who would never attend a church service. We want to lay down stepping stones to Christ by publishing and distributing life-changing testimony books by ex-offenders who have proved that losers can be winners".

The distribution of appropriate reading matter is seen as an essential tool in achieving these aims, as a further leaflet explains:

"Why use books? Locked away for endless hours, weeks, months, years, prisoners have little to do but read and think. Testimony books have been proved to change lives. Testimony books, unlike other Christian literature, can get behind cell doors. Testimony books work around the clock and are passed to other prisoners. Testimony books continue to plant good seed from which a harvest has already been reaped. Prisoners relate to ex-prisoners' experiences, making them more receptive to the gospel message. Help set the captives free!".

Noel Fellowes, trustee of the Prison Christian Book Ministries, in another leaflet, reinforces this argument that testimony books are particularly highly valued for their potential to alter inmate's belief systems:

"In my experience, books have proved to be the best form of evangelism in prisons. I have lots of evidence that God uses books to bring inmates to Jesus Christ".

As with the claims made by Hubbard previously, Fellowes does not provide any proof to support his assertions, although to be fair, short of serving God with a subpoena, this would be difficult.

Closely involved with the Prison Christian Book Ministries is the Prison Fellowship. This group began in 1979 and currently has over 160 local groups with direct links with 80% of prisons in England and Wales. The aim of the Fellowship is "to surround each Prison Service establishment with prayer". The Fellowship distributes the books, which have been provided by the Prison Christian Book Ministries, to prisoners without charge, and also sends books to prisoners in response to any requests from them. The Fellowship places a high value on books as a key to enlightenment:

"Prisoners who do not initially want to talk to the chaplain are often very receptive to the true stories of people like themselves as they find that they can easily identify with them".

Inquiries as to the merit of testimony books received a mixed response from both chaplains and inmates in this study. On the one hand, they were valued because prisoners could identify with the characters and it was felt they offered some hope for the future. For example, this inmate gave an account of how reading testimonial literature had given him a more positive outlook on life:

"I think they allow for another belief, yeah? In the system, you can go through it and it's all criminal, you can live in a prison and not believe in anything, you don't believe in yourself. It's good for self-esteem, just to have a belief that a God can help you, a fellow person can help you. Some of us are low on morals, and it's a start, for people to believe in people. Books can help be part of that learning process. Through learning, through books and that, it gives you insight into other people's beliefs - we're very selfish people, we steal, we're dishonest, because we've got no beliefs in our fellow human beings, and so it's good if we can bring it up a little bit, you know. I think it gives you an insight. It's not as much as you can be saved by clicking your fingers, it's the belief system you can get out of it - to have a belief that you can change - it gives you hope that you can change. You can read other people's autobiographies, they've been through so many rock bottoms, their life's been chaotic, but now it's taken in some kind of order - it gives you a little bit of hope for the future that you're not past help. I believe that reading those books gives you some optimism. Most of us have got no beliefs in prison, but you can read and see that people can change for the better, through religion, or just through making the change. It's not so much religion, it's believing in other people really you know" (Inmate, Prison B).

And this chaplain argued that for some prisoners, reading religious material, and its subsequent impact, is more powerful than the personal presence of chaplaincy staff themselves:

"I think it's largely to do with identification, as to whoever the hero of the book is - something that speaks to their own experience has far more impact than somebody like me, who they see as too good to be true in a sense. Things that I say don't have much street cred as far as they're concerned, but something that Nicky Cruz does. One of the barriers that we have to get through as chaplains is the feeling that we are somehow a race apart, that we don't understand ordinary life, that we don't understand what it's like to be at the bottom of the pile" (Chaplain, Prison K).

On the other hand, despite their apparent popularity, some respondents were highly sceptical of the value of testimony books. They felt they were unrealistic and sensationalist, and did not address issues which would have any bearing on future post-release behaviour. This chaplain removed most of them, not only from the prison library but also from the chaplaincy itself:

"We get a tremendous amount of evangelical books from the outside. They just come from all angles - the amount of literature I get is tremendous. I don't ask for them, I just get them, they arrive. I think the organisations that send them think they're saving souls. I think the books are all the same. And they're not the sort of books I like, because I don't think life is like that - I don't think they're true to Christianity, or to life's experiences. For me, the books would put me off Christianity for ever, no doubt about that. Some of the personal testimonies are just beyond belief. But the evangelical stuff is still popular. The lads seem to enjoy it, there's a great demand for it. It goes out in vast amounts. Things like "The Cross And The Switchblade" are still very popular, because it's violent and has a happy ending. They like happy endings" (Chaplain, Prison J).

#### 8.10 THE PRISON PHOENIX TRUST

This organisation began in 1986 as the Prison Ashram Project and was registered as a charity in July 1988. Today it has contact with 131 prisons, young offender institutions and secure

hospitals. The Trust considers itself inter-denominational and, as with many of the other groups, argues that by changing the spiritual values of an individual whilst in prison, that person's post-release behaviour will become less criminal:

"Prisoners are encouraged to use their cells as places of retreat. Here they can develop spiritual insights through meditation and breathing techniques. By these time-honoured means - known to all religions - they can take responsibility for their past and future actions, instead of just 'doing time'...If prisoners, with encouragement and guidance, can be introduced to some such discipline such as meditation and yoga, they might come to feel differently about themselves and their attitudes to life and society".

In addition to its work in corresponding by letter with over 1400 male and female prisoners, the Trust sends to prison libraries and to any inmate, free upon request, copies of Bo Lozoff's book, "We're All Doing Time" and "Being Free Through Meditation", written by Sister Elaine MacInnes, Director of the Trust. During the year 1993-1994, over 3000 copies of "We're All Doing Time", were distributed. The Deputy Director of the Trust, argued that the book can have a direct impact on people's behaviour:

"When people are banged up for 23 hours a day, as they are in some prisons, or even for twelve hours, books really do have a captive audience. When the book is powerful and remarkable like Bo Lozoff's, and makes so many direct suggestions which prisoners can put into effect immediately, different techniques for changing and improving their lives, then the book has a strong behavioural change. The evidence for this is the boxes of correspondence from prisoners received since 1987 when the Trust began".

It certainly seems that many inmates do use "We're All Doing Time", to learn about yoga and meditation, particularly as this book may be their only source of information on these topics. Prisoners' letters to the Trust confirm that they regard this as a very

beneficial exercise - the following extract is taken from the Trust's Christmas Newsletter of 1993:

"I've read the book by Bo Lozoff and the meditation is marvellous, it takes you step by step. The book gave me new insights and already I'm improving in the last few months".

An inmate interviewed as part of the present study expressed similar views, although he argued that any such behavioural changes would only affect a very small number of prisoners:

"I picked up a book out of the library, Bo Lozoff's book and I read it, and if you get rid of all the hippy trash and the American trash out of it, there are actually tools in there that you can begin to use to learn about yourself. So I've been writing to the Trust since I've been in here, a very nice Belgian nun I think she is, and I'll continue to communicate with them when I get outside. That's OK for me, but the majority of people have had nothing to do with that, and so the prison authorities have got to address that - you've got to give people tools to help themselves" (Inmate, Prison K).

The Trust also produces audio cassettes and videos, which give instructions on yoga and meditation techniques, and these are available through some prison libraries. The Trust also promotes and co-ordinates yoga and meditation classes in prisons.

### 8.11 EVALUATION

Many inmates were cynical about the role of religious literature in prison. The opinions expressed by this inmate are fairly typical:

"I've come across quite a few who have got into reading that evangelical, religious stuff - they're considered nutters in here, because they're back to exactly the same kind of person they were when they get out most of them - it's like while



they're in here they need that kind of support. People like that are considered unable to do their bird" (Inmate, Prison H).

Another view commonly voiced by prisoners was that some inmates deliberately became involved, and were seen to be involved, with religion in order to convey a more positive image of themselves to the prison authorities:

"The people who tended to grab the religion books and show them about were those sort of people who were working for their parole dates, rather than for any purely religious motives - to get a few extra brownie points, that was all" (Inmate, Prison E).

Some chaplains were also sceptical about the effect of this material. One chaplain interviewed felt that the real issues which would determine re-offending could not be addressed by reading books whilst in prison:

"Most of the time the issues are to do with relationships on the out, and there's a limit to what you can do with a book, in terms of integrating that with reality" (Chaplain, Prison G).

Another chaplain argued that while this material may affect some prisoners in a positive sense, these numbers would only be a very small proportion of the total prison population:

"There's been many people whose lives have been changed by something they've read, not only in the Christian sense, though that happens. I'm a great believer in grabbing hold of the special moments of disclosure which come through reading - they come to us in all sorts of ways from all sorts of different books. I suppose anything we read has some sort of effect on us. So yes, we don't ever need to undersell it, but it'll probably only ever be a minority" (Chaplain, Prison J).

Chaplaincy activities often attract very small numbers of inmates, for example at Prison J, with an inmate population of nearly 400, only 2 or 3 prisoners regularly attended religious services. While there may not be an exact correlation between use of religious literature and physical participation in religious activities, and indeed, as noted earlier some "closet Christians" may prefer just to read religious material rather than actively take part, nevertheless, the impact of this particular kind of reading upon the inmate population is likely to be fairly low.

Furthermore, evaluating how far religious, spiritual or morally-uplifting material can contribute to an individual's rehabilitation depends largely on the specific causal theory of criminality one ascribes to. Obviously, the individuals and organisations involved in distributing this material would favour a theory of criminality which is not deterministic and which would argue that individuals have a high degree of control over their behavioural responses. Then, through the specific type of spiritual enlightenment and redemption they offer, pro-social behaviour can be substituted for criminal behaviour. However, very few theories of criminal causality fit into this conceptual pigeonhole. Hereditary or genetic theories of criminal action must be rejected by these groups, as these are incapable of modification by the individual. Sub-cultural theories of crime, typified by the Chicago school of the 20's and expanded upon in the 50's by researchers like Cohen (Cohen, 1955), and in the U.K. by Downes (Downes, 1966), which posited a locus of control for criminal behaviour outside the individual, and argued that the sub-culture itself is conducive to delinquency, must likewise be rejected.

Labelling theories, where individuals tend to fulfil ascribed negative expectations (Wilkins, 1967, p82), must also be considered by these groups to be an inadequate explanation of criminality. Similarly, radical or Marxist theories of criminal behaviour (Taylor, Walton and Young, 1973), where patterns of individual behaviour are considered to be strongly conditioned by social, economic and political factors, can be given no credence. Furthermore, the "person-centred" model itself has been criticised, because it focuses on only one aspect of the very many processes which may precipitate criminal behaviour. For example, Tittle has argued:

"While incarcerated, a person can be successfully educated, attitudinally reformed, occupationally trained, psychiatrically treated, and religiously converted; yet later engage in unlawful behaviour as a result of peer pressure, lack of alternatives or other situational constraints" (Tittle, 1974, p386).

Similarly, McGuire and Priestley note that rehabilitation of the offender at a personal level may be a necessary, but insufficient, response in addressing the general problem of criminality in society, simply because in many ways criminal behaviour is a social, rather than an individual, product (McGuire and Priestley, 1985, p205). Likewise, Prins has argued that research into criminal causality "indicates that we may need quite drastic changes in the social structure and environment if we are to try to eliminate or control criminal behaviour" (Prins, 1982, p49). Unfortunately, simply changing the person, as many of these organisations set out to do, and if that is indeed possible, may not be enough.

On what philosophical foundation then do these individuals, groups and organisations, involved in disseminating spiritual literature, base their work? One can almost see Rabbi Harold Kushner wringing his hands in despair when he argues:

"To say...of any criminal that he did not choose to be bad but was a victim of his upbringing, is to make all morality, all discussion of right and wrong, impossible" (Kushner, 1982, p91).

Likewise, Monsignor Atherton writes, "There is of course no specifically Christian theory of crime" (Atherton, 1987, p93), but then proceeds to argue that there will be less criminality in a society which is healthy, which respects its Christian heritage and family values, and where its members have internalised a moral code and enjoy an equable standard of living. Atherton concludes by arguing that man is too complex to be understood by man alone and perhaps we should not be too inquisitive:

"We need not be too disappointed that the criminologists have failed in their pursuit of the Holy Grail - the secret of criminality. Man, even the criminal, is too wonderful, too mysterious a being to be completely understood by anyone except his Maker" (Atherton, 1987, p98).

In the absence, therefore, of suitable criminological theories regarding the causes of crime, many of those interested in the promotion of religious material tend to equate sin with criminal behaviour. Declaring that sin is a real force in the world allows the construction of a theoretical structure which takes account of individual choice, and thereby of course, redemption. As this Methodist chaplain argues:

"The view that man is a sinner is the only truly hopeful view of him...There is certainly no hope for man if the wrongness in human lives is the result of social and hereditary forces beyond human control or is to be explained in terms of psychological sickness. A person can start hoping the moment he stops regarding himself as a victim and sees himself in Christian faith as a sinner...Human responsibility is part of the gospel" (Ward, 1971, p20).

However, although it is true that people do have an element of free will in terms of "choosing" to engage in criminal behaviour, the extent of their choices are constrained to a greater or lesser degree by their circumstances. It is also true that certain factors (for example, "troublesome" at primary school, low family income, large family size, criminal parent, low IQ), may be correlated with criminal behaviour, and in some instances, indices of inequality and deprivation can be used to predict criminal behaviour at a social, but not a personal level. Unfortunately, these are issues that much of the religious material currently available within prisons does not acknowledge, failing to see the complexities of causality, and thereby the complexities of rehabilitation. Although this may seem a harsh judgement, particularly on some of the donating organisations who are very committed and well meaning, the materials they propagate are often little more than simplistic palliatives. For at their root, all these groups hold two basic propositions - that changing an individual's view of the world can change their tendency toward anti-social behaviour, and second, this change can be accomplished within an artificial environment with none of the pressures which precipitate offending in the outside world. Relatively little attention is given to the very complex problems of avoiding re-offending and becoming reintegrated into a society based upon unequal power structures, while living in a sub-culture

where criminal activity is often simply part of the fabric of daily life.

Furthermore, to what extent inmates are completely genuine in their proclaimed beliefs, the degree of transferability of these beliefs, how useful they are in the post-release environment, whether these beliefs are merely defence mechanisms to avoid confronting perhaps more painful issues or indeed whether they are contrived stratagems as part of a plan to work towards an earlier release, are extremely difficult questions to answer conclusively. However, an experienced probation officer argued:

"I think prisoners have two versions of morality - when they're on the inside, they're very moral about justice and sentencing. When they're on the outside, they don't give a shit about other people" (Probation Officer, Prison A).

From this point of view, one has to conclude that the prospects of rehabilitation through exposure to this kind of literature remain fairly bleak.

Moreover, what is particularly clear about the involvement of the organisations and groups reviewed above, is that, principally through the reading matter they disseminate through prison libraries, they wield an influence within penal establishments out of all proportion to that which they exert in the outside world. In addition, they exert this influence upon some of the most dangerous yet weakest, inadequate and vulnerable members of our society. That this literature is distributed within the context of a prison environment is itself an important factor. While in custody, many inmates, who already tend to be very gullible and

easily influenced, begin to feel confused and exposed, and some explanations or interpretations of themselves, particularly those which offer a "new life" or the chance to be "born again" may be extremely attractive. Because these experiences are removed from their usual context, they can assume a significance beyond that normally ascribed to them.

But from the point of view of the Prison Service Agency, these organisations, through their literature they distribute, seem at the very least, to affect a calming influence on inmates. This much is evident from the first hand accounts from prisoners detailed in the various organisation's own promotional material and, to some extent, also revealed in this study. The importance of this must not be understated - providing prisoners with some opportunity, even if only temporarily, to relieve their anxieties and frustrations in a highly conditioned, stressful environment is an achievement in itself.

However, on balance, whether it has been a wise move to let these groups expand and proliferate as they have done, remains an open question. These groups may propagate, albeit unwittingly in some instances, many unrealistic and negative ideas to inmates. The solutions they offer can never be tested in practice, and may involve entrapment in spiritual and ideological cul-de-sacs. Some courses of action proposed by these organisations are so naive as to be beyond the normal bounds of credibility, but which nevertheless can seem appealing to people who may often be in very desperate circumstances. But as indicated previously, once the requirements of Circular Instruction 20/1992 have been fulfilled,

it is solely at the discretion of the prison librarian what further material of a religious or spiritual nature is stocked. For those prison librarians who are faced with high levels of book losses, regular donations of books may seem attractive, but librarians, and indeed chaplains, should carefully analyse all such material before making a judgement as to its possible worth. It should be the objective of this consultation and review process to establish a level of provision of religious material, in terms of both quality and quantity, within the prison library which is acceptable to all parties, and which has the mental and spiritual health of the inmate as its main priority. Some of the issues which this review process should address are outlined in Chapter 10.



## CHAPTER NINE

# CONSTRAINTS ON LIBRARY OPERATIONS

The influence of any prison library in the rehabilitative process is obviously dependent on the particular model of rehabilitation currently in favour. However, prison library provision is constrained by a number of other factors, some specific to individual establishments, such as the particular regime in operation at an institution, while there are also other influences of more general significance, such as the over-riding question of security. Furthermore, both the Library Association and the Standing Committee on Public Libraries have argued that the policies, objectives and priorities of library authorities may conflict with those held by individual establishments, and that maintaining effective communication between the two parties can be difficult (Library Association, 1981, p42; Home Office, 1993a, p22). As a result, the extent and quality of prison library services varies greatly between institutions. In addition, as noted in Chapter 3, the fundamental changes which have occurred concerning the rationale and legitimacy of the prison library have tended to limit and define more closely the overall parameters and operations of the service.

Some of these constraints will now be examined in more detail. They can be grouped into five broad areas - regime limitations, resourcing, staffing issues, low levels of awareness and finally, negative attitudes.

## 9.1 REGIME CONSTRAINTS

### Access

Perhaps the most immediate constraint on prison library services is that of limited user access. The Prison Service Operating Standards, which are neither legally enforceable or a guarantee of any particular standard of provision at any particular time, recommend that prisoners should have a library visit of at least 20 minutes once a week (quoted in Prison Librarians Group Newsletter, 1994, p36). At some establishments, where prisoners only visit the library under officer escort, achieving this target can be difficult:

"We have to bear in mind the sort of prison it is, they have to be escorted. That means it has to be fitted in at a time when the houseblocks release the people, when the people are there to come and when there's an officer available to bring them. All these three things, getting them together, is not easy" (Education Co-Ordinator, Prison E).

Some prisoners argued that whether they received their library visit depended on the mood or inclination of the escorting officer:

"They don't bring people over to the library. Not unless you get an officer who's willing to put himself out. He doesn't get an officer above him telling him to. I don't know if there's a timetable to bring people to the library, but even

if there is, they don't work by it. People on the outside might think it's all done by rota - it's not, it's done by attitudes" (Inmate, Prison B).

Library staff confirmed that uniformed staff varied in their enthusiasm for escorting inmates to and from the library:

"It's really getting inmates to the library, or even getting the service to the inmates, in giving them access in whatever way or form that's suitable - that's the main problem. There are prison officers who are not that co-operative and some who are. Or if they haven't got enough staff or whatever then they don't come over. And that frustrates everybody - if we could get that sorted out, that would be the major benefit" (Librarian, Prison E).

Escorted visits also mean that inmates may have difficulty in asking the library staff any questions:

"They've got to be escorted here and usually get 20 minutes a group. It sounds quite a lot of time, but if you get 10 or 11 in here, it's very busy. She's very good, she'll go out of her way to look for things, but if everyone asks her a question, they're not going to get 20 minutes, they're only going to get 2 minutes each" (Prison Officer, Prison E).

Lack of privacy on escorted visits also means that inmates often cannot either look independently for information on sensitive issues nor do they feel able to discuss their needs with a member of the library staff:

"Because of the access problem it's not a sensible place to put things. Also it isn't the right atmosphere for looking at something in a fairly anonymous way, because some people with problems, they don't want to celebrate or announce the fact to the world. You have to have some measure of quiet and anonymity. That's not possible in our library at the moment. So I can see why it's not used for that purpose" (Education Co-Ordinator, Prison F).

One prison officer argued that while some other officers may not appreciate how important the library is to some prisoners, uniformed staff were also governed by their own occupational constraints:

"Perhaps there is a lack of awareness on the part of staff how important the prison library is to some inmates, and how important it is that inmates have the time in the library rather than "Right, you've got five minutes to choose a book and then we're going". But that's also because of the pressures the officers are under - they can only bring maybe a dozen at a time, and they've maybe got sixty inmates to get through in an afternoon. That's their job, to get those sixty inmates through the library in that time" (Prison Officer, Prison F).

Even at lower category establishments, where inmates did not require officer escorts, there was some evidence that library facilities were restricted by governors in order to decrease the number of places where inmates might gather, thereby minimising potential security risks:

"I think while it may be desirable to have longer opening hours, I've no intention of extending the hours in the regime, simply because of the control element. Particularly in the winter time, you have got to look at control of inmates, whether you're prepared to let them roam around and use the library as an excuse" (Governor, Prison C).

Many prison libraries are located within or very near to the Education department. While this obviously facilitates library use by those inmates engaged in classes, it can constrain use by other sectors of the prison population. Poor siting of the library can have a negative impact on its availability and level of use:

"At the last prison I was in, you basically had to catch a landing officer in a good mood, who'd got time for you and

had a couple of minutes to spare, because the library was on the remand side of the landing. It was a bit daft - you had to go where the remand prisoners were. So instead you tended to swap books around among inmates, because you had more of a chance of getting a read that way than of getting to the library. And it did cause resentment" (Inmate, Prison H).

At Prison C, the library was isolated from the main body of the prison, which meant inmates could only visit it during the daytime if they had written permission. At Prisons F and H, the library, while located within the main skin of the prison, was located several locked gates away from the Education department, which restricted use by inmates on classes. Furthermore, the increasing number of part-time teaching staff who do not carry keys can make the proximity of the library a crucial determining factor in its role as an educational resource. At Prison K for example, the library and open learning unit shared the same room and this was reflected in the heavy use made of the library by those engaged in daytime education.

Thus, both physical location of the prison library and the amount of access time that inmates are permitted will to a very large extent determine the kind of use that will be made of the available resources. The shorter the duration of the visit the greater the tendency that the library will be used for recreational purposes, and will gradually become to be perceived by inmates solely as a recreational facility. From the prisoners' point of view, ensuring they get enough reading material to last them through the next week means the process of book selection must be curtailed - inmates don't have time to browse, and neither can they afford to take the chance of trying out new authors or genres in case they are left with nothing to read for the remainder of the week.

Accordingly, many inmates will tend to read the same author over and over again. Of necessity, the resources in prison libraries reflect this pattern of inmate access:

"They get taken over there in blocks, and they get 10 to 15 minutes a week. We have all sorts of things we could do - we would put periodicals in there, and newspapers. But they can't sit down and read them, so there's no point. There's 10 minutes of madhouse and that's all" (Senior Librarian, Public Library Authority, Prison F).

Similarly, this prisoner compared outside libraries to prison libraries:

"On the outside a library is full of absolutely everything, but ours really, when you come down to it, it's just a book exchanging place" (Inmate, Prison E).

Because of the way the constraint on access tends to determine the pattern and nature of library use, some Senior Librarians remained pessimistic about the aspirations expressed by the Chief Education Officers Branch in "encouraging prison libraries to move from a recreational provision towards the concept of an outside branch library which provides an information and research service" (Blunt, 1992, p8). This librarian, for example, argued:

"Money is spent out, there's a librarian, on the physical library - yet the inmates don't actually spend very long in them. That's why I'm afraid the idea of making the library an information centre is a bit of a non-starter" (Senior Librarian, Public Library Authority, Prison D).

At Prison E, where inmates could only attend the library on a weekly rota system under escort, there was a separate room stocked with reference material which inmates could use during their visit. However, as this officer noted, the existence of this well-

equipped resource was of little or no value to the inmates, and could only really be used if rules governing security were breached:

"Well, it doesn't get used. Because what can you do in 10 minutes? When I've done the library, I've said "I'm going back to the houseblock to get some more, there's an inmate there in the reference bit, do you mind if I leave him there?" and they've always said without exception, "Oh yes, fine". But I'm not sure where I'd stand actually if when I walked out the door, that inmate started playing up, because strictly speaking he shouldn't be left there on his own, but if somebody is looking at something in a reference book, you can't say "Sorry mate, you've had your five minutes. Back off to the houseblock" " (Prison Officer, Prison E).

Although Prison E was a newly constructed prison where the library had been strategically located in order that inmates could use it while on free flow (that is, not under direct officer escort), other security considerations relating to inadequacies in the prison architecture and staffing levels generally, prevented any such use. Furthermore, these factors limited any increase in library use by inmates, even at times when they were unlocked and not engaged in any other structured activities:

"Our library here is beautifully placed for people to use, because it's on the walkway, but they're not allowed to move about here unsupervised. So the development of the library here now is dependent on two things, finances and staffing, which go hand in hand, and the accessibility. And I haven't got the answers to either of those. When the new core regime starts, they may be unlocked for 12 hours a day, but they won't have access to move about. They'll just be unlocked and sit on their houseblocks" (Education Co-Ordinator, Prison E).

Inevitably, the time that the library was open would clash with other activities in the regime. For those inmates who were in full-time work in other areas of the prison, this was a problem:

"If you work, you're not allowed in the library, except in certain hours. And without a chit from work we can't come. I work in the Works Department, in plumbing, and if we was doing a big job and I said "Can I go to the library now?" I'd probably get told to piss off. It's alright if you're a cleaner, or one of them more menial jobs, but not on the sort of job I'm doing. It just didn't work out this week, so I didn't get any fresh books" (Inmate, Prison C).

At those periods when inmates had most free time, for example, at the weekends, most of the prison libraries were closed. Some of the less secure category prisons offered limited opening times at the weekend, for which most inmates tended to be particularly appreciative:

"I don't use it much in the day time, more at weekends, which is useful. People who are working, say on the gardens or on the courses, it's difficult for them to get in during the week. And on weekday evenings, people might have an evening class or something, so you need the weekend facilities" (Inmate, Prison A).

Inmates segregated under Rule 43, reported additional problems of gaining access to the library, as these visits have to take place when inmates on normal location are either locked up, or separately confined to other areas of the prison. Similarly, inmates confined to hospital wings, complained of insufficient access:

"It's only one visit a week of 10 to 15 minutes. It's a problem if you're a heavy reader. And we've got 24 hours a day to fill here in the hospital, with not much opportunity to do anything else" (Inmate, Prison B).

Unconvicted prisoners held in remand wings also complained of difficulties in visiting the library. One prisoner in a letter to the Independent newspaper, argued that "access is almost



impossible" (Independent, 10/1/95, p13). In order to overcome some of the access problems relating to these particular groups of prisoners, who were unable to visit the library in the normal way, in some establishments the librarian would make a weekly visit to the hospital, or the Category A Unit, to try and satisfy the demands of these users more directly, by noting any special orders, discussing reading needs and trying to resolve any information requests. Clearly, it is an unsatisfactory situation if some inmates are never able to visit the library, and this occasionally caused problems. For example, at one prison the librarian was unwilling to loan legal reference material to the Category A Unit, because this would then deprive other users. At some prisons, small separate collections were maintained in these units, although a recent Council of Europe Report recommended that this practice should be discontinued and instead all prisoners should have direct access to the main collection and "the supportive milieu of a good library" (Council of Europe, 1990, para8.8).

In lower security prisons, where inmates were able to move about the establishment without the need for officer escort, access facilities to the library tended to be much better. At Prison K, for example, the Vulnerable Prisoner Unit, the library was open at all time that inmates were unlocked, including weekends. Similarly, Wright found that the more relaxed the regime, the more frequently inmates had access to the library (Wright, 1987a, p7).

### Priority of the library within the regime

Because, from a security point of view, the prison library is not considered an essential resource, it is often regarded as a 'peripheral' service by the rest of the prison (Pybus, 1992, p11). Accordingly, it tends to have a fairly low priority within the regime - "when the chips are down it does not rate highly in the eyes of most management executives" (Pybus, 1992, p11). Furthermore, because of the move toward increasing the power of individual governors (Tumim, 1993a, p65), the ascribed importance of any one facility at a particular establishment is likely to be a function of individual preference:

"The library is always the poor relation in prison, I have found. Unless you've got somebody at governor level who is very, very keen on the library. 'Twas ever thus"  
(Librarian, Prison E).

Many librarians argued that they were constantly made aware that the library service was subordinate to the regime:

"I'm not sure that libraries are regarded as very important. They were dumbfounded when I said this was my only job - they thought this was part of a bigger job, this was the boring bit. But I devote all my mental energies to this job, so I'm a bit disappointed that my attitude to the library and the work does not match up to theirs. I'm pretty low down on their list of priorities" (Librarian, Prison F).

Likewise, this inmate commented that library services are usually the first to suffer if there are staff shortages:

"Libraries are an under-used resource in prison, partly because we don't get enough time to go there and stay in there, but also because the library tends to be the last thing on a governor's mind when he's looking at staffing levels - if he's short staffed the library goes by the board.

I remember going 2 months without a change of library books, not because the library wasn't open, but simply because when it was our turn to go, we couldn't get" (Inmate, Prison F).

An Education Co-Ordinator argued that in order for the library to receive proper consideration and accreditation:

"It's got to be fundamentally built into the regime and the routine of the establishment" (Education Co-Ordinator, Prison C).

Some library staff complained of the "bureaucratic inertia" of the Prison Service which meant "there is no way you're really going to get things off the ground properly". In one prison, there was a good example of the problems faced by both library and officer staff in trying to expand service provision - this pre-release officer recalled how for the previous 18 months they had been trying to establish an information point in the library:

"The library has already given us the go ahead, unfortunately it's from the prison side that it hasn't started. We would be providing an information area in the library, initially it's going to be for officers to come to us - for example, if an inmate on a houseblock has got a certain problem and he goes to his personal officer on the houseblock, those officers obviously haven't got all the information they require over there, but we as pre-release officers, do have a vast range of contact numbers etc. If this is successful and we see no reason why at all it shouldn't be, then the area will be opened up to inmates who are coming into the library. We've got the knowledge there, we know how to contact probation officers, education departments, housing trusts, rehabilitation centres, the whole gamut. What's holding us up is basically the regime here and the problems with staff shortages" (Prison Officer, Prison B).

Library staff had faced similar problems in trying to introduce a computerised library management system:

"It's been on the cards for some time. It's just the practicalities of doing it, all the security aspects of it.

We'd like to give inmates, in some way if we can, access to an OPAC, probably not themselves, but as long as they can sit in while somebody's doing it, I think that would give us a better circulation system, the librarian could also do his or her own acquisitions and ordering, which would then give them more control of the budget. And then they'd be part of the system more, once you're on there with everybody else, you'll feel more involved and integrated" (Senior Librarian, Prison B).

One governor argued that the library existed only because the individual establishment had a statutory duty to provide such a service, and little attention was paid to how, when or why it was used:

"I'm not going to go over the top about a library service. You could take it away tomorrow and I'd still lay straight in my bed, shut my eyes and go to sleep. I haven't dictated that we will spend seven thousand pounds on the library service. It matters not to me whether it's there or it's not there. If it wasn't there, it'd have a knock-on effect on education, but I'm sure we could actually buy that in anyway on an ad hoc basis. So its presence has no great meaning to me, whether it's there or it isn't. I'm sure if it wasn't there I could deal with it in a different manner anyway. So I'm not going to go over the top because I've got 168 criminals and convicts here and I'm providing them with an extensive service. It would not matter one iota if we shut the damn place. I don't give a monkeys about justifying it, it's something that exists, but if it didn't exist, if somebody said to me "Why are you spending X thousands of pounds on prisoners as opposed to the local school library?" I can't justify that, nor is it my job to justify that. I'm a governor of this establishment, I'm not a politician. If a politician says we give them a Mars bar at 3.30 every afternoon, our job is not to question that, our job is to give them a Mars bar. Hence, that's the analogy with a library - I don't ask for one, I've got one and I try to make the best use of what I've got" (Governor, Prison G).

Another view commonly expressed, by both staff and inmates, was that the role of the library was constrained by the particular role and environment of the establishment itself. For example, this inmate argued:

"The role of this prison is purely to contain people - rehabilitation is not considered in this prison in any shape or form. It's a big local nick with 30% of the inmates on remand. If the role of the prison was different, then areas of the library could look at that and work in hand with it. I think it is very sad that this could be the last prison before anyone is released. Very few people will be rehabilitated through any amount of time here. Perhaps the library can give them that extra bit of push or help, but not in a place like this" (Inmate, Prison F).

### Integration and communications

Current thinking regarding rehabilitation favours a dual approach, involving on the one hand, the provision of specific courses, and on the other, the need for the regime to work as a unified whole in developing a structured ethos geared to the resettlement and reintegration of the offender (Warner, 1989, p10). Because libraries themselves have never been neutral institutions (Usherwood, 1989, p12), the role of the prison library in this process remains unclear:

"Do prison library programmes represent the mission of libraries in our democracy or should they be used as penological tools by prison administrators in an effort to counteract criminality?" (Vogel, 1989b, p25).

Some writers have argued the prison library should above all function as a public service with "its allegiance to society rather than the institution" (Rubin, 1974a, p539). Others have concluded that the prison library service should be provided as a human right and "not as a reward of the system of total control" (Vogel, 1989a, p34). In fact, as outlined in Chapter 3, almost by default, a lack of clarity concerning the rationale and legitimacy of the prison library has meant that, in many cases, it has failed to act as a supportive force to the programmes of the institution.

However, other critics such as McClaskey, have argued that librarians have a central role to play in the institution, and should assume "an active role in the total rehabilitation programme" (McClaskey, 1977, p43). Writers like Roberts have gone so far as to argue that "omission of books which will not support the institution programme constitutes good selection, not undesirable censorship" (Roberts, 1971, p165).

Partly as a result of this ideological debate, the levels of co-operation and unification of the library with other departments in the prison showed a large degree of variation between individual establishments. At one establishment, the librarian got lost trying to show the researcher where the Probation department was located:

"I find communication in prison to be quite difficult as I'm only in part-time. I feel that maybe I should make more effort to go over, but often I don't know where and when people are in. For instance, if I wanted to get in touch with Probation about leaflets, it's not always easy, as we found out. If I had more meetings with education, probation, things like that generally, I could probably find out more of the kind of information that they wanted me to display. The teachers don't really come over and advise me on the kind of courses they'll be doing, which is a pity, because I could probably help them more if I was given some advance warning" (Librarian, Prison A).

Some staff argued that individual departments within establishments were often reluctant to become integrated with other departments because of the implicit threat that their own job may be at risk if particular work was seen to be transferable or resources were being duplicated, as this officer pointed out:

"If they felt they could do pre-release by putting a book in a library, then they could be thinking to themselves that's 2

or 3 people every day, Monday to Friday, that we can find another job for, or more likely, don't need at all" (Prison Officer, Prison B).

Furthermore, the organisational structure of a total institution will tend to work against departmental co-operation and individual initiative (Gruensfelder, 1977, p511). One librarian argued she had developed "resigned apathy" to any prospect of integration with any other departments:

"You have to tread a very fine line in here. It would be very easy to challenge what they're doing and break down your working relationship with people. So it's better left unchallenged" (Librarian, Prison G).

Another librarian felt completely despondent that the library was not integrated in any sense with the institutional life of the establishment resulting :

"All our stuff is within this room here, our customers are here on this landing. I can't see where we're integrated at all. I just see us as a little island, where people get escorted here and go away again. But I don't know enough about the structure of the prison to say who is out there and who we could be assisting. To me at the moment, we've got a stock of books and people come and use it. We don't push it or promote it in any way, and nor does anybody else promote us, other than there's a library here if you want it, sort of attitude" (Librarian, Prison E).

In addition, many prison librarians frequently argued they felt no sense of accountability to the prison for the work they did while at the establishment:

"I don't feel I'm accountable to the prison, because no one formally takes a lot of interest. Nobody discusses anything with me. They could discuss with me what they felt the role of the prison library was within the establishment. I'd find that extremely useful. I've never had that level of discussion. It's an unhappy alliance. I'm insulted that I haven't been consulted on the new core regime" (Librarian, Prison F).

This librarian reported that he had little or no contact with higher management within the prison:

"That guy that came in this morning, a governor, well I think he is anyway, he opened the door, nodded to the blokes over there and ignored me. He didn't say "Hold on, I've got a captive library assistant here, let's see what he thinks". I'm not saying we'd have the answers, but at least we'd feel we were being consulted" (Librarian, Prison E).

Furthermore, as noted below, rapid staff turnover and the predominance of part-time working among librarians, can mean it becomes very difficult for them to develop links with other departments:

"It's long been my intention to go to the benefits office and job centre and pick up all the stuff on current benefits. You tend not to do that when you're fairly new to the job, because if someone says "Oh, probation has all that sort of thing", you don't want to come in and tread on people's toes. And since no one has introduced me to probation, how do I know?" (Librarian, Prison F).

Simply the lack of time can preclude efforts at integration, but even when efforts are made, some librarians reported a negative response:

"No one has ever suggested to me that I should get involved with the work of other departments. I'm not familiar enough with what goes on and I haven't got enough spare hours to offer. I did send a message to the Careers Guidance Officer to say "Can I come and see you?" It was a very difficult conversation, because I really wanted to see what books he'd got, whether he kept job outlines, that sort of thing. But there was no way I was going to be shown what he'd got and I think he was perhaps wondering what I was there for. There were no ulterior motives - I was genuinely interested to know how much stuff was available in there" (Librarian, Prison F).



This lack of communication and integration means that often departments work in blissful ignorance of each other, and may tend to assume, perhaps incorrectly, that a particular service is being provided. For example, this Senior Librarian argued:

"It is difficult for us to get into what other departments are doing - we tend to assume they're well supplied themselves. I'm a bit dubious about providing things like information on housing because I think there are other departments in the prison which could do that better, but with whom we could co-operate, but I don't really know that for certain" (Senior Librarian, Public Library Authority, Prison F).

Some librarians were also concerned, despite the existence of written contracts between the public library authority and individual establishments, about the nature and level of contact with individual prison governors:

"I have a dilemma of not knowing what the prison expects of the library. I can't ever remember having seen the Head of Inmate Activities in the library. It also disturbs me that I have little idea of the administrative arrangements for the library" (Librarian, Prison C)

In one establishment where the library was located within the education department, the wider role of the librarian had become subsumed by the Education department. On the one hand the librarian had been encouraged by the Education Co-Ordinator to catalogue and issue all the open learning resources, but was told it was not "practical" for her to have any input into the pre-release course:

"We decided it was more effective to use a system that was established to issue open learning materials. So the librarian catalogued all the books for us in the open learning room and we issue them through the library...We have very few library hours here and the librarian has quite a hefty job description to accomplish in the limited hours she's got. We

have in our development plan an idea for a tutor-librarian, for the role to be enhanced. If we were to get the extra resources in terms of time, then yes, input into pre-release, but at the moment it's not a practical proposition" (Education Co-Ordinator, Prison G).

Pre-release is probably one of the most important departments which could effectively utilise many of the information resources of a well equipped prison library, particularly in regard to the rehabilitation and re-integration of offenders. However, when pre-release staff were interviewed it was clear that their knowledge of the range of information within the library was generally very poor. As one pre-release tutor said:

"The purpose of the library is mainly for inmates isn't it? That's what the library's for. It's not for the staff" (Prison Officer, Prison B).

Lack of awareness of the range of library services available is a crucial factor in determining the level of integration. For example, this pre-release tutor was asked if there had ever been any co-operation between his department and the library:

"Helping us with pre-release? Not to my knowledge have any officers ever used the facilities in the library" (Prison Officer, Prison A).

When further prompted if he was aware of the extent of information resources available in the library, the officer suggested some improvements to facilitate integration:

"Well, I wasn't aware they had these things to be quite honest with you. And we do need that kind of information on the course. We've been trying to get somebody in on benefits - we used to have someone come in, but that has dried up at the moment, because the bloke who used to do it has been promoted and there's nobody to take his place, so it might be useful if the library's information is up to date, then yes,

great. Good job you told me. I suppose really they should be sending round an information bulletin on just what information they've got in there so we'd all know" (Prison Officer, Prison A).

Another pre-release officer at a different prison admitted:

"I know virtually nothing about the library here. One of the biggest problems seems to be lack of awareness. Lack of awareness among staff, perhaps not just staff, but maybe management, about what is available and what is on offer in the library. Because they are in a position to communicate that information to the prisoners" (Prison Officer, Prison E).

Other pre-release staff, again from a different establishment, argued that while integration and co-operation was a good idea in principle, in practice they simply did not have enough time to develop those kind of links, and would tend to rely on the librarian to make the first approach:

"I don't suppose we really get together, the library and pre-release. We haven't really thought about that. We get set in our ways, we've got a certain way of doing things and we're always busy, so as soon as we've finished one thing we're off on to something else. So you don't have time to think "What can we do here? What can we do there?" If the library were to motivate us, maybe coming down and saying "We've got this for the course", they might have things now, I don't know. We don't spend any time in the library, we don't talk to the librarian. So if something was going like that in a particular area, yes, I think it's a damn good idea really to pursue it" (Prison Officer, Prison F).

The problem of low levels of awareness among staff and inmates is examined in greater detail below.

The research evidence also indicated that there existed problems of poor integration and communication between the prison library and the Education department. Although education has traditionally been closely linked with the work of prison libraries, Heeks has

argued that this relationship may in practice be little more than a "structural convenience" and that "public librarians know little of adult education" (Heeks, 1985, p41). In the present study, a member of the teaching staff at one prison argued that links with the library were poor because staff were generally uncertain of the librarians' rostered hours:

"Libraries have not had a very high profile here. It could be that they're part-time, you're never quite sure when the librarian is around, and because she works elsewhere as well, the times can change and they have done, and so nobody seems quite sure when she is actually going to be there" (Tutor, Prison A).

At another establishment, one tutor ruefully admitted:

"It's been a long time since I actually went into the library. You are showing me just how poor my knowledge of it is to be honest. Maybe I should spend more time in the library. I don't think people realise just what the library has got. You asked me "Do you know if the library has got this, that and the other?" I'm ashamed to say I don't know. I feel I ought to know but the truth is I don't. You've shown me just how little I know about it. I need to have a good look. You should know, especially if you're in contact with inmates, because they tend to ask you questions and you ought to be able to know the answer to tell them or be able to suggest where they can find it out. To be honest, I'm ashamed to say so after 7 years, I'm ignorant as to the extent of access inmates have to the library here" (Tutor, Prison F).

Finally, to give some indication these are not isolated or unique responses, at yet another prison an Education Co-Ordinator conceded:

"I'm not sure exactly what they keep in the library and what they don't. You're making me think about all sorts of things I've never asked the library. I suppose I've assumed things, which is not the right thing to do. I know I don't go into the library as much as I should" (Education Co-Ordinator, Prison C).

In some public library authorities which serviced more than one prison, regular meetings were held between prison librarians, in other authorities quite the opposite situation prevailed and peripheral staff tended to become completely isolated. Some establishments organised Library Committee meetings where representatives from the prison management, the public library authority and in some institutions, inmates, could discuss relevant issues. However, some Senior Librarians argued that these meetings were too infrequent to have any real impact on policy:

"We have meetings three times a year with the Education Co-ordinator, the Head of Inmate Activities, the librarian, myself and the Area Manager, and I get the impression this is the only time we ever get to sit down and talk" (Senior Librarian, Public Library Authority, Prison D).

At some prisons both governors and library staff expressed some disquiet about the administrative arrangements governing prison libraries, particularly in regard to the continuing influence of the Education department. This Head of Inmate Activities argued that:

"The trouble is the library is geographically too close to the Education and there seems to be an overriding thing that the responsibility is with education. It is not. I oversee the business contract with education, and I also have a business contract for the library services - totally exclusive contracts, there's no coming together at all. But traditionally, there's been an answering of the library to the Education Officer what was, but who now isn't, who's got no input at all into the senior management group of the prison. That traditional role has gone, but whether it has gone from the librarian's side I don't know, because it's not been tested yet, but it will be before too long I think. In business terms, the Education Co-ordinator can't manage the library. Chief Education Officers Branch is still plugging that line, but that just shows you how out of touch they are

with the business reality. You can't have a contract holder here being a line manager for contract holder from a different place. You just can't do it. It's stupid. It's like I've got a Senior Probation Officer who I've also got a business contract for and it's like saying our physical education bloke is his line manager. It's nonsense" (Governor, Prison G).

## 9.2 STAFFING ISSUES

The input from the professional librarian

The Prison Service has now made available resources to fund at least some professional librarian hours at every prison (Home Office, 1993, p2). However, this provision is in some cases very limited, and may not necessarily coincide with the times that the library is open to inmates, or its peak use (Wright, 1987, p11; Stevens, 1992, p69). Some librarians were dissatisfied with the amount and quality of contact time with inmates:

"It's difficult because I don't actually mix with them. Once we've started the library, the counter comes down, so we are physically cut off from them. Everyone gets in their appropriate position and library begins. To a certain extent, this is the way it has to be - it's a very busy time and you've got to stick pretty rigidly to little routines. But I would like more time standing within the library, so I can sense when help is perhaps needed, even though it's not specifically asked for" (Librarian, Prison F).

In all but two of the prisons surveyed, the librarians argued that their hours were inadequate to provide an effective service. Staff reported that no time existed for self-analysis, or to even think about possible improvements. One professional librarian argued that simply performing the day to day maintenance routines

took all her time. This library orderly summed up the pressures of time on the librarian:

"In the evening sessions, all the librarian is basically doing is handling queues "Can you get us this?", "Can you get us that?" That's the time taken up straight away. When she comes in during the daytime she's got to catch up with just the basic day to day running of the library. So she's got no time left to start going round the prison to try to build up enthusiasm among the rest of the staff and departments to try and get the input she could probably do with. It's a damage reduction exercise. Some areas have to go by the board" (Library Orderly, Prison A).

Because the Prison Service stipulates that all professional librarian hours must be actually spent on-site, some librarians reported that they used their own time to carry out related duties outside the establishment:

"If I want to get hold of benefits leaflets I physically have to go into town and pick them up and pay money to park and whatever. Now I don't mind doing that, but it gets low down your list when you're doing all this in your own time, which is when I would be doing it" (Librarian, Prison F).

Part-time library staff also reported difficulties in building up a working relationship with staff working in other departments in the prison, who may themselves be working part-time hours, perhaps on opposing shift patterns.

The value of a professional librarian partly lies in the encouragement and the enthusiasm which can be transmitted to the user (Roberts, 1971. p166). Souza has argued that the role of the librarian may also take on that of a confidant, as many inmates feel able to talk freely to a person, who is often female, and who is not involved in the disciplinary side of the institution

(Souza, 1977, p29). However, because of staffing levels, such a personal relationship is often impossible. The majority of inmates agreed that the role of a professional librarian was essential in ensuring an effective library service was provided. Many prisoners felt that the limited number of hours that the librarian worked was inadequate in ensuring the consistent delivery of a quality service:

"She's here Monday and Tuesday. There's a sort of vacuum the rest of the week when she's not here. Although you've got the orderlies, the knowledge base isn't there, the professionalism and support's not there" (Inmate, Prison G)

Furthermore, some inmates said they were reluctant to approach the library staff because they always seemed so overworked:

"I haven't tried to ask her anything, but she looks always busy. She is always busy to get the books back in, get the cards out, selling the stuff like in a supermarket. This I think is not the way how libraries should work" (Inmate, Prison E).

Some inmates were dissatisfied that they had little or no opportunity to discuss their needs with the librarian:

"It looks to me like here is your book and that's that. Now leave. There is no, I cannot say, service. The librarian just takes the numbers and probably doesn't even know the kind of stuff he's dealing with" (Inmate, Prison E).

Other prisoners reported difficulties in seeing a professional librarian:

"In here the officers basically don't have much to do with what goes on in the library, they're just there to make sure everything is OK and no fights break out. If you want anything to do with the library, you have to go and see the librarian. The only drawback is that she's only here one



night a week. I know she's in other times, but that is during the day, and the shops are working during the day, so you don't get chance to go over and see her. It seems odd she's in 3 or 4 days a week and nobody gets chance to see her" (Inmate, Prison A).

This limited contact time may be particularly disadvantageous for inmates who find it difficult to articulate their needs, who lack verbal skills, who feel embarrassed or reticent about discussing problems with a perceived authority figure or for people whose first language may not be English (Albert, 1984, p48).

#### The input from support staff

Levels of uniformed staff can also affect library operations. According to the Standing Committee on Prison Libraries, there is "ample evidence" that the reduced availability of prison library officers has led to a declining service (Home Office, 1993a, p17). A library orderly in the present study reported that a short loan service to inmates had to be suspended because of inadequate staff cover:

"We had a 3 day loan for blokes who read quicker, because a visit once a week and two books, it's not enough - I mean, I can read a book in a night, so that'd be two days, and you've got the rest of the week. So instead they could have a book for 3 days and change it. We was originally going down to the houseblocks every day, go up to the pads and collect the books. But we couldn't get into the pads because screws didn't have the time. So we sacked that idea" (Inmate, Prison E).

Furthermore, proposed extensions to library opening hours had been prevented by insufficient numbers of officer staff:

"I would love to see the library open in the evening - the biggest hiccup on that has been the officer's ability to

escort. Right the way through the library service has been asking to open in an evening. We've actually got men in the prison who work full time, who never get an association time when they can use the library" (Education Co-Ordinator, Prison E).

Officers may also be called away to deal with other duties in the prison, resulting in closure of the library:

"The biggest problem we have is, like today, an incident happens elsewhere in the prison, and our library officers are withdrawn to deal with it. As a result, today some people haven't had their library. Happens once a fortnight. Sometimes we can catch up and get them all done the following day, sometimes we can't" (Library orderly, Prison F).

All Library Officers had additional duties within the prison in addition to their work in the library. These included normal duties within the wings and landings, the responsibility for the daily recording of videos from satellite broadcasts, the ordering and distribution of inmates' newspapers and magazines, Fire Officer, Labour Control Officer, Race Relations Officer and Legal Aid Officer. These additional duties make any officer support unreliable, as this librarian related:

"When we did the service level agreement, I managed to sit the Library Officer down and said to him "Can you guarantee us a minimum of 15 hours a week?" and he couldn't. Usually he comes in to do the papers and he collects books from the local library van delivery for us, then there's just day to day stuff - 15 hours doesn't go far. if he's suddenly called away for some fire problem then that's it - that is more important than the library" (Librarian, Prison H).

This Library Officer argued that time spent on other duties restricted his input into developing library services:

"I lose 1 hour 40 minutes out of my day locking and unlocking for Education. In an ideal world I'd be able to use that time to get more people in the library at evenings and maybe

weekends. If they could take all that out, and let me spend more time in the library, there are a lot more things I could do - at the moment it's as much as I can do to get the work done that I'm doing, because of other responsibilities" (Prison Officer, Prison F).

Other Library Officers tended to be more phlegmatic, stating clearly where their priorities lay:

"Well, there isn't enough time, but you've got to be flexible in prison. I'm a prison officer first and a Library Officer second" (Prison Officer, Prison H).

There was some disagreement expressed over the effects of the increasing trend toward civilianisation of prison library services. One governor argued that employment of public library personnel had resulted in a worse service for inmates by reducing opening hours:

"Ideally the library should be open from 8 in the morning until 8 at night - the same length of time that they are unlocked, but it's the finances. How do you do it? It was OK in the old days, when it was staffed by prison officers, because we would man it ourselves and we had the staff to do it. And all we did was shut down at mealtimes, get the staff back on the landings and this was their job in between. Civilians running the library has really meant it's going to be open less, because you've got to work within a new financial budget" (Governor, Prison E).

In contrast, an Education Co-Ordinator argued that civilianisation had resulted in a more consistent pattern of opening hours and a better image:

"In the past when we had Library Officers, whenever there was a shortage of staff, the library was always the first place hit. Always. So the library would shut. The Library Officer was always taken out first for whatever purpose, and although I can see there are things which would take place over a library any day, there are others that wouldn't, and I would say a good working library is very important to the regime of a prison and to undermine it by always closing it didn't do anyone any favours. It gave very negative signals

and I'm sure it still goes on in places where there are Library Officers" (Education Co-Ordinator, Prison C).

## Training

Prison librarians are being increasingly called upon to effectively manage new resources, such as the expanding amount of community information and the gradual introduction of electronic information and library management systems. For example, the Standing Committee on Prison Libraries has recommended that libraries should either have on-line access to the local public library computer system or an "in-house" system based on an Archimedes PC, and should also have access to a variety of information databases (Home Office, 1993a, p10). To fulfil these new responsibilities it is essential that library staff meet certain standards of proficiency. Furthermore, it has been argued that a well trained staff can develop the motivation and confidence of the user (Thompson, 1974, p96), particularly when then the client group may be unfamiliar with library services (Bamber, 1992, p50). However, poor training was a widespread complaint both from civilian and officer library staff. Even at a the most basic level, some librarians reported that their induction provided by the prison establishment was totally inadequate:

"My induction was just half an hour's talk by the Security man. I didn't feel I was made to feel I was part of the prison. I think they think myself and the library are something that's done to them, it's an imposition" (Librarian, Prison E).

"I had no formal induction myself. I was here a week before I was told where the panic button was. As the first woman that's been in the library as far as I know, and as an outsider who's new to the system, I did feel this was slightly remiss" (Librarian, Prison F).

This librarian argued training for prison librarians from her own public library authority received a low priority, which reflected the overall level of esteem in which prison librarians were held:

"The way prison librarians are thought of in this authority is that you're not actually on the complement of staff - you're only here because the prison exists. Therefore they won't put any money into training for you, unless it's just general training that everybody has. I would really have to fight to go the Prison Libraries Study School, because libraries say prisons should pay and prisons say libraries should pay, and nobody will pay. They're not prepared to invest in you" (Librarian, Prison G).

These perceptions were confirmed by Senior Librarians who also argued that any time staff spent on training courses inevitably meant closure of the prison library:

"I'm not happy about the amount of training library staff get generally, but particularly the amount of training they get in prison procedures - they don't get included in courses that they should be perhaps be included on. It seems that the libraries are pretty much on a limb, they're not really one thing or another and they tend to get forgotten. Also, the hours they work, being part-time, are fairly inadequate to do anything extra. So any extra time for training has to come out of our budget. And every time they do go on a training course, we have to close the library down. And if any of the librarians go on leave, we also have to close the library which is not a satisfactory solution" (Senior Librarian, Public Library Authority, Prison C).

In addition, it is particularly important that orderlies should feel competent in carrying out their duties, as often they have sole responsibility for library operations on the occasions when the professional staff are absent. However, even though many orderlies were very keen and committed to their job, inadequate levels of training were commonly reported. For example, one

orderly when asked about the Dewey system was completely taken aback:

"What numbers? I thought they were for somebody else. Nobody's told me about it. No need because no one ever asks. You look at the cover, and if it's got a good cover you take it. You don't think "Oh, it's got a good number on it, I'll take it" " (Library Orderly, Prison B).

Some librarians argued that it was not worth training orderlies because their abilities were fairly limited anyway. At one prison this view was challenged by the teaching staff:

"They say they don't think the orderlies would be capable, but I think that's a very stereotyped view of the orderlies - they might well be capable and they might not have such a high turnover if they were given more responsibilities" (Tutor, Prison A).

Inmates themselves argued that negative perceptions held by staff tended to deny them any training:

"A little bit of training would come in handy. It's only because they think we don't want to know. We have to find things out for ourselves. There's a lot more to libraries than I ever thought. I thought it was just going in and getting a book" (Library Orderly, Prison J).

While some prison libraries had become completely civilianised, others remained partly staffed by designated prison officer librarians. Again, despite their obvious enthusiasm, poor training of these officers was commonly reported:

"I would like to become more involved with the work of the librarian. I'd like to become more knowledgeable about basic library structures and systems. I've got a bit of knowledge, but I picked that up myself. I've had no training. Everything I've done, I've had to do myself or find out myself. It's abysmal" (Prison Officer, Prison F).

"Training? I've never been able to get time off to go. There's either never enough money or never enough hours" (Prison Officer, Prison J).

Inmates were clear about the value of trained staff in the library, although some argued that they would deliberately avoid talking to prison officer librarians:

"A teacher could help you in the use of a library, but untrained officers can't. It would be better if you have people who know what libraries and books are all about - not just someone who's in there because he's been told to go in there" (Inmate, Prison F).

#### Isolation of library staff

Previous studies carried out in the United States found the isolation experienced by professional library staff to be a significant factor in constraining service provision (Rubin and Souza, 1989, p49). The researchers reported that librarians found the physical isolation of the work place a problem and that they also felt occupationally isolated as often they were the only library-oriented employee in the institution. Furthermore, because they were not employed directly by the establishment they felt alienated from any supportive networks. In the present study, many library staff also reported feelings of professional isolation, both from their own colleagues within their public library authority and also from the Prison Service staff. At one prison, opposing shifts of library staff rarely met, with the result that they felt very disillusioned and unclear about their roles or objectives:

"We do sometimes ask ourselves what on earth we are doing here. We have tried having little staff meetings, but our duties don't cross that often. To get all three of us together means overtime and that's painful" (Librarian, Prison E).

Some prison librarians reported low levels of job satisfaction, principally because they felt a general lack of support and a feeling of being devalued by the regime constraints:

"On a scale of 1 to 10 I'd say my level of job satisfaction was about 6. I feel what we're doing is worthwhile, but it's knocked back by frustrations that we hit, mostly because of the regime and what's happening within the prison, things which are actually beyond our control in a sense" (Librarian, Prison F).

As a result, staff turnover among prison librarians is high - eight out of the ten prison librarians in the study had been in post for a period of less than two years. This also creates problems in maintaining continuous and consistent levels of professional input into the library service at individual establishments, as this senior librarian pointed out:

"Before she left, the previous librarian was going to look at pre-release, to see how we could fit into the pre-release system. I think we must have a role there if we take seriously our objectives. I've said we don't provide the information we should generally. The only way we're going to is to co-operate with probation, pre-release and get their information in our library, rather than be separate things all over the place. The previous librarian did want to go down those lines, but now she's left, we've got to start all over again" (Senior Librarian, Public Library Authority, Prison A).

Furthermore, the post of prison librarian usually offers little scope for further career advancement:

"I would say I'd only stay for 2 or 3 years, something like that. At some point, I'd like to broaden my experience -



prison libraries can be a cul-de-sac. Although I enjoy it, I can't think it would be the sort of job you'd want to stay in indefinitely - you haven't got the same promotional structure you've got if you're a children's librarian or whatever" (Librarian, Prison E).

Rapid turnover not only affects the professional staff but also the inmate assistants too. At one prison, the library orderlies were not appointed by the library staff, but by wing staff. This resulted in much of the librarian's time being taken up with the training of inmate assistants:

"The problem here is that I don't have any say in selecting the orderlies - they get put in here as part of their therapy - it's seen that the library will be a good idea. So I can find myself virtually continually training orderlies. You've just about got one up and going and the next one comes along, which is not really ideal. I prefer it when the librarian has some sort of say in choosing an orderly, can get them properly trained and they're there for a reasonable length of time. Here we're not really able to train them to be much of an actual help in the library - they do the clerical routines, whereas in other establishments orderlies would be able to answer basic queries, find stock and so on for their fellow inmates" (Librarian, Prison D).

### 9.3 RESOURCING

#### Financial arrangements

The Chief Education Officers Branch itself has recognised the disquiet felt by some public library authorities that despite the per capita allowance being index linked since 1977, they are, in effect, subsidising the Prison Service by bearing the brunt of the additional cost of providing a library service to prison

establishments (Home Office, 1993a, p17). For example, in delivering the prison library service, Nottinghamshire County Council have, in recent years, regularly spent over twice the amount that they received in the form of the capitation allocation (Nottinghamshire County Council, 1990, p6).

Considerable sums of money are involved, and one Senior Librarian interviewed hinted that the nature of service provided may be subject to review:

"The prison pays the salary of the servicing librarian, but I put in time from myself, and also the ethnic minorities librarian. Also my clerical staff here have put in time dealing with exchanges and stock moving round the area. Then the Home Office pay a capitation grant for provision of the book stock, which is something like two thousand pounds, we double that, so we are spending around four thousand. It's where do you draw the line between a statutory obligation to provide a library service for everybody in your county and the fact that the Home Office agrees that it costs more to provide a library service within a prison. The Home Office might argue that they are subsidising our statutory obligation. Perhaps we are stupid as librarians - perhaps we should say that for a community of 300 souls, 10 minutes every fortnight, a mobile library will call. That's what we do at the villages out here" (Senior Librarian, Public Library Authority, Prison A).

Some prison librarians felt that inadequate resourcing constrained the nature of the service they were able to provide:

"There are times when I wish there was more time, more resources or whatever to actually develop the service more, but we're so limited. I wish prison libraries weren't like the Cinderella service - it's so short sighted" (Librarian, Prison E).

Other librarians were critical that the policies of their own library authority regarding stock selection prevented them from building up specialist material. The Library Association guide-

lines clearly state that prison libraries should be regularly supplied with new stock "purchased specifically for use in the prison library" (Library Association, 1981, p21) at a level of provision in line with that made at an equivalent sized branch library. However, at some establishments, individual prison librarians did not have their own budget - instead stock was bought centrally and transferred and exchanged between all the libraries in the authority. A Senior Librarian commented:

"We certainly don't put specialised stock into the prison. I don't think we've got the budget to cover it" (Senior Librarian, Public Library Authority, Prison D).

This approach to stock management can lead not only to an absence of specialist material but also to the selection of inappropriate material, as this prison officer librarian recalled:

"We're not allowed to go book buying. So they still send us things that aren't suitable. One of the books we got was "You and Your Pony". I sent it back and complained about it. Seventeen quid for that book. Total waste of money. In a branch library it would have been OK, but totally wasted on us" (Prison Officer, Prison D).

Finally, some librarians argued that the "setting up" grant for the provision of libraries in new establishments was inadequate:

"For a new prison the library needs to develop and evolve, and we're not being given any more resources" (Librarian, Prison E).

The resources and stock of the prison library

The quality of the environment of the library can be an important factor in determining perceptions of the level of service and for

motivating new users (Bamber, 1992, p64). However, the physical fabric of the libraries and their resource base varied greatly between establishments. Some libraries were housed in new purpose built accommodation, others were in converted cells or outbuildings. Wright, in his 1987 study of on prison libraries, reported similar findings:

"Other accommodation put to library use include a chapel, a 'windowless room', an 'old execution shed', a dormitory, a games room and a boiler room. Accommodation on Remand Wings seems to be by far the most neglected area. Many reports were received which indicated that such provision, where it did exist, was nothing more than a cupboard or a bookcase on a landing or wing, stocked with old paperbacks with little or no control being exercised over their use" (Wright, 1987, p6).

Lack of space was a big problem for many librarians, and this constrained many library activities:

"I think it's important to do things like displays. But we're restricted here by several things - space being one of them, and staffing certainly. I don't think we'd have time to get everything and set it up ourselves, or necessarily the resources. Because I don't think we've got a budget here at all - we've got a books budget and that's about all"  
(Librarian, Prison G).

In the older prisons particularly, though not exclusively, many librarians had neither work space nor private space, and battles for the most basic items of office furniture were reported:

"The physical size of the library I share is ridiculous - I haven't got a desk. If the Prison Officer Librarian gives up his desk to me that's fine. One at least doesn't. Ever"  
(Librarian, Prison F).

Lack of space also meant that librarians could only carry very limited stock on the shelves, and inevitably the most popular genres tend to predominate, as this tutor commented:

"We are stuck here, basically because we haven't got much space, so I would see the role of this library as being primarily recreational. We haven't got the space for study books, language books or whatever, which in an ideal world would be the function of a prison library" (Librarian, F).

In one library conditions were so cramped that it was not possible to display all the book stock:

"I know the Home Office standards are not being met, but short of piling books on top of each other on the floor, what else can we do?" (Senior Librarian, Prison G).

The range and quality of stock within individual libraries showed a wide degree of variation. At some prisons inmates could not praise the library service enough, at others, inmates were scathing in their evaluation:

"The library here is first class. I've only had one sentence, this one, and I've only been to two prisons. The last prison the library was an abysmal alcove, yes, it was basically an alcove, full of thriller books and books on how to handle your time in Sing Sing by becoming a Christian" (Inmate, Prison A).

Many inmates argued that poor stock tended to deter use:

"There's so much books go missing out of this library here that when people come down from the houseblocks, the books they want are never on offer for them. So a lot of people they don't go down to the library no more. There used to be a steady stream of people coming from the houseblocks, 15 or 20 people coming down, but now you get the odd 3 or 4. I've seen the difference from when I was here last year, when I was library orderly" (Inmate, Prison B).

Other prisoners complained that prison libraries only catered for the perceived lowest common denominator of taste:

"I've always found the general selection of books in prison libraries to be pretty poor. There's very little poetry or literature available, but usually hundreds and hundreds of westerns and crime and detective novels, that kind of thing. Whether that's because they get the demand for it or whether that's because they think the public gets what the public wants, I don't know" (Inmate, Prison D).

There were also specific complaints about the quality of reference material:

"You look up something and they've only got a book what's dated about 6 years ago" (Inmate, Prison G).

Provision of periodicals was also found to be extremely variable. Some librarians argued that while similar sized public branch libraries received no such provision, the funding of periodicals to prisoners bordered on the extravagant:

"I do not think it wise to draw attention to these facts in the present climate" (Senior Librarian, Public Library Authority, Prison D, Confidential Memo).

The Standing Committee on Prison Libraries has advocated that the library should be able to support and enrich regime activities (Home Office, 1993a, p7). However, some inmates argued that material to support vocational training courses in the prison was limited:

"They've only got about 5 books on computers and they're not really up to date" (Inmate, Prison D).

Others had found no material in the library to support the classes held in the Education department:

"A lot of prisoners have a great deal of a lack of education facilities. When I was in a local prison, I started doing German and we only had half an hour a week with the teacher, seven in the class, so you didn't get much tuition, and from the library there wasn't anything really in German that would help you. So I jacked it in" (Inmate, Prison E).

This prisoner concluded that stock selection and purchase for prison libraries needs to be carried out by a professional with experience in the field, who appreciates that the needs of prisoners may not necessarily be the same as the needs of a community outside:

"The library here is a real mishmash - you've got some philosophical treatises at one end, and beer and skittles books at the other. I think what it is, whoever ordered those books has thought "that's what a prisoner reads", or ordered it as a favour to whoever was library orderly at the time. You've got people who are looking for more current academic books to help out with their studies and they're missing out, you've got the others that want the more lighter reading and I get the impression they tend to miss out a bit. They go for a block in the middle and it doesn't really do one thing or another" (Inmate, Prison G).

There has been concern expressed over the low level of multi-cultural provision in some prison libraries. For example, a survey of 16 Young Offenders Institutions found that:

"In all the libraries positive images of diverse cultures, including the travelling people, were rare. African-Caribbean newspapers were available, although they were sometimes not on display and had to be asked for; the same applied to books in languages other than English...Few [officers] appreciated the need for some of these to be displayed" (Department for Education, 1993, p4).

However, in the present study, complaints regarding stock for particular groups, such as multi-cultural provision or material in other languages for foreign prisoners were very few. This was undoubtedly because the public library authorities serving the prisons examined here all employed specialist librarians to deal specifically with the needs of these groups.

However, only three of the ten libraries had a cassette collection available for loan by inmates. In Wright's 1987 review of prison libraries, only 15 out of 57 establishments offered this service. Wright has strongly advocated the extension of this type of service provision, arguing that those offenders whose reading ability is poor may be discouraged from library use or feel embarrassed to be seen borrowing material aimed at individuals with low literacy skills, whereas listening to the same material on cassette is often not perceived as a signal of inadequacy (Wright, 1987b, p69). Similarly, only one of the ten libraries in this study had videos for inmates to watch during library opening hours. Roy Collis, Chairman of the Prison Libraries Group of the Library Association, has stated that the decision not to stock audio material may have more to do with personal idiosyncrasy at particular establishments than any reasoned judgment (Collis, 1991, p3). Many prisoners and staff argued that the absence of a cassette library was unsatisfactory:

"I think where the library fails here is that it seems pre-occupied with the written word. A lot of people I encounter are actually alienated from the written word, except in a very specialist way, and that usually relates to the criminal justice system" (Education Co-Ordinator, Prison F).



Despite the recommendation made nearly 15 years ago in the Library Association guide-lines that there should be "a basic collection of bibliographical aids" (Library Association, 1981, p24), a common complaint made by prisoners was that they had no access to a catalogue, a problem exacerbated by the unfamiliarity of most users with the stock:

"We haven't got a proper index, we could do with a fiche which would make life a lot easier. The librarian's pretty good at getting books on a subject - it might not be quite as specific as you want it, but she'll invariably come up with something, she's got a book on the subject and she's principally fulfilling a request. But there might be something better that you're not aware of. We do need a little bit more information in that direction - I'm surprised there's no fiche here" (Inmate, Prison E).

Other inmates argued that the very slow request system, which almost inevitably was even slower when the librarian was part-time, tended to deter use. This was considered to be a particular failing when books were required to support work in the education department which had to be completed within a limited period.

Where the regime, security considerations and physical space within the library allowed inmates to sit down there and study this was considered to be particularly useful:

"I think if you took the library away, with the fact that it's difficult in this prison to study in your room, I think for me it would be a bombshell. Here all I have is a wafer thin piece of wood between the rooms, and you hear everything, so when you want to get down to studying, it's difficult, there's so many distractions" (Inmate, Prison A).

However, at those prisons where inmates were unable, for whatever reason, to use the library for private study, lack of space to sit down and read was a common complaint:

"I think you should have the opportunity to sit in a library and read. But you can't do that. So lads that are studying are struggling for somewhere to go. You can't do it in this library. It's not like in libraries on the out" (Inmate, Prison H).

#### 9.4 AWARENESS AND PROMOTION

##### Promotion

Promotion of library services within individual prison establishments was generally poor. In most establishments promotion was confined to a leaflet giving library opening times pinned to a noticeboard. In some institutions however, the library had a regular slot in the prison magazine, while some librarians organised quizzes for bank holidays. However, in general, the stereotype of the prison library as solely a place to obtain light fiction was often unchallenged. There seems little doubt that the resulting lack of awareness both among staff from other departments and among inmates themselves exercised some degree of constraint on the usage of library facilities:

"I spend a large part of my working day looking at educational opportunities for inmates. I don't resort to the library. If it has got those things, then it's not marketing it, because people ask me and if I say go to the library, they feel they are being fobbed off. It could be that a large part of the inmate population, or indeed a large part of the people within this place, staff and inmates, don't really know how to use a library. They know it contains books, but

they possibly aren't aware of the many services the library can and will provide. But being pro-active is not necessarily an attribute in a place like this - it's a very reactive culture. Being dynamic and up front may not necessarily do your cause a service" (Education Co-Ordinator, Prison F).

Staff embarrassment at their lack of awareness of library resources was sometimes acute:

"They might have foreign language books. They don't deal in cassettes. Do they deal in cassettes? They have a few. Or do they?" (Education Co-Ordinator, Prison C).

One inmate commented:

"Everything's just really half-hearted. They'll maybe fling a poster or something up and then it's forgotten about. I goes in the library about a month ago and I found this questionnaire and I thought "Oh, blinding. I want to fill this in, tell them what I really think of this library". I found out it was two years old. I said like "Where do I put this?" She says "Oh, you're too late, that was two years ago". The mood here is - here's the address of Head Office, if you're not satisfied write to them" (Inmate, Prison C).

Lack of promotion may also mean that inmate's reading tastes are never expanded, as this prisoner explained:

"In this nick, there's certain books that are ever popular - motoring books, weightlifting. They're always on demand. They just take those and don't read anything else. If she only got what they wanted, there would be no impetus to explore other things. You would never improve yourself, find out something new. One could spend one's entire prison term reading nothing but Agatha Christie or the Famous Five Freak Out on Evo-Stik. And they wouldn't get anywhere would they?" (Inmate, Prison H).

However, one prison library had produced an 18 minute video to promote the prison library itself and also to encourage the use of

libraries after release, with the result that usage had increased and become more purposive (Birchmore, 1985, p52). McClaskey has also argued that the use of computer technology, networks and co-operative efforts to "link the correctional setting to the total world of information" should be used to promote library services to prisons (McClaskey, 1977, p42).

### User needs

In its guide-lines for prison library provision, the Library Association argued that a regularly reviewed community profile was essential in ensuring quality in service delivery (Library Association, 1981, p13). Yet within prison libraries, user needs are frequently the great unknown. As Gruensfelder has pointed out, prison libraries often tend to operate on the basis of the administration's preconceptions, rather than the inmates' actual demands (Gruensfelder, 1977, p511). One librarian when asked how she knew if the library service was meeting the demands of its users falteringly replied:

"Oh. Ooh. Well. I think - I don't know. I think just to try and get whatever they want. Other than that I can't really say. It sounds terrible doesn't it?" (Librarian, Prison E).

However, obtaining reliable data relating to users needs within prison establishments is very difficult. In conducting user surveys for example, there are major problems - chief among them low response rates, often compounded by a high turnover of inmates and the difficulty of assessing the needs of non-users. Only one of the libraries in this study (Prison C), had actually conducted

a user survey within the last two years. This took the form of a questionnaire, a copy being delivered to each cell. Only 39 were returned out of a total of 270, and there was a strong likelihood of positive bias, in that those who completed the questionnaire would be probably be drawn from those who were regular library users. Taking this into account, the results of the survey make particularly depressing reading:

- one third of the respondents said they had difficulty in getting to the library in the times that it was open
- one quarter did not know the library took daily newspapers
- one third of the respondents claimed not to have been given information about the library when they first arrived at the prison
- as regards information provision, the survey evaluation report concluded "Most of the DSS leaflets are hardly ever used. Thought needs to be given to the filing and indexing of information, so all, readers and librarian, know what is in the library and exactly where it is. This area of the library needs a much higher profile".

Inmate participation in library operations varied - at three establishments inmates were on the Library Committee, at two others the inmate orderlies were asked to look through lists for book selection - activities which other researchers have argued are particularly important in order that prisoners' information and recreational needs are recognised (Burt, 1977, p33; Albert, 1984, p47-48; Penney, 1984, p38).

Some inmates and staff interviewed for this study were of the opinion the Prison Service held the view that as long as a library, in some form, was being provided, this was sufficient in order for their statutory obligation to be fulfilled:

"The Prison Service seems to have the idea that providing the service is good enough, irrespective of how satisfied the

users are with the service provided" (Education Co-Ordinator, Prison C).

One inmate argued that because most inmates will tend not to complain, for fear of being labelled a trouble-maker by staff, the library service had an unrealistic view of the levels of user satisfaction:

"People come in and they look around, there's nothing there and they just tend to go away. The odd one will voice his dissatisfaction, but the majority will go away and not come back. So the undercurrent of dissatisfaction is not being felt. People are assuming that because there's no complaints coming in, things are running smoothly. It's running smoothly in the sense that you can get out a basic stock of books, but beyond that it's not providing what should be provided" (Inmate, Prison A).

#### User education

Typically, the general prison population tends to be less well educated than the general population, with poorer reading skills, and a greater number have a non-British cultural background, or do not have English as their primary language (Walmsley et al, 1993). Because of these factors, and because many inmates are unfamiliar with library services, they may experience difficulty in making effective use of the resources provided (Blunt, 1990, p13). For example, these inmates commented:

"I've tried to look for things myself, but I can never seem to find anything. When you're on your own, it's hard to motivate yourself. If I could find material that was really interesting to me, then I would use it" (Inmate, Prison E).

"Most times in most prison libraries, you won't even know where to find information. There's information there only if you know it's there" (Inmate, Prison J).

The Council of Europe Report argued that "special efforts" should be made to attract inmates to the library, and to create a relaxed atmosphere (Council of Europe, 1990, para8.6). In addition, longer stay prisoners, those with low literacy skills and prisoners from foreign backgrounds or ethnic groupings may require particular help (library Association, 1981, p13). It has also been argued that user education is an area needing the input of a skilled professional (Pearson, 1984, p346). Some librarians were aware of how important user education was in overcoming the negativity and bewilderment of many inmates:

"They'll only be empowered with information if they know how to access it, and how to find it, and if that assistance is given. That doesn't always happen. It's just a wall of books to most people" (Librarian, Prison H).

Other inmates argued that reading itself was a new pastime and they required some assistance in selecting suitable material:

"For me, coming in to the library, looking around, I don't know any author's names, I don't know who they are, so I can't tell one from another. I don't know what I'm picking up. If you don't know authors what can you go by?" (Inmate, Prison B)

Many inmates argued that they would welcome positive intervention by library staff, and that this could only have beneficial effects:

"Some people coming in here, seeing all the books, maybe the last book they have seen is the telephone pages - he needs some advice, some proper advice, so I think the librarian should have a little nose or a little eye for people and provide some guidance and that way I think a proper trained person could catch loads more people and give them some advice and some help, even if people get a little stiff if people try to help them. But what is more harmless than a book, and if you can get some person to read a book he may come on

and read the other one and there is a point where education could start" (Inmate, Prison E).

The role of library orderlies can be crucial in assisting the process of user education (Kling, 1967, p425). Whereas inmates would often be reluctant to approach a prison officer for help, and many would be embarrassed about seeking assistance from a civilian, asking the advice of fellow prisoners is a much more attractive alternative. This library orderly explained how he both intervenes and assists inmates in satisfying their information needs:

"They'll come in here with their problems and say "I want to know what I can do about it". Some of them don't even know what they are looking for you see - that's why you've got to help them, because otherwise they'd be there forever. And somebody who's never used them books before might shy away from it, so you just have to explain it to them. I don't spend a lot of time with them, five minutes just running it through with them, or just finding it for them" (Library Orderly, Prison J).

Some prison libraries had produced leaflets explaining to inmates the range of services the prison library could offer, while at three of the prisons the librarians had, at some time, organised information skills classes for prisoners. However, in general, most inmates tended to have a very limited view of the range of library facilities on offer, as this library orderly pointed out:

"Not many people know what the library's here for - they think it's just for general reading material. It's not really the ones that do go to the library that you need to be worrying about, it's the ones that don't go" (Library Orderly, Prison A).

Because of the constant turnover of inmates, user education must be an ongoing process (Brenneman, 1979, p85). However, new



inmates tended to be very badly informed about the library service, and at two of the establishments, the library was not included on the Induction programme. At Prison E, library induction was not perceived as an opportunity to promote the library, but rather as "baby-sitting" prisoners while they awaited their interview with the Education Co-Ordinator. Even at those prisons where a visit to the library was ostensibly part of the induction programme, whether inmates actually visited the library was in some cases more dependent on chance than design:

"Induction is a bit like Pre-Release here - it's very sloppy. It's a disgrace, it really is. Although the library is listed, the officers haven't got the energy or the motivation, and there's no one checking up to see that they go. So most inmates go to the library because they've been in other prisons and know there's a library, rather than any structured induction process where people are welcomed into the library" (Education Co-Ordinator, Prison C).

At another prison, no library induction was, or ever had been, offered to inmates, and the librarian was unclear about what form this should take and whose responsibility it was to organise it:

"If there was an induction course, or even if I could meet with inmates who wanted to come to the library, I think I could make it sound a lot more attractive than the average prison officer. That would be easy to do, wouldn't it, let's face it. I don't know what form induction courses take here - I've never been asked to attend them or be part of one. Whether the initiative should be coming from me, I don't know. In other places, do librarians get to help with induction courses? Is the library seen as important enough to do that?" (Librarian, Prison F).

### Stock display

Circular Instruction 20/1992 identifies certain publications which should be included in all prison libraries. These publications

include copies of certain Acts, Reports and Inquiries which may be particularly relevant to prisoners, Prison Rules and Standing Orders, Prison Service guides and manuals, pertinent Council of Europe and United Nations publications and a range of legal guidance material. The Circular Instruction states specifically that:

"Governors should ensure that all publications are readily available on open shelves to inmates. Where this is impracticable due to a lack of space a list of the publications should be prominently displayed in a suitable position in the library with a clear indication of how inmates may have access to the publications".

In only one of the ten prisons was this material stored on open shelves, in two prisons there was no indication of what statutory material was available nor how it might be obtained, and at the remaining seven prisons a list (of varying degrees of currency and comprehensiveness), of the publications which were available on request to the librarian, was pinned to a noticeboard.

Other researchers have reported similar findings with regard to the provision of statutory material, and have argued that this may deter inmates from seeking information. Plotnikoff and Woolfson, for example, have noted that:

"The principal argument for not placing the documents openly on the shelves is that they might go missing. This scarcely justifies withholding the information altogether and does not explain the absence of notices listing reference works and where to find them...A prisoner who has to ask for information may be deterred through fear of being labelled a trouble-maker" (Plotnikoff and Woolfson, 1992, p18).

Clearly, it serves no purpose to have material in the library yet keep it hidden from view, and such restrictions can have disproportionate negative consequences for the institution as a whole. For example, many inmates reported that Standing Orders in particular, were often very difficult to obtain. Often in instances of this kind, where inmates perhaps believe they should be entitled to a particular privilege, large amounts of friction and hostility can be generated if an answer cannot be found relatively quickly. These behaviours are simply part of an adaptive institutionalisation process, where what may seem like a minor event to an outsider, can easily assume a significance many times greater for the inmates concerned (Library Association, 1981, p24).

Stock presentation in some establishments was very poor, which is particularly important when many of the users will tend to be unfamiliar with a library, and may tend to assume that what you see is what you get. If prisoners do not borrow material on their first visit it is unlikely they will return. Furthermore, the limited time that many inmates have within the library means that stock must be readily available, well displayed and continuously refreshed (Library Association, 1981, p12). Thus, the argument that stock need not be physically present on the shelves if there is an efficient computerised catalogue and reservation system, carries little weight in prison libraries, as this orderly noted:

"Although you can order books through the library, what I find is people when they go and they see what's there, they would not really go and ask for anything else. So it's better if you actually have things there. It's like if you walk in a shop and there's stuff on display, chances are people are going to buy it" (Library Orderly, Prison J).

However, in some prisons, very popular books (for example Asterix, Dean Koontz and Jackie Collins), were kept separate and only made available to trusted inmates. In one establishment, the prison officer librarian kept several Tom Sharpe novels in a safe within his office, and any inmates who heard of this secret repository were thoroughly interrogated before being allowed to borrow a copy. The officer explained his strategy:

"There's things I can't trust prisoners with. I can't even trust the library orderlies. It's as simple as that" (Prison Officer, Prison F).

The Library Association guide-lines state that library guiding is "obviously of paramount importance with a need for clarity and simplicity" (Library Association, 1981, p18). However, the quality and effectiveness of guiding was extremely variable, ranging from none at all, through handwritten pieces of card stuck on shelves with bits of Sellotape to professionally produced signs. Similarly, the attempts at stock classification in the libraries studied showed varying degrees of success. Although the Library Association guide-lines (Library Association, 1981, p17), encourage prison librarians to adopt a non-traditional approach to categorisation, these innovative stock arrangements were, as discussed in Chapter 6, sometimes bizarre failures. In some prisons, there was no attempt at stock classification at all, as this inmate had found:

"There's no Dewey system here or anything like that. The books are on the shelves which is an achievement in itself. You're not sure where you're going to find things. I think I adopt a bit of a laid back attitude toward it, that if you

don't expect too much, you don't get too many disappointments" (Inmate, Prison G).

In some establishments, reference material was stored behind a counter, or even in a separate room. In some cases, libraries had established good collections of reference material but had given little thought to how and when inmates could use it. In other prisons, leaflets and information packs were kept behind the counter, with sample copies displayed behind a perspex screen. This system was favoured on the grounds that if inmates could have access to leaflets they would throw them away in other areas of the prison and create a litter problem. This inmate argued however that the system tended to deter inmates from obtaining information:

"If they had it out on the actual shelf it would be better, because you often see that stuff behind there and think "Am I allowed to take that or what?" If they had it out on an actual shelf it would be better. Say if they'd got leaflets behind there about sex offenders or drug abuse, things like that, people might feel a bit out of place if they was to walk up and say "Can I have one of those leaflets about sex offenders?" In that sense they should be out for people to take at their own will" (Inmate, Prison G).

At one establishment, all leaflets were kept locked away in the library office. When the librarian was asked the reason for this, she replied:

"I don't know. Whether it's because they'll just take them and make paper planes of them I don't know. They're getting wasted maybe" (Librarian, Prison A).

In one library, which had collated a large and regularly updated community file which was kept in large unmarked filing cabinet with free access, stock promotion was so poor that inmates, including

those who were regular library users, had no idea of its existence:

"I didn't even know it was there until I asked the librarian something. And I've been here nearly 16 months".

"No I haven't heard about it. I wasn't sure what was in there, and whether it was actually for us".

"I didn't even know there was such a thing. Oh, yeah. That filing cabinet. I didn't even know what that was. Never. That's jail for you" (Inmates, Prison C).

In some cases, librarians reported that a lack of resources prevented any stock promotion:

"I'd like to do displays, but I haven't got any material to do displays with, I haven't got any stands, I can't even get hold of any book-ends" (Librarian, Prison E).

Lack of awareness of resources meant that some inmates were unaware the library had a catalogue that was available for use:

"On the out, I used to use the library a lot, I've used the microfiche and computers to look up things. I haven't used it here because I didn't know they had one. I think the big problem with prison libraries is that they don't tell people of the services they provide" (Inmate, Prison A).

## 9.5 NEGATIVE ATTITUDES

Narrow, ill-informed and preconceived ideas among users (both inmates and staff), can exert a significant constraint on the breadth and efficacy of library provision. This has proved to be a problem faced by prison librarians as well as librarians in the

community outside. For example, a survey examining public opinion on library usage, concluded "people are relatively one-dimensional in their usage and assessment of libraries" (Library Association Record, January 1994, p36). Research by Williams and Matthews, who investigated the attitudes towards privileges of over 650 inmates held on remand, found that access to library facilities was one of the least preferred privileges. They concluded that these findings reflected "the generally low level of literary interests in the population" (Williams and Matthews, 1987, p365). Souza has argued that for some inmates the very concept of a library is an alien one - the idea of borrowing or sharing may run counter to the ethos of survival which prevails in the rest of the prison (Souza, 1977, p529). Staff in the present study reported that even when there was daily access to the library some inmates would still steal and hoard books. Some prisoners argued that indifferent attitudes to libraries often developed as part of a general antipathy to school. However, one inmate argued that while early negative educational experiences were a major factor in the reluctance of many inmates to use the prison library, staff should present a positive image of the library's resources as a force for self improvement:

"I'd say 85% of prisoners don't use the library because perhaps they were at school and got turned off from education and got involved in crime - it stems from there. What they should do is get the library staff to tell them about the facilities - tell them there's a chance to be re-educated and do something constructive with their life, rather than being on the dole, thieving, burglaries or whatever. That would be a great opportunity. Some people are here for years unfortunately, and with nothing extra they go out, back into the same social environment and conditions which helped put them in here in the first place" (Inmate, Prison B).

In contrast, some inmates considered that prisons were already "too soft" and that libraries were an unnecessary, and indeed unwanted, luxury:

"I believe the library is very good in this prison but that does not mean to say I believe prisoners should have those facilities. Being a right winger, I think prisons should be a deterrent, not a luxury. I don't believe people should be pampered when they come to prison - I know what it's like outside, I know what books cost, how schools have to run jumble sales to get their education equipment, whereas here if you ask for an exercise book, drawing book, pencils etc., you get them, which I think is wrong. The average person who comes to prison just wants to do his time and get out. There are those who want to come to prison to learn, I mean, I got a B.A. in prison, but I'm of the minority. I could tell you of the 50 people in this shop now, there must be only about 4 who wish to further their education via the library, who do use the library facilities" (Inmate, Prison F).

Other prisoners argued that for many prisoners the television was the most important leisure activity, as it was essentially passive and required little or no motivation or effort on the inmate's part:

"People get into a rut, all life here is what's on the television. If it's not something they're interested in they'll moan, but they wouldn't think of going to the library. It means them perhaps doing something themselves, and this is a problem, we get into a rut and won't do things for ourselves" (Inmate, Prison E).

At one of the prisons in this study, inmates had recently been allowed a television in their cell, and the availability of this new leisure activity did result in an initial drop in library issues, although numbers gradually began to recover. This inmate commented:

"Even with the things we're allowed - TV's, videos, radios, everything on mains power, I still enjoy reading. I used to



read a book a night. Now it might take me 3 nights to finish the same book" (Inmate, Prison D).

Other problems affecting library usage mentioned by inmates included a lack of time and space to actually read borrowed material. For those inmates who share cells or dormitories this may be especially difficult:

"There's not a great deal of privacy in this place - you can't get away from people. When I first came here, I used to read in the lavatories until the early hours" (Inmate, Prison G).

Other prisoners found their reading was restricted by "lights out":

"They put the light out at 11. That's probably the time when you would do a bit of reading" (Inmate, Prison K).

The Library Association Guidelines advocate a "liberal loans policy" (Library Association, 1981, p20), where access to the library is limited. Nevertheless, some inmates argued that their reading was limited by the restrictions on the number of books they were allowed to borrow:

"I find it a nuisance that we've only got 3 tickets, because we've got a very good outside requests service and the librarian is very efficient. So if you order books they arrive. If they are in the nature of a textbook that you want to hang on to for a week, fortnight or whatever, and if you order two or three on the same subject, that automatically means your novels have gone by the board, and I need a novel a night" (Inmate, Prison A).

Some prisoners argued that the library had to be carefully monitored from a control point of view, in order that prisoners could not take advantage of the space and contact with other prisoners to engage in criminal activities. Some prisoners wanted

access to library facilities to be conditional on good behaviour and expressed highly protective attitudes to library stock, advocating draconian punishments for inmates who damaged material. The Chief Inspector of Prisons has also complained of:

"great ethical rules being imposed by orderlies which denied remand prisoners library access because they were more likely to be destructive than convicted prisoners and couldn't be trusted" (Tumim, 1991, p85).

Damage to stock was often cited as a major factor in presenting a positive image of the library to other staff in the prison, as this prison officer librarian commented:

"We would like to do a lot of things, but just the damage to the tapes has stopped us" (Prison Officer, Prison D).

However, barring exceptional events like riot damage, no hard evidence has been presented that stock losses are any greater than in outside libraries (Home Office, 1993a, p18). In addition, public library authorities do have the power to invoice governors for losses or damage in excess of 4.4% of total stock (Blunt, 1994, p165). Furthermore, the Council of Europe Report on Prison Education stated:

"Concern about damage to books should not be allowed to dominate operational practice; even public libraries have to accept a certain level of book damage and loss in order to encourage involvement by people. A fully secure library is one which is never used" (Warner, 1989, p8).

The negativity, and in some establishments, the hostility, shown by prison staff toward the library service can also have a constraining influence:

"I think they look at it as it's just something they've got to supply. I'm going to sound really awful now, but a lot of the officers I've spoken to think that they're being given too much anyway, that the library is a privilege and would not have any hesitation in shutting it down. And that's quite a widely held view I think" (Librarian, Prison A).

Other librarians reported a more varied response:

"Very mixed. From the one extreme to the other - from the view of the hardliner who thinks that everybody should be banged up for 23 hours a day and have nothing except tatty paperbacks, to the person who is fully committed to rehabilitation and realises that libraries are very important from the point of view of entertainment and crucial from the point of view of self-education and improvement" (Librarian, Prison F).

Some officers regarded any civilian staff working within prison with an element of disdain, arguing they were poaching officer's jobs, and because they had no disciplinary function had no real perception of the true nature and behaviour of prisoners, or the necessary working practices of the institution:

"I think the librarian is looked upon more as an asset from the inmates point of view than the officer's point of view, generally speaking. I think perhaps prison officers, especially the younger ones, who may feel as if they're having their toes trod on by someone who shouldn't be" (Prison Officer, Prison B).

However, another view came from this inmate, who argued that staff were well aware of the value of the library, but their personal view tended to be more negative, clouded by their own prejudices or the tedious practicalities of escorting inmates to the library:

"Whenever anybody visits the place, the library is one of the places they're taken to and I've often heard senior officers

who've been showing people around, extolling the virtues of the library, and once the party's gone, telling us what he really thinks, which differs. Some officers, even those that look upon it as a bit of a pain in the backside, know its value in terms of the rehabilitation of the offender. They've got to know, it's obvious" (Inmate, Prison F).

One Education Co-Ordinator argued that while staff might accept the library as part of the institutional fabric they gave little thought as to its actual purpose:

"I think it is accepted by the uniform people, but the main reason why is because it's been there for so long. Certainly the uniformed staff in this organisation, from their point of view, the worst thing is change. They are so non-susceptible to change it's unbelievable - so providing the library has been going for a long time, they've cracked it. You don't have to justify why you're doing it, they will accept a library as being here. They don't know why it's here, but they will accept it because it's been there" (Education Co-Ordinator, Prison A).

Officers tended to confirm this view:

"I've been in this prison 13 years and Library Officer for 6 years, but for the first 7 years I just used to walk straight past that door marked "Library" " (Prison Officer, Prison D).

Obviously, this apathy can easily be transmitted to inmates, and it becomes fairly unlikely that the library is promoted positively in any sense at all. This prisoner articulated clearly the effects of these attitudes:

"They just think it's there. it's not a thing that's suggested to you - they don't suggest you do anything. The officers are just there really to keep control of the situation. There's no real bonds built up - we're a transient population and they're doing their job. Whether they hate you or not, some of them do, it's obvious they think we're the scum of the earth. But most of them are neither here nor there about anything - very non-committed about everything. I don't try and weigh them up. I'm not anti-prison officer. I think as far as they are concerned the library is there and that's it. I don't think the train

of thought goes any farther than that really. It's like tomorrow the sun will come up and it'll be another day and tonight the library will be open" (Inmate, Prison K).

Other prisoners argued that officer attitudes varied and although they had a right to use the library, whether they actually got their visit was dependent not on a particular officer's perception of the library's value but on how much inconvenience they would be caused in escorting inmates to and from the library:

"It depends on the individual member of staff. If you ask to come up to the library, some members of staff will let you straight up, others will say "Can't you go another time? It's not really important, is it, it's only library" " (Inmate, Prison B).

Another inmate commented that some officer staff actively discouraged library use by inmates:

"Prior to going into prison, I'd gone through all my school life and been told I was thick - I'd no qualifications, nothing. When I got to prison, I started reading and I found that it tended to broaden my outlook. On the other hand, I was having certain things put in my way, there's always the odd screw who don't even like you to be able to spell your name because they see you as a danger" (Inmate, Prison D).

One tutor argued that negative staff attitudes became almost a self-fulfilling prophecy - as staff tended to care less and less about the service they provided, so the inmates would tend to respond in a similar fashion, resulting in higher levels of damage and decreased usage:

"At the moment it's "Come on, you've got five minutes to pick a book", I've heard one of the officers say. There's all these shelves, there are no leaflets or notices, and by the time you've found out where something is, it's a lottery, or worse still, they don't take a book out at all. There's this assumption they'll be nicked, so it's not worth doing

anything anyway. You have to work round these attitudes, it's very frustrating, it's very time consuming, and it takes a long time for resources to be made available to inmates. If people feel they aren't being trusted then when they do get a book, they will vandalise it because they feel they don't own the library, it's not a pleasure to be there, they're not valued as a person when they go there so why should they value the book they get out of it?" (Tutor, Prison E).

One privatised prison has been accused by a Chief Librarian of showing a "lack of commitment to library provision" (Brockhurst, 1992, p763), for failure to adhere to Library Association guidelines. In the present study, some librarians even reported negative attitudes from their own colleagues within their public library authority - in some cases, there was even a refusal to send requested stock to the prison:

"It can sometimes be the thought of people outside, either in the rest of the public library service or the public at large, you know, why do we make life easier for them, and that can still be a problem. People can be very reluctant in being at all generous in say providing their time or information, or lending them books, and it isn't helpful. I think the perception still is that you're going to lose a lot of stock and why are we bothering to provide a service. That still is the perception, so it always is going to be a bit of a battle" (Senior Librarian, Public Library Authority, Prison D).

## 9.6 A REACTIVE APPROACH TO SERVICE DELIVERY

As a result of the interplay of the constraining factors listed above, many prison libraries tended to occupy a reactive role in the institution - as one chaplain commented:

"The impression I have is that the library is passive, just providing a service, while other departments in the prison are active in the life of the prison" (Chaplain, Prison F).

## CHAPTER TEN

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Prison, in many ways, operates as a social labelling process, invoking, confirming and maintaining stereotypes of past misdeeds, present behaviour and expectations of future action. Prisoners have done bad things, therefore prisoners are bad people, and prisoners will probably carry on doing bad things. In terms of sheer practicality, total institutions have to function largely along these lines of generality. Almost inevitably, however, this tends to lead to an ossification in working practices, and more importantly, often means that the goal of rehabilitation becomes a vague and secondary objective. It becomes very difficult to try new things - indeed staff have very little time, or opportunity, to luxuriate in designing regime modifications. Often just getting through the day with no major problems is perceived, with some justification, as an achievement in itself. In such a situation there is little opportunity to analyse just what is happening, let alone to develop any vision for the future.

Furthermore, as noted in Chapter 1, the causes of crime, the purpose of imprisonment and the nature of rehabilitation itself have become difficult issues to define, let alone for any penal

policy to address. Earlier chapters have also referred to the problems of measuring rehabilitation, and in identifying the factors likely to bring this process about. Additionally, it should be made clear that in attempting to rehabilitate offenders, even if a change toward law-abiding behaviour could be induced early enough in a criminal's career pattern, and even if there was a 100% success rate in eliminating recidivism, the overall effect on the crime rate would be "minuscule" (Lillyquist, 1980, p355). A principal factor, but one which is often overlooked, is that all programmes and treatment initiatives to alter criminal behaviour operate post factum - in this sense, criminal law, and the punishments it prescribes and oversees, is simply an indicator of social problems. Society should not expect the implementation of the criminal justice system to result in either a reduction of criminal behaviour or an amelioration of social conditions. While fear of imprisonment may be expected to exert some general deterrence toward criminality, prisons are, by definition, the last resort in any attempt to reduce crime. Platek for example, has argued that there is no correlation between rates of imprisonment, the number of criminal offences or levels of fear of crime (Platek, 1994, p29). Likewise, all post factum attempts to modify anti-social behaviour can only go so far in helping reduce recidivism:

"Beyond a certain point there is only so much that can be achieved by approaching offence behaviour at the individual level. In a number of important ways criminal behaviour is a product of the society in which it occurs" (McGuire and Priestley, 1985, p205).



Rehabilitative initiatives thus face obstacles at three levels - theoretically, operationally and empirically. Faced with these problems, not to mention a rising prison population, it is fair to ask if trying to rehabilitate people in prison is so problematic, and seems to offer so few rewards, is it worth the effort? Haines, while acknowledging the various difficulties associated with the development and implementation of rehabilitative initiatives, has argued that they can be justified, at the very least, on humanitarian grounds:

"if a certain form of assistance improves the quality of life of an individual, then this itself is a sufficient justification for continuing and is the mark of a civilised society" (Haines, 1990, p3).

#### 10.1 THE REHABILITATIVE RATIONALE OF THE PRISON LIBRARY

This study has focused on just one of the services provided within prison establishments and tried to evaluate its influence in changing the criminal behaviour of the offender. It has shown that the prison library is not just an exercise in humanity, but has always had a role in the rehabilitative process, and continues to do so. The rehabilitative impact of the prison library is, however, as much constrained as any other initiative by the three factors listed above - the theoretical foundation for intervention, operational arrangements and the difficulties associated with the measurement of any individual change. The previous chapter has addressed many of the practical difficulties of providing a library service within a penal environment, while the complications of designing suitable methodologies for evaluation were discussed in

the two introductory chapters. However, the problem of articulating a rehabilitative rationale for the prison library is one which this study has found to be particularly important. That no such rationale currently exists was evident from the diversity in service priorities and provision, and was reflected in the comments of many respondents who expressed negative opinions as to the rehabilitative potential of the prison library. In fact, the biggest single factor constraining the rehabilitative power of the prison library may be the prison librarian's view of the role of the prison librarian.

## 10.2 THE RESEARCH EVIDENCE: SOME NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS

### Librarians

While particular functions were carried out, or particular services provided, by prison librarians, it was only rarely that they perceived these as significant in a wider rehabilitative context. Librarians consistently undervalued the importance of their work and were often overly pessimistic about the possibility of any rehabilitation at all. In common with many respondents in this study, including both staff and inmates alike, rehabilitation was considered essentially as a personal response to a particular set of circumstances, and as such, impervious to any superficial influence. Thus, anything which any particular department of the prison could do was largely understood as either inadequate or irrelevant. Criminality was thought by many respondents as, essentially, causally related to external

factors, such as economic or social circumstances or personality traits. The likelihood, therefore, of any programme of intervention being successful was considered remote:

"As far as we can go to rehabilitation, it's limited. I'm fairly cynical of the system I suppose. I don't really think there's going to be any, having seen what I've seen. And a lot of it is based on factors that you can't control, because once they go outside, having been nurtured in that environment, they're at the mercy of it. When they go back to their own social situation, which probably hasn't changed, probably got worse, it's just that's what they're going to do and that's that" (Senior Librarian, Public Library Authority, Prison B).

Furthermore, because the concept of rehabilitation was individualised, being conceived as a process which could only be initiated and undertaken by alienated and anti-social persons, almost by definition there was only a very limited chance of a positive outcome:

"Any rehabilitation has to come from within the individual. Rehabilitation is a remote objective unfortunately, because the type of people we are dealing with are not an everyday person" (Prison Officer Librarian, Prison J).

These beliefs underpinned the views that many librarians expressed - that while they considered certain elements of their work to be "beneficial" to inmates, they were reluctant to consider these as "rehabilitative":

"I would like to think that prison libraries help in rehabilitation, but I doubt it. I think there are probably individual cases where inmates can get interested in something that he comes across in the library which might make a world of difference, but I don't think there's any kind of close correlation, or cause and effect. But I would certainly hope, one way or another, that there would be a beneficial effect" (Librarian, Prison C).

Similarly, other librarians considered the service they provided to be "useful", though not significant in reducing recidivism:

"I think that the library can be useful for self-improvement. Whether it would stop them re-offending I don't know"  
(Librarian, Prison E).

In some instances, librarians considered that any benefits the library was able to offer was offset by the negativity of the rest of the institution:

"I happen personally to think that the prison system is not always geared to rehabilitation, I think it is retribution. The few who do make a determined effort to improve their lot by learning to read, write and use the library, yes it may be of benefit to them, even if it's only writing letters from prison the next time they come in. I would say they benefit from it, but as to the amount of rehabilitation it affords, I don't know" (Librarian, Prison A).

### Governors

Prison governors too, confessed to a lack of any clear idea of what would rehabilitate any particular individual, or how this could be measured. Some governors recognised that information services provided by prison libraries could be "useful", though not necessarily rehabilitative:

"Information wise, inmate development side - information is in there and they can be channelled into it. It's up to them whether they read it or not. But I'm not that daft as to think now they know what it's like to read a book, they won't commit crimes when they go out. I've done 22 years in the Prison Service. I'm not that naive" (Governor, Prison G).

Other governors considered prison libraries a "good thing", but why they should be thought so, remained unclear:

"I've worked in the Prison Service for 11 years, and I've lots of ideas about what's good for rehabilitation, but in many ways, I'm still puzzled as to what really rehabilitates. I believe that libraries are conducive to rehabilitation, but I believe that as an act of faith almost. Often we look at things in the Prison Service and say this is good for rehabilitation, but finding measures of success is difficult" (Governor, Prison H).

### Civilian Staff

Many civilian staff tended to be cautious about ascribing a positive value to any initiative, let alone the prison library:

"Quite a lot of people do get into borrowing books on particular subjects and become quite expert. But I don't know how much it helps them when they're released. People do pick up information in the library that might be useful to them, but sometimes there are other places in the prison where they can pick up the same information. It's difficult isn't it? Who can actually tell what anything that's done in prison does to people when they get out? It's as much the process of maturation as anything else" (Probation Officer, Prison A).

"We've been trying in the Probation Service for 100 years to find the answer to rehabilitation. I don't think it lies in the library. I honestly don't know what the answer is. But we can't just give up. We've got to try all sorts of things, but so far, none of them's really worked has it? I'm not so sure anything stops them" (Probation Officer, Prison E).

Some staff expressed the view that the prison library did not contribute to rehabilitation because it did not have a formal change-based orientation:

"Rehabilitation happens within a programme, in a structured way. There are resources which can be used from the library, but the library per se doesn't contribute to rehabilitation" (Probation Officer, Prison G).

## Officers

Likewise, some uniformed staff felt that reading, on its own, could have little effect in inducing behavioural change:

"I've been dealing with two cases this morning, one to do with drink and one to do with football hooliganism. Now I could have said to them "Now go down to the library and ask the librarian for a book". My guess is he perhaps wouldn't, but instead he will be pointed towards a couple of courses. I think if somebody reads a book, no matter what it is, they can formulate their own ideas about it, but it's not until you start discussing it with someone else, or someone explains it to you, that it makes any marks at all. So I think although the printed word is very valuable, on its own the effect is limited".

Some officers felt that while the prison library could be a positive influence upon inmates, its effects would only be transitory, and likely to be devalued in the hostile post-release environment:

"Reading can help you find out about yourself and develop an awareness. But in the main people here are recidivists to whom none of the normal rules apply. When they're discharged we're back to square one" (Prison Officer, Prison J).

## Prisoners

Many inmates expressed similar opinions to those detailed above - whilst on the one hand they ascribed an arbitrary value to the prison library, they simultaneously denied that it had any rehabilitative influence:

"Although I think the library can be useful for self-improvement, whether it would stop people re-offending I don't know. I think that's a bit much" (Inmate, Prison F).

Similarly, another inmate argued that the prison library could help in the education of prisoners:

"Anybody who uses any library in any part of the world, whether it be the prison system or anything else, if they use a library, they will educate themselves. They'll even educate themselves without even knowing they're educating themselves. They'll broaden their minds, open their mind up to new ideas, give them new insights into different things".

He also considered that the prison library was a useful source of information and a means of empowerment:

"Any library will give you information. If people only knew what was in a library".

However, as to the prospect of rehabilitation, this was thought to be extremely unlikely:

"No, I shouldn't think so. Not even on a small scale. No" (Inmate, Prison A).

Many inmates tended to equate the prison library solely with the provision of fictional reading matter, which they considered to have no rehabilitative influence:

"No, the library doesn't help at all in rehab. I've always been well read and still put myself on offer, if you know what I mean" (Inmate, Prison B).

"No. Nothing helps in rehabilitation. There's no such thing in here. They've got all them Dean Koontz books in there. They can't rehabilitate no one can they? No, I don't reckon they do. It's not their purpose. It's just to stop you going mad in your cell" (Inmate, Prison C).

The argument raised by some librarians and members of staff that the role of the library was constrained and determined by the objectives of the institution was also voiced by some inmates:

"Through reading you do create wider interests, but as a direct influence on rehabilitation, no. What rehabilitative function do prisons serve anyway, no matter what auxiliary units are set up within them? They're here to contain, so therefore the function of the library is only escapist" (Inmate, Prison D).

Most prisoners tended to endorse the view that criminal behaviour was determined and conditioned by the unfavourable environment existing outside, and which the prison library could do nothing about:

"No matter how much education you get in a prison, I've got a criminal record behind me. When I do go out to get a job, they don't care what library I've been in, they're not going to employ me, because I've got a record. So the library can get the material in an attempt to rehabilitate, but it can't help you when you get out there, because no matter how much knowledge you have consumed, if I sit here and tell you I've been in prison several times, are you going to give me a job? I'm not saying the library does not make an effort, but what about when people get out into the real world - I could memorise every book in here and it still wouldn't help me" (Inmate, Prison C).

Finally, some prisoners expressed cynicism about library provision, arguing that it was little more than a public relations exercise:

"It's like a normal thing that the Prison Service can provide - there are lots of things within the system you can't provide. I guess it sounds nice - we're trying to educate them, we're trying to encourage them to read and I believe that's part of their motivation. But there's also a lot of politics going on and if somebody can stand up in the House of Commons and say "Look, we've spent all this money on books for prisoners". Well, that looks good" (Inmate, Prison D).



## Summary

Overall, respondents tended to be pessimistic about the rehabilitative potential of the prison library. Two principal reasons were cited. First, criminal behaviour was considered to be a product principally of socio-economic factors. Whilst located within the prison environment, it was not possible for either individuals or structured programmes to have any appreciable influence across these behavioural determinants. Secondly, given this causal analysis, it follows that the transition to non-criminal behaviour is not affected to any large degree by such things as educational advancement, self-improvement or the attainment of social skills. These factors were identified by respondents, as noted above, as "beneficial" or "useful" but not "rehabilitative".

However, cognitive theorists argue that it is the enhancement of prisoner's skills in precisely these areas which is likely to have the most significant bearing on future behaviour (Nuttall, 1992, p41).

### **10.3 THE RESEARCH EVIDENCE: THE PRISON LIBRARY AS A POSITIVE INFLUENCE IN THE REHABILITATIVE PROCESS**

The research evidence indicated that the prison library may have a positive influence on prisoner's behaviours in a number of different forms. Even at the most fundamental level, for those inmates who have never used a library before, the very concept of

an institution open to all, operating without discrimination and prepared to trust all its users, may be an antithesis to all of the values implicit in their indigenous sub-culture:

"I think we do have an influence. We try at a fairly basic level, we try and instil some sort of responsibility for objects that aren't their own. So they don't just think "Right, they're there to take" and hang on to them for evermore. Instead, they can see that as a general principle, they borrow something and actually bring it back again. So there is a sort of sharing, a sort of joint responsibility. We do try and say to inmates who we feel aren't bringing things back that they're letting their colleagues down, and that if one of them does something which may mean that part of a library service is reduced, then one would hope that their colleagues would say "Look, you shouldn't be doing this, we should all be working together, you're letting your fellow inmates down by doing this". So I do think, even if it's only at a fairly basic level, it's got that sort of social pattern which means that it does instil a bit of responsibility. I mean one would also hope that they will pick up interests which will stay with them in later life. And also as well as the education staff they meet, it's another fairly neutral person they come into contact with, not specifically part of the regime. They will often talk about things to the librarian that they might not talk to another officer about. So I think that sometimes helps as well - just the person being there, as somebody who's not particularly involved as to why they're in prison or anything else, but just for their interests or leisure pursuits" (Senior Librarian, Public Library Authority, Prison D).

Throughout this study, rehabilitative interventions based on modifying the cognitive processes of the individual in the belief that their subsequent behaviours will become more pro-social, have been advocated as the strategy likely to be most successful. This paradigm presents a positive alternative to the social and environmental determinists to whom any mediations, by definition, can have only limited impact. Within the cognitive model, the prison library can have an important influence. Library resources can be employed to assist in the introduction, development and reinforcement of cognitive skills programmes. More importantly,

however, whereas cognitive-behavioural interventions essentially say to the individual that there are alternative ways of perception, interpretation and social action, library resources can directly provide inmates with opportunities to experiment with these choices. For example, in Chapter 4, the importance of the prison library as an empowering influence was examined. In Chapters 5 and 6, it was shown that library resources could be used to provide inmates with access to an enlarged knowledge base, to assist them in making more informed and independent judgements, and to act less impulsively. In Chapter 7, it was indicated that the act of reading itself could help in fostering the development of reasoning abilities and reducing adherence to rigid thinking patterns, while promoting abstract thinking and critical reasoning. All these functions of the library help to encourage the individual to take responsibility for their own actions, rather than to externalise blame, deny culpability or engage in other distortions, such as minimalisation:

"What we have to remember is 80% of these people will go back to the same background and environment, where they don't have the same chances. Hopefully, by giving them some guidance on how to cope, improving their education, helping to improve themselves while they are in here, they will begin to think about their own lives" (Prison Officer, Prison A).

As more cognitive-behavioural interventions are employed as strategies for addressing offending behaviour, two important developments are likely to occur. First, the fatalistic approach toward rehabilitation held by many staff in the Prison Service will tend to be eroded. Practitioners have, in fact, been urged by cognitive-behavioural researchers to adopt a more positive attitude:

"At all levels be prepared to counteract the "nothing works" myth" (Hollin, 1990, p152).

Second, by supporting cognitive-behavioural programmes operating elsewhere in the prison, and by promoting the value of its own work, the prison library has an important opportunity to develop, and implement, its own rehabilitative rationale. Some of the issues which prison library services may have to address, and the changes they may have to undergo, are examined below.

#### 10.4 THE RESEARCH EVIDENCE: RECOMMENDATIONS

The research evidence highlighted some areas of provision and operation which need to be changed if the prison library is to be fully involved in the rehabilitative process. If librarians incorporate a rehabilitative rationale in their aims and objectives, as a direct consequence, the implementation of most of these recommendations will occur. Other recommendations will require fundamental policy change, either from the Prison Service Agency, or from individual establishments.

##### Operational issues

###### 1 Siting

The physical location of the prison library has an important influence on its operation. Given that tutors and inmates working in the Education Department are likely to form the biggest single group of library users, it is advantageous if the library and

teaching resources are sited as closely together as possible. Such arrangements were seen to be workable even at those prisons where inmates were required to be under close supervision. At establishments where the prison library and the Education Department were located at some distance away from each other (for example, at Prisons C and F), there was evidence of very poor co-operation between the two services. The argument advanced by some respondents that some inmates have such negative experiences of their school years that they are deterred from using the prison library if it is seen to be too closely allied to the Education department, was only a minority view and not one to which too much weight should be given.

## 2 Access

Rule 30 of the Prison Rules establishes that the provision of a library within a penal establishment is a statutory requirement:

"A library shall be provided in every prison, and subject to any directions of the Secretary of State, every prisoner shall be allowed to have library books and exchange them" (quoted in Plotnikoff, 1988, p67).

However, no statutory requirements exist which define the nature of what should be provided, or the amount of access inmates can have to the prison library. The Prison Service Operating Standards do recommend that a weekly visit of at least 20 minutes should be a target level of permitted access (Home Office, 1994c, paraU25). These Standards are not statements of entitlement but outlines of intention, and have no binding force.

While some prisons are able to offer access to the library far in excess of the Operating Standards target, the research showed that for some prisoners regular visits to the library were still difficult, and often a function of the personal inclination of uniformed staff, rather than any desire to adhere to Prison Service recommendations. However, access to the library is one of the most cost effective ways of occupying large numbers of prisoners for long periods of time. Disregarding any other benefits, even on the limited criteria of institutional management alone, ensuring inmates have both consistent and sufficient opportunity to use the prison library should be regarded as an important regime activity in its own right.

As noted in Chapter 9, for some groups of prisoners, access to the library may be particularly difficult. At some establishments, vulnerable prisoners, Category A prisoners within special units and inmates in the prison hospital have had small, separate collections within their segregated quarters. At other institutions, the librarian makes visits to these designated units and either takes a trolley of selected material which is perceived to be suitable, or endeavours to obtain items which any prisoners may request. Such arrangements are unsatisfactory, and it is recommended therefore that all prisoners should be permitted to visit the prison library in person and be able to make full use of all the services which are available.

### 3 Library design

The research evidence indicated several approaches to library design. When librarians were ensconced in separate offices to

which inmates were not permitted entry (Prisons A, B, D, J), this arrangement offered the poorest level of opportunity for users to consult staff. In some cases these offices served principally as rest rooms for officers. In other establishments (Prisons C, E, G, K), the librarian sat at a desk within the library itself, which permitted users to approach the librarian with some degree of privacy. At Prison E, the office vacated by the librarian had been converted into a reference room. However, because of security considerations, this room had to be kept locked, and as inmates only visited the library under officer escort they had little chance during the short duration of their visit to apply for the room to be opened and make use of the resources therein. Utilisation of library space has to be compatible with both security considerations and with the demands of the users.

At two establishments (Prisons F and H), the librarian had no designated workspace at all. The result was that at Prison F the librarian became isolated from the inmates, and indeed from the rest of the prison as well, having to share the tiny amount of space behind the library counter with the prison officer librarian and two orderlies. At Prison H, the librarian was faced with similar problems but made the rest of the prison her workspace, energetically forming liaisons and partnerships with other departments. However, such an arrangement can only function successfully if the orderlies are both conscientious and trustworthy. Consequently, it is recommended that while taking due account of security considerations, the internal layout of the library should attempt to maximise inmate access to resources and facilitate staff-inmate interaction.

## The library user

### 1 User education

As indicated in Chapter 9, because many inmates are inexperienced library users, and may also be disadvantaged in a number of other areas, user education should be a high priority:

The library should be included on all staff and inmate induction programmes.

Library staff should be prepared to intervene personally and proactively in order to assist inmates.

Bibliographical aids should be accessible to inmates.

### 2 Borrower processing

Particularly in those establishments, where library access is restricted, libraries should impose as few borrower restrictions as possible. For example, the maximum number of items which can be borrowed by each user may need to be increased and librarians should adopt a flexible approach to the lending of reference material.

## Stock management

### 1 Stock provision

English Prison Rules make no mention of the kind of stock which should be held or the type of service which should be provided by prison libraries. European Prison Rules are only slightly more specific:



"Every institution shall have a library for the use of all categories of prisoners, adequately stocked with a wide range of both recreational and instructional books, and prisoners shall be encouraged to make full use of it. Wherever possible the prison library shall be organised in co-operation with community library services" (Council of Europe, 1987, para82).

The Prison Service Operating Standards recommend that the prison library should be responsive to the information, cultural, educational, occupational and recreational needs of prisoners by providing:

"Information in all forms (including audio cassettes) on the subjects of interest or use to prisoners" (Home Office, 1994c, paraU23).

Maintaining this necessary depth and variation of stock is a particularly challenging task for the prison librarian. It is of some concern therefore, as reported in Chapter 9, that only one of the ten libraries studied had completed a user survey within the previous two years. The requirement to produce a regular profile of user needs should be a feature of the contract between the public library authority and the prison establishment.

In addition, the librarian must liaise with other departments in the prison to ensure that library stock can support other courses and initiatives.

Ensuring the library is responsive to inmate's needs is important. Accordingly, opportunities must be available for feedback from users.

Because of pressures of space, at least one library (Prison G), was not able to display all its book stock. Other librarians have complained of such high levels of losses that shelves are bare (Hopkins, 1994, p21). In both situations, it is essential that stocks are regularly reviewed, weeded, exchanged and refreshed.

In Chapter 6, the importance of community information and current affairs was indicated. Accordingly, particular emphasis should be given to the provision of newspapers (both local and national), periodicals, cassettes or digitally encoded material. Only five of the ten libraries reviewed carried a daily newspaper, while only three of the ten held collections of cassettes.

In order to develop and maintain the specialised stock profile, it is essential that prison librarians have control of their own book fund and can determine their own selection policy.

## 2 Stock display

The display of stock, including leaflets and statutory publications, within prison libraries is crucial. Many inmates are unfamiliar with library procedures, organisation and classification systems. They may also be unaware of reservation arrangements or procedures for inter-library loans. Other prisoners may feel embarrassed about asking for help, particularly in front of other prisoners or staff. Furthermore, particularly in those establishments where inmates visit the library under officer escort, unless inmates are able to find the material they are looking for rapidly, the prison library will tend to revert to its most basic function, that of providing prisoners with fiction

to read whilst they are confined to their cells. It is recommended therefore that:

1 As much stock as possible should be openly displayed for inmates to access freely.

2 Explicit library guiding should be provided.

3 Where appropriate (for example, in developing self-help collections), thematic, as opposed to more orthodox, classification schemes should be introduced.

### 3 Promotion

Library promotional material must be produced on a regular basis in order to maintain user awareness. Within a prison environment, this is particularly important as there is a constant turnover of the client group, as new prisoners are admitted and other prisoners discharged or transferred. In addition, the increasing numbers of part-time staff employed by education contractors may often be unaware of prison library services.

Within those establishments studied, most promotion tended to occur within the library itself or in the corridor leading to it. Active efforts should also be made to publicise the library outside the immediate library environment and to target non-users.

The overwhelming number of respondents interviewed tended to perceive the library solely as a resource for the lending and exchange of books. Promotion should not deal solely with publicising new titles but address the whole range of services that the library is able to offer.

In Chapter 6, it was shown that some prison librarians had collated large amounts of community information, but had tended to hide this resource from inmates, rather than promote it. The research evidence also indicated the unwillingness of many librarians to openly display material in leaflet form. Many librarians also adopted a policy of providing services, in secret, to inmates who were considered to be especially trustworthy, or who had ingratiated themselves to a particular degree. Such services included the provision of inter-library loans, the overnight loan of reference material, reservations of spoken word cassettes and concealed collections of Tintin and Asterix books. Librarians argued that such an approach was justified, in preference to such services being publicised and then abused by other inmates. However, the problem with such an approach is that what begins as a policy aimed at protection may turn into one driven by paranoia. **Promotion of the library should raise awareness of all the services which the library is currently contracted to deliver.**

A number of library activities were organised at some establishments. These included classes to develop information skills (Prisons A and D), demonstrations of bell ringing (Prison C), multi-cultural evenings (Prison A), visiting authors (Prison H) and discussion groups (Prison J). **A range of library activities should be developed to encourage use and widen awareness of service provision.**

Prison librarians may need to promote their work to their own colleagues within the public library authority. For example, the

research evidence did indicate that prison librarians felt isolated from other librarians and that some branch libraries were reluctant to lend stock to the prison libraries in their authority.

#### 4 Information provision

The evidence presented in Chapter 6 showed that information held within prison libraries can help maintain contact with the outside world, help inmates address aspects of their offending behaviour and assist in the process of re-integration.

Maintaining stocks of current information within the prison library are crucial to the rehabilitative process.

The provision of community information, targeting the inmate's local community and the likely area of resettlement, should be a priority for the librarian.

Prison librarians must liaise with other information providers in the prison to ensure the most appropriate resources are used and that all needs are addressed.

Greater attention must be paid to the information needs of specific inmate groups. Prisoners held on remand, lifers, older inmates, those from ethnic groupings and vulnerable prisoners all have particular information needs.

Librarians must give particular emphasis toward the provision of material which reinforces treatment programmes or change-based initiatives offered elsewhere in the establishment.

## 5 Self-help material

Many prisoners are unwilling to participate in courses or rehabilitative programmes, for fear of embarrassment or perceived negative reaction from fellow inmates or members of staff (Stevens, 1992, p119). In addition, attendance on formal courses may be seen by prisoners principally as an opportunity to indicate to authority a level of institutional adjustment, rather than an opportunity to internalise positive responses (Sampson, 1992, p11). Encouraging the independent use of self-help resources by individual inmates is therefore significant in promoting pro-social behaviour and facilitating re-integration. The role that librarians have in stocking a wide variety of self-help material, and actively promoting its use, is one of the utmost importance. As indicated in Chapter 6, the influence that the prison library can have in this area has also been recognised by psychologists employed by the Prison Service Agency.

A wide variety of self-help material is currently available to prison librarians to stock if they so wish. However, much of the self-help material which has been produced so far, relies heavily on the written word. Within a prison environment, low literacy levels may act as a major constraint on the effectiveness of such material. A recent survey by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit indicated that 1 in 2 inmates had serious literacy difficulties, compared with 1 in 6 in the general population (Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, 1994, p16). It is recommended therefore, that prison librarians should examine all

available formats of self-help material in order to maximise exposure and usage.

## 6 Open learning

In Chapter 4, the importance of open learning and self-directed study were examined. Both require a suitably stocked, responsive and pro-active library service in order for these initiatives to succeed. Open learning, or independent study, are ideal vehicles for many prisoners, whose only previous educational experience at school was either negative or non-existent. For example, the 1991 National Prisoner Survey indicated that 40% of male prisoners under 25 left school before the age of 16, compared to only 11% in the general population. Of those prisoners who attended school after the age of 11, 30% said they mostly played truant compared just 3% in the general population (Walmsley et al, 1993, pviii). Open learning however, is non-threatening, it allows prisoners to develop their own interests and to work at their own pace. It also provides a constructive activity to occupy the prisoner during the hours they are locked up. Furthermore, the integration of prison library resources and open learning packages can be used to overcome security and regime constraints, which may restrict prisoners from physically attending classes in the establishment's Education Department. The research evidence indicated that when the library also functions as an open learning resource and study centre, as at Prison K, then access to all inmates, not just those attending classes or those engaged in private study, can increase.

Currently, the British Association for Open Learning is encouraging every public library in England to provide an open learning service, with appropriate resources and trained staff (Allred, 1995, p14). It is recommended, therefore, that to mirror these developments in the public library service, prison librarians should, in order to optimise resource usage, facilitate inter-departmental integration and maximise inmate access:

(i) Evaluate the levels of input by prison libraries into open learning provision.

(ii) Determine the role and contribution of the library to the provision of open learning programmes.

(iii) Examine what additional resources may be involved, and what staff training may be required, in order for libraries to become fully integrated into this process.

## 7 Religious material

Librarians should take into account four principal factors when deciding whether material ostensibly falling into this category is suitable for inclusion in the prison library:

(i) The nature of its origin.

What is known about the group or organisation donating it, and in particular, whether the origins of the material are explicitly stated?

(ii) The motivations of the donating source.

What are the overall objectives of the organisation and particularly, the reasons why prisoners are being targeted as being receptive to this material? Is the welfare of prisoners the



main purpose, or do the donating organisations have their own objectives?

**(iii) The content of this material.**

Careful consideration should be given as to whether particular trends of thought or ideologies are being propagandised under the cover of providing spiritual comfort. In addition, bearing in mind the relatively immature level of the reasoning abilities of many prisoners, particularly young offenders (Hollin, 1990, p11), and the lower average level of their IQ (Eysenck, 1987, p33), they may tend toward a very simplistic interpretation of things they read. Reading something that confirms an external explanation for their criminal behaviour, or that seems to provide a rapid road to spiritual enlightenment without them having to necessarily address their pattern of offending behaviour, or come to terms with the consequences of their criminal activity, can be a very inviting proposition for many offenders.

**(iv) The consequences.**

The effects of reading such material should be thoroughly examined. Within a prison environment, books can have a very powerful capacity to influence people, particularly when:

- the content of the book is reinforced by additional messages and correspondence, for example, by letters from the donating agency. All four of the organisations examined above encourage a written interaction with prisoners.

- where the message tends to be personalised - for example, on the front cover of the "The Way To Happiness" (Hubbard, 1989), there are boxes to fill in to indicate donor and recipient.

- where no opposing view is offered.

-where some inmates may find it difficult to read material uncritically, particularly when this material offers one dimensional routes to "happiness".

-where the limited exposure of many inmates to worldly events, by necessity, constrains their response to new influences. Fragmentary experiences coupled with a highly selective association of ideas can create an unrealistic and illusory model of society.

-when it is the nature of the prison environment that the significance of some events or experiences are heightened and exaggerated, simply because of the routine and monotony of daily life.

Prison librarians should carefully review the kind of spiritual and pseudo-spiritual material they hold. This review body should include representatives of the Chaplaincy, and governors. At a national level, the access and exposure granted to religious organisations should be closely examined. More research is needed to evaluate the impact of these groups, and the literature they distribute, on prisoners' lives.

## Staffing

### 1 Staffing levels

The research evidence indicated that lack of officer support acted as a severe constraint on library operations at a number of establishments. Some of the effects of this staff shortage included the suspension of a short loan service, closure of the library as library officers were switched to other duties, the inability to extend library opening hours to provide weekend or

evening services and delays in a programme to provide additional information services to inmates. Service level agreements may need to be re-negotiated, or more strictly adhered to, in order to maintain integrity of staffing provision.

The research also revealed that the level of Home Office funding for professional librarians was in many cases inadequate. As indicated in Chapter 9, only 2 of the 10 prison librarians interviewed considered the hours they worked enabled them to provide an effective service. Furthermore, the insistence by the Home Office that funding only covers time actually spent on-site, has resulted in many prison librarians working in their own time, in an unpaid and unrecognised capacity. Examples of this out of hours work included obtaining local newspapers from the distributors and dictionaries for inmates (Prison E), welfare rights leaflets and information (Prison F), community information (Prison C), processing prisoner's reservations and requests off-site (Prison H) and promoting multi-cultural material (Prison A). Funding for professional staff should reflect the demand for greater input, non-professional clerical support and the need to spend some amount of time off-site.

## 2 Training

The amount and quality of training available was criticised at all establishments. Inmate orderlies, prison officer librarians, library assistants and professional librarians all voiced dissatisfaction.

While training of all library staff is important, that of library orderlies should receive particular attention, as they have the greatest amount of contact time with users, and may also be the most preferred information source. The training of non-professional staff also enables the librarian to concentrate on developmental work.

Effective training can help reduce the isolation of library staff, both in terms of interacting with other personnel, increasing levels of confidence and assisting toward the adoption of a more integrated and pro-active approach within the establishment.

#### Organisation and management

##### 1 Inter-departmental integration and communications

The research indicated that the library in many establishments was isolated from other departments in the rest of the prison. This was attributed to two principal factors. First, there was evidence that librarians themselves saw their role as being primarily confined to work within the library itself. At Prison A, the librarian could not find the Probation department, while at Prison C, the librarian had not visited the innovative drug rehabilitation unit located, for the previous 6 months, immediately behind the library. When accompanying the researcher to the unit, several areas of co-operation and information sharing possibilities were identified between the unit's workers and the library staff. At Prison D, the librarian expressed reluctance to attend therapeutically oriented wing meetings.

Second, there was evidence that both management and other departments in the prison saw little reason why they should have any contact with the library. For example, at Prison F, a local prison, with many locked gates, the librarian had not been issued with any keys, and furthermore, her own attempts to liaise with other departments (for example, Careers), had been rebuffed. At some establishments, there was evidence of poor communications between management and library staff. In addition, consultations about the future of the library service when inmates were to be unlocked for longer periods, were conducted between the prison officer librarian and the Head of Inmate Activities, to the exclusion of the professional librarian. At Prison B, the librarian complained of the "bureaucratic inertia" of prison management, when trying to develop a new information service for inmates. At Prison G, governors who were interviewed made it very clear that the library was perceived as an ancillary department, with little real significance in the life of the establishment (see Chapter 9). At Prison E, professional library staff reported no contact with senior management. At Prison A, pre-release officers admitted that "no officers ever used the facilities in the library" (see Chapter 9), while officers working in the Prisoner Support Unit at Prison H expressed surprise at the depth and range of information resources held within the library. At Prison K, a pre-release officer admitted he knew "nothing about the library". At Prison F, tutors declared their "ignorance" in respect of library resources, while the Education Co-Ordinator at Prison C gave a similar response.

Furthermore, at some prisons, the library had become burdened with a range of other unrelated duties, ranging from recording videos and distributing prisoner's mail to acting as the local newsagent.

In light of this evidence, it is recommended that:

Induction procedures for all staff must be reviewed in order to ensure that all departments are included in the process.

Professional librarians must be issued with keys.

Librarians should be aware that to discharge their duties effectively, it is essential they interact with Prison Service staff and civilians working in other departments within the establishment.

Librarians should be included on Education staff meetings, and where appropriate, attend meetings of the establishment's senior management team.

Librarians should ensure that the integrity of the library's agenda is not subsumed by other departments or interests.

Librarians should adopt a high profile within the prison.

Patterns of communication between governors and professional library staff should be reviewed.

## 2 Pro-activity

Professional library staff should attempt to maximise inmate contact time and endeavour to maintain a presence during the hours the library is open to inmates.

Clerical duties should not take precedence over interaction with users.

Routine borrower processing tasks should not form part of the professional librarian's duties, but be designated to the inmate orderlies or support staff.

The pattern of hours worked by professional library staff should coincide as far as possible with the opening hours of the library itself.

Professional librarians must adopt an interventionary approach to service delivery.

Subject to limitations of security and professional judgement, librarians should be prepared to operate in an advisory capacity.

It is helpful if librarians are seen, by inmates and staff, as having a participative role in the prison. Librarians should be prepared to work as part of a multi-disciplinary team.

## Purpose and objectives

### 1 A policy-driven approach

In Chapter 3, it was shown that there is lack of clarity concerning the rationale and legitimacy of the prison library service, particularly with regard to its rehabilitative impact. As a result, many initiatives taken by prison librarians tend to be ad hoc, and dependent upon the dynamism of a particular individual. Often when that individual leaves the post, the impermanence of their enthusiasms is revealed:

"The previous librarian was working with us in developing a joint collection of benefits information, and doing an index to make sure they were all up to date, because there's nothing worse than out of date information on benefits. But she left, and nothing really has happened with that since" (Senior Probation Officer, Prison A).

Prison libraries must have a policy-led, rather than personality-driven, rationale which is focused clearly on the rehabilitative process.

### 2 Role perceptions

The way in which prison librarians perceive their own role will determine to a great extent the operation and objectives of the prison library. Prison libraries are not branch libraries in a somewhat different setting. Neither should prison librarians see themselves as civilians providing a facility to an institution.

The tasks which a professional librarian undertakes in a branch library outside may have a completely different degree of importance when undertaken in the prison library. Furthermore,



unlike their colleagues working in public branch libraries, the prison librarian requires a different range of skills, undertakes many different duties, may have different objectives and operates in a particular, controlled context.

Prison librarians must recognise they are important members of staff working with others in an integrated and multi-disciplinary environment, and sharing common objectives. Prison librarians must not aspire to make their libraries the equivalent of a "normal branch library", nor indeed must prison librarians see themselves as branch librarians. Instead, they must work toward developing a library service which is affirmed by the rest of the establishment and which incorporates a rehabilitative rationale.

#### 10.5 THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF PRISON LIBRARIES

The Chief Education Adviser to the Prison Service Agency has stated that:

"In general, prison libraries have reached a standard of excellence...over 75% of all inmates regularly use the library service" (Benson, 1994, p7)

This statistic may be a little misleading, for although it suggests a large number of inmates may be coming through the library doors, it does not reveal anything about the quality of facilities provided, nor how satisfied prisoners are with the service they receive. Indeed, because the prison library is a

monopoly provider in respect of many of its services, it would be surprising if a large number of inmates did not use it.

However, of more importance for the future development of the prison library than expressing self-satisfaction with levels of use, is that an appropriate rationale for the service is developed. In many of the establishments studied, bland mission statements existed, but librarians remained confused about the overall direction and purpose of the prison library. If no such rationale develops, it is likely that the role of the prison library will become little more than a book exchange to occupy some of the prisoners' idle hours.

For all libraries, both inside and outside prison establishments, there is an implicit belief that they have the power to affect the lives of their users:

"Library use is a process which is goal seeking, structured and intended to change the competence and ability of a person to do something. In other words, a learning process...Our mission has to do with helping people to make sense of the world and with enabling, even challenging people to become more competent at this" (Allred, 1995, pp13-14).

Within a prison library, the potential of the library to effect change in the individual becomes a particularly important responsibility. It is essential therefore, that prison librarians address the central issue of the prison library's rationale, and the rehabilitative function of the service must occupy a central position in any such review.

However, irrespective of how prison librarians articulate their own objectives, there are a number of other issues which are of particular import for the future development of prison libraries.

### Privatisation

The Home office is committed to operating at least ten privatised prisons. Already at some of these establishments library services have been directly provided, without support from the local public library authority. The librarian at H.M. Prison Blakenhurst has argued that these arrangements have made Blakenhurst "a milestone in penal provision", where the library is "appropriate, effective and excellent...pleasant, well-used and respected" and "any librarian's dream come true" (Evans, 1994, p26). This view is not however shared by other librarians responsible for prison library provision. Linda Hopkins, from Gloucester County Library Services, has argued that such euphoria may be shortlived, and in the longer term "certainly, stocks are likely to become more static, inmates denied access to proper request and inter-library loan facilities, and information services are likely to be less well-developed" (Hopkins, 1994, p160). Furthermore, with budget devolution and competitive tendering, governors are being turned into customers, and the possibility of buying in library services, for example, from the education contractor, has become much more likely. However, public library authorities have well developed supply and inter-lending networks, major resources and a history of expertise which they are able to offer to prison establishments (Benson, 1994, p11). Prison libraries which are served by a public library authority are likely to be more responsive to

specialist needs, which can often be satisfied from current stock. For example, all the public library authorities serving prison establishments in this study employed librarians to provide multi-cultural and multi-lingual services.

#### Lack of central cohesion

The Chief Education Officers Branch which formerly oversaw all education and library provision has been re-organised into an Education and Training Advisory body which will have to contract its expertise to individual penal establishments. Roy Collis, the Chairman of the Prison Librarians Group has expressed "concern about the implications for providing a strategic overview of education, and particularly, library issues" (Collis, 1994, p3). Similarly, as individual governors exercise control over their own budgets, some librarians have voiced their fears that "the Home Office will be unable to sustain a coherent policy about library provision" (Hopkins, 1994, p159).

#### Local government reorganisation

The outcome of local government reorganisation is to be the creation of a number of smaller unitary authorities, and the inevitable dissolution of some larger county library services. There has been some disquiet that the new smaller authorities may find it difficult to maintain levels of resourcing and expertise for the prison libraries under their jurisdiction (Hopkins, 1994, p160).

## Introduction of mobile services

Inmates at H.M. Prison Springhill are now served by a mobile library, which calls two evenings a week. Previously, prisoners at this establishment had access to library resources and professional staff at H.M. Prison Grendon. Although this has been termed "good news" and an "innovative development" by some librarians (Hopkins, 1994, p161), it remains to be seen whether other establishments will see this as a precedent and withdraw static provision. Using a mobile library to deliver a service to a prison establishment imposes some severe constraints on provision - for example, no arrangement has been made on the service to Springhill for any interaction with professional library staff, activity programmes, information services, support for education or vocational training, or specialised stock selection.

## 10.6 CONCLUSIONS

In addressing the concept of rehabilitation in this research, the premise that criminal behaviour has many causes, and therefore must be addressed with a variety of responses was adopted. However, in developing rehabilitative programmes the cognitive-behavioural model was identified as the intervention strategy most likely to be successful. The work undertaken by researchers such as Ross and Fabiano (1985), correlated particular cognitive patterns with criminal behaviour. Cognitive characteristics which have been identified include impulsivity, externalisation, an inability to perceive from another viewpoint and a lack of

emotional concern (Hollin, 1990, p10). Theorists argue that these particular cognitive structures are typically a result of poorly formulated analytical and social skills, constraining the development of moral and ethical reasoning, and resulting in deficient problem solving capabilities (Thornton, 1987, p138; Maclean, 1992, p23). Because these skills are learned, it is believed that programmes which support cognitive development can have an impact on future behaviour (Nuttall, 1991, p41).

Successful programmes emphasise the "critical elements" of self-control and perspective taking (Williamson, 1994, p55), together with "consideration and interpretation of competing consequences" of behavioural alternatives (Jones, 1992, p12).

The present study has shown that the prison library can have an important influence in challenging these cognitive distortions, promoting pro-social behaviour and assisting in the re-integration process:

- 1 Library use by inmates was found to assist the development of their cognitive and interpersonal skills.
- 2 Library use fostered their ability to analyse situations and adopt a less egocentric viewpoint.
- 3 Library use also encouraged inmates to seek information independently, thereby assisting in a personal process of empowerment and demythologizing their fatalism.

4 Library use was found to have a direct influence in assisting inmates address patterns of their offending behaviour.

5 Library use could also help facilitate re-integration back into the community. For example, the provision of community information, newspapers and current affairs, employment and training information, welfare rights and information about accommodation were found to be important elements of provision.

The research results indicate that the principal reason why libraries were found to be an especially important source of information within the prison, was that they allowed inmates access to resources in a more appropriate learning environment than that which other information providers are able to offer. For many prisoners, the information they receive from formal providers tends to be passively imposed and is used by them, primarily, to portray a degree of institutional adjustment. In contrast, when inmates are able to exploit information independently, they are likely to benefit much more, as this usage is "self-directed and internalised" (Albert, 1989, p126).

The research has shown that in those establishments where librarians have realised the contribution the prison library can make to the rehabilitative process, the service has become more pro-active with more co-operation and evidence of integration between the library and other departments. In those establishments where the library has not absorbed a rehabilitative

perspective so strongly, the service has tended to remain as an isolated department with a narrowly defined role, based principally around replicating a public branch library within a custodial setting. Inevitably, it is more difficult for the librarian to extend the role of the prison library when there are regime constraints - for example, if inmates are only permitted weekly escorted visits, or if the library is physically isolated from other departments. However, at one establishment with precisely these handicaps, the librarian had succeeded in integrating the library with other regime activities. She argued that it was essential that her role was seen to be as broad as possible and had deliberately cultivated a high profile within the prison. She indicates below just some of her duties, those in relation to the provision of information:

"I provide information for the hospital, through the network of health information centres, on particular problems and diseases. I've provided a few leaflets and posters for the actual hospital itself. I see myself as a link really between the various departments in the prison and things like the Health Resources Centre, the Self-Help team, things like that. I've done work with several of the officers - when I first came here, staff support wasn't mentioned at all, but I have had that written, very loosely, into my job description now. I think it's important that the officers, they take books anyway for recreational reading, but if there's any particular information they need, I should be able to get it for them. I've helped one of the officers, he's doing a conversion course, he's doing a study on relaxation, so I've managed to get quite a lot of information for him. He's actually going to start a relaxation group here. Education - I support courses and individual men that are on the courses, and teachers, and try to keep abreast of what's happening, keep up with them. Staff in admin ask me for things sometimes. The Prisoner Support Unit is the main department and I actually hope to be involved in some of their courses this year, particularly pre-release. I hope to be able to do some work on information, using the theme of the library as an information centre, to go through everything that libraries have in the way of information - from basic things like timetables to reference books, benefits information, jobs. I don't think people are aware of how much libraries have got to offer, so I'll probably do a



session on that, with an exercise for them to do. And they do a lifers course as well, about a week long, every so often, so I thought I might do something similar for that. And then there's all the other things that are ongoing, like drugs support information and alcohol, stress management, leaflets and so on" (Librarian, Prison H).

In the past, prison libraries have often tended to be reactive, rather than proactive organisations - whatever the prevailing thinking regarding rehabilitation, the prison library tailored its service to meet it. Even so, given the history of constraints upon the operation of the prison library, it seems remarkable that the library has been able to play so effective a role in the various rehabilitative initiatives that have been undertaken. Today, the prison library no longer exists simply to provide positive moral literature, and it need not just passively respond to a diet of poorly articulated demands, which, in many cases, have already been constrained by a lifetime of low expectations. Currently, the essential role for prison librarians is not to narrowly replicate current ideology in isolation, but rather to ensure that the service they provide is fully co-ordinated with the strategies of all the other agencies in the prison.

Prison library services will never reduce reconviction rates or increase resocialisation by themselves (there are too many factors in society outside the institution which have a causal impact on criminality), but they can help as part of an integrated programme to develop a more holistic view of the nature of the rehabilitative process. As one Education Co-Ordinator said:

"The focal purpose of the library is to provide a social, cultural and developmental role supporting the rehabilitative work of the whole regime" (Education Co-Ordinator, Prison K).

However, in order to develop and maintain this rehabilitative perspective for the prison library, three considerations must be kept under permanent review. First, the narrow perceptions held by some prison librarians of their own role must always be challenged. Second, their understanding of the potential importance of their own work in influencing the rehabilitative process must be continually reinforced. Third, in redefining the prison library's purpose, it is essential that the whole agenda of the librarian's work should not be personality-driven but policy-led, and should explicitly acknowledge and incorporate a rehabilitative rationale.

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## APPENDIX 1

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON SITES VISITED

Due to Prison Service Agency restrictions concerning this study, it is only possible to give some very basic information about the type and nature of the institutions visited.

Excluding the pilot study, 124 inmates were interviewed and 62 staff. The numbers and ethnic origins of inmate interviewees are given below, following the Home Office classification system:

6 AP - Asian Pakistan  
 1 BA - Black African  
 17 BC - Black Caribbean  
 100 WM - White

Thus, 19.4% of inmates interviewed were non-white, compared with a figure of 16% for the whole prison population.

In addition, the Senior Librarian responsible for overseeing services to penal establishments from each public library authority was interviewed. Because several prisons were served by the same library authority, a total of 6 librarians were interviewed.

Finally, in order to obtain a post-release perspective, 20 inmates (3 BC, 17WM), who had recently been released from prison were interviewed. A copy of their interview schedule is included as Appendix 7.

The two prisons which were used for the pilot study were:

PRISON 1 - CATEGORY: Young Offenders Institution

POPULATION: 420

CONSTRUCTION: Recent, purpose-built.

INMATE CHARACTERISTICS: Very secure environment for young offenders serving a range of sentence lengths from very short to life.

NUMBER OF INMATES INTERVIEWED: 6 (1 BC, 6 WM)

STAFF INTERVIEWED: (7) Careers Officer, Education Co-ordinator, Head of Inmate Activities, Lecturer, Prison Officer, Prison Officer Librarian, Professional Librarian.

PRISON 2 - CATEGORY: C

POPULATION: 536

CONSTRUCTION: Converted military base.

INMATE CHARACTERISTICS: Very low proportion of non-white prisoners 5%, compared with a figure for the whole prison population of 16% and for the general population of 5% (Walmsley et al, 1993, pvii). In addition, a very low average age of 23 years 11 months reflecting the high number of first offenders.

NUMBER OF INMATES INTERVIEWED: 7 (1 AP, 6 WM)

STAFF INTERVIEWED: (8) Chaplain, Education Co-ordinator, Head of Inmate Activities, Prison Officer, Prison Officer Librarian, Professional Librarian, Senior Prison Officer, Senior Probation Officer.

The ten institutions which were used for the main body of the research were:

PRISON A - CATEGORY: C

POPULATION: 400

CONSTRUCTION: Converted military base.

INMATE CHARACTERISTICS: Can take up to 60 lifers, the remainder mainly medium and short term sentence.

NUMBER OF INMATES INTERVIEWED: 11 (1 BC, 10WM)

STAFF INTERVIEWED: (7) Education Co-Ordinator, Lecturer, Pre-Release Course Tutor, Professional Librarian, Senior Probation Officer.

PRISON B - CATEGORY: B

POPULATION: 840

CONSTRUCTION: Modern purpose built local prison, providing a very secure environment.

INMATE CHARACTERISTICS: Mainly on remand, or convicted and awaiting allocation to another prison. The prison has a Category A unit.

NUMBER OF INMATES INTERVIEWED: 10 (4 BC, 6WM), of these 3 were on remand.

STAFF INTERVIEWED: (4) Chaplain, Education Co-Ordinator, Pre-Release Course Tutor, Professional Librarian.

PRISON C - CATEGORY: C

POPULATION: 270

CONSTRUCTION: Converted hospital.

INMATE CHARACTERISTICS: 19 lifers, mainly older, medium term prisoners nearing the end of their sentence. Approximately 24% of prisoners considered themselves to be black.

NUMBER OF INMATES INTERVIEWED: 9 (1 AP, 2BC, 6 WM)

STAFF INTERVIEWED: (6) Chaplain, Education Co-ordinator, Head of Inmate Activities, Library Assistant, Professional Librarian, Senior Probation Officer.

PRISON D - CATEGORY: B

POPULATION: 145

CONSTRUCTION: Post-war, purpose-built.

INMATE CHARACTERISTICS: Inmates have usually committed very serious offences, and are referred to this prison by a Medical Officer, in order to address their offending in a more therapeutic environment. Half the men were lifers, only six were non-white.

NUMBER OF INMATES INTERVIEWED: 14 (14 WM)

STAFF INTERVIEWED: (5) Chaplain, Education Co-ordinator, Head of Inmate Activities, Prison Officer Librarian, Professional Librarian.

PRISON E - CATEGORY: B

POPULATION: 497

CONSTRUCTION: Modern purpose-built local prison.

INMATE CHARACTERISTICS: Approximately 100 prisoners are on remand or awaiting sentence. Most prisoners are serving medium

to short sentences, with only 6 lifers in the total population. Approximately 23% of the inmates consider themselves non-white.

NUMBER OF INMATES INTERVIEWED: 12 (1 AP, 1 BA, 3 BC, 7 WM), of these 2 were on remand.

STAFF INTERVIEWED: (7) Education Co-Ordinator, Head of Inmate Activities, Library Assistant, Pre-Release Course Tutor, Prison Officer, Professional Librarian, Senior Prison Officer.

PRISON F - CATEGORY: B.

POPULATION: 573

CONSTRUCTION: Victorian local prison.

INMATE CHARACTERISTICS: About half the population is on remand, or convicted awaiting allocation. There are about 30 young offenders, and there is also a Category A unit.

NUMBER OF INMATES INTERVIEWED: 13 (1AP, 2BC), of these 3 were on remand

STAFF INTERVIEWED: (9) Chaplain, Education Co-Ordinator, Assistant Education Co-Ordinator, Lecturer, Pre-Release Course Tutor, Prison Officer, Professional Librarian, Prison Officer Librarian.

PRISON G - CATEGORY: D (open)

POPULATION: 166

CONSTRUCTION: Converted estate.

INMATE CHARACTERISTICS: Very low risk prisoners, including a high proportion of "white collar" offenders. Only 8% of offenders considered themselves to be non-white.

NUMBER OF INMATES INTERVIEWED: 12 (12 WM)

STAFF INTERVIEWED: (6) Chaplain, Education Co-Ordinator, Head of Inmate Activities, Lecturer, Professional Librarian, Senior Probation Officer.

PRISON H - CATEGORY: B

POPULATION: 200

CONSTRUCTION: Victorian.

INMATE CHARACTERISTICS: Lifers only prison. About 18% of prisoners considered themselves non-white.

NUMBER OF INMATES INTERVIEWED: 13 (1 AP, 2 BC, 10 WM)

STAFF INTERVIEWED: (7) Chaplain, Education Co-Ordinator, Head of Inmate Activities, Prison Officer Librarian, Professional Librarian, group interview with staff from the Prisoner Support Unit.

PRISON J - CATEGORY: C

POPULATION: 370

CONSTRUCTION: Converted military camp.

INMATE CHARACTERISTICS: Varied mix of risk and sentence length.

NUMBER OF INMATES INTERVIEWED: 16 (2 AP, 2BC, 12 WM)

STAFF INTERVIEWED: (4) Chaplain, Pre-Release Course Tutor, Prison Officer Librarian, Professional Librarian.

PRISON K - CATEGORY: Vulnerable Prisoner Unit

POPULATION: 216

CONSTRUCTION: Post-war, purpose-built.

INMATE CHARACTERISTICS: Only 6% of inmates were under 25 years old, compared with 40% in the whole prison population and with 16% in the general population (Walmsley et al, 1993, pvii). 52% of inmates were aged between 41 and 60.

NUMBER OF INMATES INTERVIEWED: 14 (1 BC, 13 WM)

STAFF INTERVIEWED: (8) Chaplain, Education Co-Ordinator, Head of Inmate Activities, Inmate Development Unit Officer, Lecturers [2], Pre-Release Course Tutor, Senior Prison Officer.

## APPENDIX 2

### RESEARCH CONSENT FORM FOR EX-OFFENDERS

This study is an examination of the role of the prison library, and is being undertaken in the Department of Information Studies, at The University of Sheffield, by Tony Stevens, under the direction of Dr. R.C. Usherwood.

Participation in the study is purely voluntary and will not count for or against you in any way.

Nothing you say will affect your position here in any way, as all information is coded so that no individual can be identified.

You may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

I agree to take part in this study.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name (in block letters) \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer's signature \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX 3

### INFORMATION FORM FOR EX-OFFENDERS

This sheet is intended to tell you about a study of the role of the prison library, in which we would like your co-operation. The study is being undertaken in the Department of Information Studies, at The University of Sheffield, by Tony Stevens, under the direction of Dr. R.C. Usherwood. It is being paid for by a grant from the Department for Education.

In this study, inmates and staff from a selection of prisons, housing adult, male offenders will be interviewed. In addition, a number of ex-offenders will be interviewed. All those people who take part will be asked about the library and whether they feel it can help prisoners in any way. This information could be used later in deciding how library services could be improved. So by co-operating you will not only be helping us, but maybe other inmates and ex-offenders as well.

The results of the study will be included in a final report which will be publicly available. In addition, all or part of the results may be published separately in academic journals, where they will be freely available for anyone to read.

All answers that are given will be strictly confidential, and will be coded for all reports, so that no individual can be identified.

**APPENDIX 4****RESEARCH CONSENT FORM FOR PRISONERS**

This study is an examination of the role of the prison library, and is being undertaken in the Department of Information Studies, at The University of Sheffield, by Tony Stevens, under the direction of Dr. R.C. Usherwood.

Participation in the study is purely voluntary and will not count for or against you in any way.

Your interview will be audio taped. After the interview is completed the tape will be transcribed and wiped. The written transcript will be coded so that no individual or establishment can be identified.

Nothing you say will affect your position here in any way.

You may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

I agree to take part in this study.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name (in block letters) \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer's signature \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 5

### INFORMATION FORM FOR PRISONERS

This sheet is intended to tell you about a study of the role of the prison library, in which we would like your co-operation. The study is being undertaken in the Department of Information Studies, at The University of Sheffield, by Tony Stevens, under the direction of Dr. R.C. Usherwood. It is being paid for by a grant from the Department for Education.

In this study, inmates and staff from a selection of prisons, housing adult, male offenders will be interviewed. Those people who take part will be asked about the library and whether they feel it can help inmates in any way. This information could be used later in deciding how library services could be improved. So by co-operating you will not only be helping us, but maybe your fellow inmates as well.

The results of the study will be included in a final report which will be publicly available. In addition, all or part of the results may be published separately in academic journals, where they will be freely available for anyone to read.

All answers that are given will be strictly confidential, and will be coded for all reports, so that no individual can be identified.

If you would like to participate in this study, please fill in the attached form and hand it to a member of the library staff.

# APPENDIX 6

## PRISON- BASED INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

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PRISON OFFICER LIBRARIAN

EDUCATION OFFICER

HEAD OF INMATE ACTIVITIES AND GOVERNORS

PROFESSIONAL LIBRARIAN

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PART 6 LIBRARY ISSUES

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## INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

To be given to all respondents:

- Thanks for agreeing to take part.
- Personal introductions.
- Brief background to study.
- Anticipated length of interview.
- Assurance of anonymity.
- Any preliminary questions.

## PART 1 - THE MODELS OF REHABILITATION

To be administered to: Librarian, Prison Officer Librarian, Inmate Assistant, Prison Officers, Head of Inmate Activities, Probation Officers, Education Officer, Governor, Inmates, Public Library Authority Senior/Chief Librarians

I would like to start off by asking you some general questions about prisons.

## Question 1

What do you think should be the purposes of a prison?

## Question 2

The concept of rehabilitation has been viewed in many different ways by many different people. I will now read out some of these. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement, according to the scale on this card (SCORECARD A).

When you have picked a category for each statement, please explain the reasons for your choice.

A Rehabilitation means sorting out prisoners' everyday problems, such as housing, employment, family welfare and money management.

B Rehabilitation means ensuring offenders do not get reconvicted.

C Rehabilitation means treating prisoners and curing them of their mental deviation.

D Rehabilitation is more likely to happen in the community than in prison.

E Rehabilitation means reforming moral attitudes and behaviour.

F Rehabilitation is something that not many staff in the prison service really believe in.

G Rehabilitation is a process that involves the prison, the individual and community services in a co-ordinated programme.

H Rehabilitation means helping the offender over the disruptions caused by the prison sentence itself.

J Rehabilitation means addressing the reasons why the offences were committed.

## Question 3

The statements which I have just read out are all listed on this card (STATEMENT CARD A). Please select one statement which most closely describes how rehabilitation is viewed by the authorities at this prison.

Can you explain why you chose that particular statement?

## Question 4

Now could you select one or more statements from the card which most closely correspond to how you personally view rehabilitation.

Can you explain why you chose that particular statement?

## Question 5

According to your view of rehabilitation, to what extent would you agree that prisons, in general, are successful in rehabilitating inmates? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD A).

Can you tell me why you think this is?

## Question 6

Again according to your own view of rehabilitation, to what extent would you agree that this particular prison is successful in rehabilitating inmates? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD A).

Can you tell me why you think this is?

## Question 7

How is it possible to know, whilst the offender is still in prison, if he has been successfully rehabilitated?

PART 2 - THE ROLE OF THE PRISON LIBRARY

To be administered to: Librarian, Prison Officer Librarian, Inmate Assistant, Prison Officers, Head of Inmate Activities, Probation Officers, Education Officer, Governor, Inmates, Public Library Authority Senior/Chief Librarians.

I would now like to ask you some questions about the prison library.

Question 1

What do you think should be the objectives of a prison library?

Question 2

In general, to what extent would you agree or disagree that the library in this prison is successful in meeting those objectives? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD A).

Can you explain why you chose that particular answer?

Question 3

How would you justify the presence of the library in this prison?

Question 4

The roles and purposes of prison libraries have been viewed in many different ways by many different people. I will now read out some of these. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement, according to the scale on this card (SCORECARD A).

When you have picked a category for each statement, please explain the reasons for your choice.

A Prison libraries are an agent of control in providing another activity in the regime to keep prisoners occupied.

B Prison libraries are part of the Education Department.

C Prison libraries should not just concentrate on supporting courses or rehabilitation programmes but meet the individual needs of each inmate.



D Prison libraries offer inmates a constructive use of time.

E Prison libraries help inmates educate themselves.

F Prison libraries help in rehabilitation.

G Prison libraries empower the inmate with information.

H Prison libraries are a mainly recreational resource.

#### Question 5

The statements which I have just read out are all listed on this card (STATEMENT CARD B). Please select one or more statements which most closely describe the role and purpose of the prison library within this prison.

Please explain why you chose that particular statement.

#### Question 6

Now could you select one or more statements from the card which most closely describe how you personally think a prison library should operate.

Please explain why you chose that particular statement.

## PART 3 - THE IMPACT OF THE PRISON LIBRARY

To be administered to: Librarian, Prison Officer Librarian, Inmate Assistant, Prison Officers, Head of Inmate Activities, Probation Officers, Education Officer, Governor, Public Library Authority Senior/Chief Librarians.

## Question 1

Are the resources of the library used to provide any services to other departments within the prison?

IF YES:

What kind of services?

## Question 2

In what ways do you think the library could become more involved in the activities of other departments?

## Question 3

I will now read out some statements concerning the library in this prison. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement, according to the scale on this card (SCORECARD A).

For each statement, please explain why you chose that particular answer.

- A The amount of access inmates have to the library is sufficient
- B The amount of access inmates have to the librarian is sufficient
- C The library is understaffed
- D The library operates more successfully if a civilian is in charge
- E The library is well integrated with other departments in the prison
- F The gender of the librarian is of no importance to the operation of the library

## Question 4

Do you think prisoners are treated by staff in any way differently in the library than they are in the rest of the prison?

If YES:

In what ways?

## Question 5

Do you think prisoners behave differently in the library than they do in the rest of the prison?

## Question 6

In providing the library service, should the librarian take into account the overall objectives of the prison?  
Could you explain why?

## Question 7

Do library staff give inmates any guidance or education to help them use the library?

## Question 8

Do you think that prison staff generally have a positive or negative view of the library's value?

Why do you think this is?

## Question 9

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the prison library is able to help inmates before they are released? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD A).

## Question 10

In what ways do you think the library is able to help?

## Question 11

Can you tell me whether this library is able to offer inmates any help in these particular areas?

1 For example, does the library contain any information on further education or training courses?

2 Does the prison library provide any help with information about accommodation eg housing associations, boarding schemes, hostels?

- 3 Does the library contain any information on the community in which the offender may settle eg location of law centres, CABx, leisure facilities, family centres?
- 4 Does the library contain any information about money management?
- 5 Does the library contain any information about welfare rights or benefits?
- 6 Are library services able to provide inmates with any information on training, careers or employment opportunities?
- 7 Are library facilities available to offer inmates help with literacy/numeracy?
- 8 Are any library facilities available to help inmates improve their social skills?
- 9 Are any library services able to offer inmates any help with their individual problems eg anger control, assertiveness training, gambling, alcohol, drugs and substance abuse?
- 10 Are any library services able to help provide inmates with any insight into their own pattern of specific offending behaviour eg sexual/child abuse, burglary, drunk driving, car theft?

#### Question 12

Do you generally associate provision of these services with the library?

#### Question 13

Do inmates receive any encouragement to make use of libraries after their release?

If YES:

In what way?

#### Question 14

Does the Pre-Release Course make any mention of public libraries?

#### Question 15

If the library is being used to provide inmates with information on a particular issue, do you think that library staff should also provide inmates with advice on that particular issue?

Could you explain your answer?

Question 16

What are your views about prison officers using the library?

I would now like to ask you some general questions about reading itself.

Question 17

Do you think that reading, as an activity itself, affects prisoners in any way?  
Can you explain?

Question 18

Do you think that reading about other people's ideas can change the way inmates think about what is right and what is wrong?

Question 19

If the way inmates think about what's wrong and what's right changes, does that mean the way they behave will change as well?

GIVE EXAMPLE IF NECESSARY:

For example, many young offenders believe that stealing cars is wrong, but they don't think it is a very serious crime. Do you think if they came to realise that car theft was a serious offence that would stop them stealing cars?

Question 20

If it's possible to change the way people think and act about what's right and what's wrong, do you think that these changes can come about in the context of a prison environment?

## [A] PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS FOR INMATE LIBRARIANS:

- 1 Have you a job description?
- 2 Does your job description include the objectives of your post?
- 3 What do you consider to be your principal tasks?
- 4 What do you consider to be your principal objectives?
- 5 Have there been any times when you have been asked to do something in the library which has been unpopular with other inmates?
- 6 How many hours a week do you work in the library?
- 7 Are there any opportunities for you to receive training outside the prison?
- 8 Overall, how satisfied are you with the amount of training, including training on the job, that you have been given in regard to the prison library? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD C)

Can you explain why you chose that answer?

- 9 Are there any ways in which you think the training was inadequate?
- 10 Is there any kind of training you feel you ought to have had?
- 11 Does your length of sentence enable you to complete the City and Guilds (Telford) Librarian Certificate?
- 12 Taking into account all the aspects of the job you currently do, will you choose an answer from this card which most closely describes your present level of job satisfaction (SCORECARD C).
- 13 Is there anything you particularly like about your job?
- 14 Is there anything you particularly dislike about your job?
- 15 How do you make your views known about aspects of prison library service provision?
- 16 Do you have any other duties in addition to the time you actually spend in the prison library?  
If YES:  
What are they?

17 Do you currently have responsibility for any library duties which you don't think are really part of the role of the prison library?

If YES:

What are they?

18 Do you have any say regarding materials that are bought for the library?

19 Using the scale on this card (SCORECARD C), please tell me how satisfied you are that you would be able to confidently perform these following tasks (INTERVIEWER TO READ OUT TASKS LISTED BELOW):

- a using the catalogue correctly
- b explaining to inmates the library classification scheme
- c using the library's information resources to answer a specific query
- d retrieving overdue books from other inmates
- e dealing with verbal hostility from inmates
- f dealing with tension between inmates
- g dealing with complaints from inmates
- h liaising with other departments in the prison

20 In some prisons, no officers are employed in the library. What are your views on that arrangement?

## [B] PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS FOR PRISON OFFICER LIBRARIANS:

- 1 Have you a job description?
- 2 Does your job description include the objectives of your post?
- 3 How many hours a week do you work in the library?
- 4 What do you personally consider to be your principal tasks?
- 5 What do you personally consider to be your principal objectives?
- 6 Has there ever been any conflict between your objectives as a prison officer, and the objectives of the library?
- 7 How is the role of library officer viewed by other officers?
- 8 Would you like to expand your own role within the library? If YES  
In what ways?
- 9 Do you have any say regarding purchases made for the library?
- 10 Have you taken the City and Guilds Information and Assistants course, either locally, or through the Telford College (Edinburgh), distance learning scheme?
- 11 How often do you meet professional staff from the Public Library Authority who are responsible for the prison library?
- 12 Have you attended the Prison Libraries Study School within the last three years?
- 13 Is there a relief officer librarian?
- 14 Have they received sufficient training for the task?
- 15 Using the scale on this card (SCORECARD C), please tell me how satisfied you are that you would be able to confidently perform these following tasks (INTERVIEWER TO READ OUT TASKS LISTED BELOW):
  - a using the catalogue correctly
  - b explaining to inmates the library classification scheme
  - c using the library's information resources to answer a specific query
  - d retrieving overdue books from other inmates
  - e dealing with verbal hostility from inmates



- f dealing with tension between inmates
- g dealing with complaints from inmates
- h liaising with other departments in the prison
- j training inmates to act as effective Library assistants

16 What are your views regarding the current statutory arrangements for the funding of prison libraries?

17 What are your views regarding the current administrative arrangements for prison libraries?

## [C] PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS FOR THE EDUCATION CO-ORDINATOR:

- 1 What do you see as your role regarding the prison library?
- 2 Are you kept adequately informed about the operation and policy of the prison library?
- 3 What percentage of your time do you give to the prison library per month?
- 4 Is the managerial responsibility for the library written into your job description?
- 5 What Library Authority training have you received?
- 6 What Library Authority training would be useful?
- 7 Have you attended the Prison Libraries Study School within the last three years?
- 8 What opportunities exist for the Professional Librarian to be involved in, or support, various areas of the Education programme?
- 9 What percentage of inmates are involved in full time education?
- 10 What percentage of inmates need help with basic literacy?
- 11 What percentage of inmates need help with basic numeracy?
- 12 What use do teachers make of the library?
- 13 Do you ensure that all teaching and vocational training staff have met all library staff?  
IF YES:  
How do you do this?
- 14 Do you take any steps to ensure that books to support class based teaching and individual learning needs are available in the library?
- 15 What are your views regarding the current statutory arrangements for the funding of prison libraries?
- 16 What are your views regarding the current administrative arrangements for prison libraries?

[D] PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS FOR HEAD OF INMATE ACTIVITIES AND GOVERNORS

- 1 What do you see as your role regarding the prison library?
- 2 Are you kept adequately informed about the operation and policy of the prison library?
- 3 What percentage of your time do you give to the prison library per month?
- 4 What are your views regarding the current statutory arrangements for the funding of prison libraries?
- 5 What are your views regarding the current administrative arrangements for prison libraries?

## [E] PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS FOR THE PROFESSIONAL LIBRARIAN:

1 Have you a job description?

2 Does your job description include the objectives of your post?

3 What do you consider to be your principal tasks?

4 What do you consider to be your principal objectives?

5 How do you feel about the number of hours you work in the library? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD C).

Could you please explain why you chose that particular response?

6 Has there ever been any conflict between your objectives as a librarian, and the wider objectives of the prison system?

7 Are you kept adequately informed of developments in the prison which affect the library?

8 Are you happy with the amount of control you have in regard to staffing arrangements within the library?

9 Are there any areas of the prison where you are not permitted access?

IF YES:

What are these areas?

10 When do you meet other prison librarians?

11 Using the scale on this card (SCORECARD C), please tell me how satisfied you are that you would be able to confidently perform these following tasks (INTERVIEWER TO READ OUT TASKS BELOW):

a dealing with verbal hostility from inmates

b liaising with other departments in the prison

c dealing with complaints from inmates

d retrieving overdue books from other inmates

e training inmates and staff to work in the prison library

12 Have you attended the Prison Libraries Study School within the last 3 years?

13 Are you satisfied with the amount of direct contact time you have with inmates?

14 What are your views regarding the current statutory arrangements for the funding of prison libraries?

15 What are your views regarding the current administrative arrangements for prison libraries?

[F] PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS FOR PUBLIC LIBRARY AUTHORITY SENIOR/CHIEF LIBRARIAN

1 In some prisons, no officers are employed in the library. How do you feel about that situation?

2 What methods are taken to ensure that the library is meeting the needs of your users?

3 How often are these procedures carried out?

4 How often are the objectives of the prison library reviewed?

5 Do you see any particular problem areas in the current operation of the library programme?

6 What contact do prison library staff have with outside organisations?

7 What forum exists for you to make your views known about aspects of prison library service provision?

8 How satisfied are you that the library budget is sufficient to sustain effective provision of services? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD C).

Could you please explain why you chose that particular answer?

9 How satisfied are you with the amount of training that staff who work in the prison library receive? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD C).

Professional librarian  
Prison Officer librarian  
Library orderlies

10 What are your views regarding the current statutory arrangements for the funding of prison libraries?

11 What are your views regarding the current administrative arrangements for prison libraries?

## PART 4 - INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR INMATES

I would now like to ask you some questions about your own use of the library.

## Question 1

How many times in the last two weeks have you used the library?

## Question 2

Why do you use the library?

## Question 3

How satisfied are you with the amount of access you have to the prison library? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD C).

## Question 4

How satisfied are you with the amount of access you have to the prison librarian? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD C).

## Question 5

Do you think you are treated in any way differently in the library than you are in the rest of the prison?

If YES:  
In what ways?  
Why do you think this is?

## Question 6

Does it make any difference to you whether the librarian is a civilian or an officer?

If YES:  
In what ways?  
Why do you think this is?

## Question 7

Does it make any difference to you whether the librarian is male or female?

If YES:

Could you explain why?

## Question 8

How important is the library to you?

Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD B).

Could you explain why you chose that answer?

## Question 9

Do you think that all staff who work in this prison generally have a positive or negative view of the library's value?

Why do you think this is?

## Question 10

Do you think that in the provision of library services, the librarian should be guided only by what the prisoners say they want?

Could you explain your answer?

## Question 11

In providing the library service, should the librarian take into account the overall objectives of the prison?

Could you explain your answer?

## Question 12

How do you feel about prison officers using the library?

## Question 13

If you can't find exactly what you're looking for when you visit the library, who of these people listed on this card would you generally first ask for help? (SCORECARD D).



Can you explain why you would approach that particular person first?

Question 14

Have you ever looked in the library catalogue?

If YES:

What did you look for?

Did you find what you were looking for in the catalogue?

If NO:

Is there any reason why you haven't used the catalogue?

Question 15

Have you ever looked at any leaflets in the library?

If YES:

Which ones were they?

Did you take them away with you?

If NO:

Is there any particular reason why you haven't looked at any leaflets?

Question 16

Have you ever looked in the community information files?

If YES:

What did you look for?

Did you find it?

If NO:

Are there any reasons why you haven't needed to use the community information files?

Question 17

Do you want any further education or training when you are released?

Question 18

Have you ever used the library to find information about further education or training opportunities outside the prison?

If YES:  
What did you look for?  
Did you find it?

Question 19

Have you ever used the library to find out any other information?

If YES:  
What did you look for?  
Did you find it?

Question 20

If you ask the library staff a question how satisfied generally are you with the reply? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD C).

Could you explain why you chose those particular answers?

Question 21

Have you ever used the library in connection with any Education or training courses run in the prison?

If YES:  
What did you use in the library?

Question 22

Have you ever used the library to find out or learn about things by yourself?

IF YES:  
Can you explain?

Question 23

Do you read any of the newspapers in the library?

Question 24

Do you read any of the magazines in the library?

## Question 25

Are there any specific books, magazines or newspapers or any other kind of information which you think should be available in the library?

## Question 26

Do you think there are enough facilities in the library (for example, tables, chairs, space), to enable you to browse through books or magazines?

## Question 27

Do you use the library as a place to read?

## Question 28

Do special collections or displays of books in the library encourage you to read them?

## Question 29

How do you think the library could become more involved in the activities of other departments within the prison?

## Question 30

How do you make your views known about aspects of prison library service provision?

## Question 31

Is there anything you want to accomplish while you are in prison, for example, something you want to learn or changes you want to make in yourself?

Could you explain your answer?

IF YES:

Have you had any help with these while you have been in prison?  
Have you found the library has been of any help?

## Question 32

Do you think it is better to forget the outside when you are in here or try and keep as much contact as possible with what's going on?

Has the library been of any help to you in this respect?

## Question 33

Do you have any plans for when you are released?

IF YES:

Have you had any help with these plans while you have been in prison?

Has the library been able to help with any of these plans?

## Question 34

What information do you think you will need prior to your release?

## Question 35

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the services of the prison library will be able to help you in any way prior to your release? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD A).

Please explain why you chose that particular answer.

## Question 36

IF AGREE:

In what ways do you think the library will be able to help?  
(OFFER PROMPTS IF REQUIRED)

IF DISAGREE, OFFER PROMPTS:

## PROMPT QUESTIONS:

1 Has the prison library provided you with any information about accommodation eg housing associations, boarding schemes?

2 Has the library been able to offer you any information on the community in which you may settle eg location of law centres, CABx, leisure facilities, family centres?

3 Has the library provided you with any information to help you with money management?

4 Has the library been able to provide you with any information about welfare rights or benefits?

5 Has the library provided you with any information to help you with training, careers or employment opportunities?

6 Has the library been able to offer you any help with reading or mathematical skills?

7 Has the library helped in any way to improve your general level of education?

8 Has the library been able to offer you any help to improve your relationships with people?

9 Has the library been able to offer you any help on particular problems you may have? (PROMPT IF REQUIRED eg anger control, assertiveness training, gambling, alcohol, drugs and substance abuse).

10 Has the library been able to offer you any insight into your own pattern of specific offending behaviour? (PROMPT IF REQUIRED eg sexual/child abuse, burglary, drunk driving, car theft).

#### Question 37

Have there been any times while you have been in prison that you have wanted some advice but been unable to obtain any?

IF YES:

Could you tell me about these?

#### Question 38

Do you think the library staff should provide inmates with advice?

Could you explain your answer?

#### Question 39

In a typical week how much time do you usually spend on these activities?

- a work or full time education
- b visits and writing letters
- c with friends and socializing
- d group meetings
- e watching TV
- f listening to radio or music
- g sports and hobbies
- h reading
- j other things

## Question 40

What times in the day do you usually do these things?

## Question 41

In percentage terms, how much of the time would you say you felt bored?

## Question 42

What do you do when you are bored?

I now want to ask you some questions about reading in general.

## Question 43

Has being in prison changed your reading patterns in any way? For example, has what you read changed, or the amount of things that you read?

## Question 44

Why do you prefer to read rather than do something else?

## Question 45

Do you think that reading, as an activity itself, has affected you in any way?  
Can you explain?

PROMPT IF NECESSARY:

- Has there been any improvement in your reading skills?
- Has reading given you a more creative use of time?
- Has reading been in any way a learning experience for you?

## Question 46

Do you think that reading about other people's ideas can change the way you think about what is right and what is wrong?

IF YES:

Can you think if there has been any times when you have read something, perhaps in a magazine or a book, that has changed the way you thought about something?

## Question 47

If the way you think about what is wrong and what's right changes, does that mean the way you behave will change as well?

## GIVE EXAMPLE IF NECESSARY:

For example, many young offenders believe that stealing cars is wrong, but they don't think it is a very serious crime. Do you think if they came to realise that car theft was a serious offence that would stop them stealing cars?

## IF YES:

Can you remember if there have been any times when you have acted differently because of something you'd read?

## Question 48

Do you feel the way you think and act has changed in any way while you have been in prison?

## IF YES:

Could you explain in what ways?

## Question 49

Do you think that people can change for the better while they are in prison?

## Question 50

Do you think the prison library can help alter the way you think or act in relation to what's right or wrong?

## IF YES:

In what ways?

Finally, I would now like to ask you some questions about yourself.

## Question 51

How long have you been in this prison?

## Question 51

How long is your sentence?

## Question 52

How much of your sentence is left?

## Question 53

Have you been in a prison before?

IF YES:

- a How many times have you been in prison?
- b How long were you there each time?
- c How old were you when you first went in?

## Question 54

How satisfied are you that you will **not** be convicted of some offence within two years of your release? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD C).

IF RECONVICTION THOUGHT LIKELY:

What kind of things do you think would help prevent you being reconvicted?

Have you had any help with these while you have been in prison?

Has the library been able to offer any help?

IF RECONVICTION THOUGHT UNLIKELY:

Have there been any particular things which have happened to you in prison which makes you think that?

Has the library been able to offer any help?

## Question 55

How important is it to you **not** to be reconvicted? Please choose answer from this card (SCORECARD B)



## PART 5 - STAFFING ISSUES

To be administered to: Librarian, Prison Officer Librarian.

I would now like to ask you some questions regarding staffing issues within the library.

## Question 1

How long have you been employed in this job?

## Question 2

How many years have you been employed as a librarian/prison officer?

## Question 3

Who do you think you are primarily accountable to for the work you do in the library?

Could you explain why you chose that answer?

## Question 4

What are the main constraints on your role?

## Question 5

Please think ahead and tell me what you expect to be doing in five years time.

IF respondent envisages giving up work or changing jobs:  
What will be your reasons for leaving this post?

## Question 6

Since you have been in your present job, how satisfied are you with the amount of help you have been given in planning your career? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD C).

## Question 7

Are there any ways in which you would have liked more help in planning and developing your career?

IF YES:

What kind of help would you have liked?

## Question 8

Taking into account all the aspects of the job you currently do, will you choose an answer from this card which most closely describes your present level of job satisfaction (SCORECARD C).

Could you explain why you chose that answer?

## Question 9

What, if anything, do you particularly like about your job?

## Question 10

What, if anything, do you dislike about your job?

## Question 11

Overall, how satisfied are you with the amount of training, including training on the job, that you have been given in regard to management of the prison library? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD C)

Can you explain why you chose that answer?

## Question 12

Are there any ways in which you think the training was inadequate?

## Question 13

Is there any kind of training you feel you need?

## Question 14

Could you please tell me the date and title of the last training course you attended?

## Question 15

Do you read any professional journals?

If YES:

Please could you tell me their titles.

## Question 16

Do you have any other duties in addition to the time you actually spend in the prison library?

If YES:

What are they:

## Question 17

Do you currently have responsibility for any library duties which you don't think are really part of the role of the prison library?

If YES:

What are they?

## Question 18

How satisfied are you with the amount of responsibility you have for making decisions? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD C).

Could you explain why you chose that particular answer?

## Question 19

How satisfied are you with the amount of advice you are given on how to do things? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD C).

Could you explain why you chose those particular answers?

## Question 20

How satisfied are you with the amount of help you get from people in higher authority? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD C).

Could you explain why you chose those particular answers?

## Question 21

Are there any ways in which people in this establishment could make your job any easier?

## Question 22

Are there any ways in which people outside this establishment could make your job any easier?

## Question 23

Have you visited any other prison libraries?

## PART 6 - LIBRARY ISSUES

To be administered to: Librarian, Prison Officer Librarian, Inmate Assistant.

I would now like to ask you some questions about the operation of the library.

## Question 1

What percentage of inmates use the library?

## Question 2

How are new inmates informed about the library and its services?

## Question 3

Do inmates receive any guidance on how to use the library?

## Question 4

Are there any inmates, or group of inmates, who are unable to use the library in the normal way?

## Question 5

What arrangements are made for them?

## Question 6

Do you have any contact with any outside groups to help provide material to particular inmates?

## Question 7

In what ways is the library promoted within the prison?

## Question 8

What efforts are made to attract non-users into the library?

## Question 9

What input do inmates have into the selection of material, including newspapers and magazines, for the library?

## Question 10

Is there any consultation with other departments in the prison in regard to stock selection?

## Question 11

What methods are taken to ensure that the library is meeting the needs of its users?

## Question 12

How often are these procedures carried out?

## Question 13

How often are the objectives of the prison library reviewed?

## Question 14

Roughly how often in percentage terms are the advertised opening hours for the library achieved?

## Question 15

Do you have files of community information?

IF YES:

Are these available on open access for consultation by inmates?

How frequently are these files updated?

Is this material available for loan?

Where do you obtain the information from?

## Question 16

Using the scale on this card (SCORECARD C), could you think about some components of the stock in your library and tell me how satisfied you are with them (LISTED ON INTERVIEWER'S CODING SHEET).  
Large print books

Books in other languages  
 Books for low literacy users  
 Bookstock in general  
 Reference material  
 Newspapers  
 Magazines/Periodicals  
 Statutory material  
 Community information  
 Cassettes  
 Free literature

Question 17

Are any materials not stored on open shelving, and only available to inmates on request?

Question 18

What resources, other than books, are provided in the library?

Question 19

What proportion of library stock comprises material to support programmes run by other departments within the prison?

Question 20

What contact do you have with staff from other departments in relation to aspects of library service provision?

Question 21

Do teachers from the Prison Education Department make you aware of the kind of material they would like to see in the library to support classes and individual learning needs?

Question 22

How important do you think the library is to the Prison Education Department? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD B).

Question 23

How would you describe the present relationship between the library and the Prison Education department?

## Question 24

What kind of relationship would you like to see exist between the library and the Prison Education department?

## Question 25

Are there any particular reasons why this relationship does not exist now?

## Question 26

Have you experienced any particular problem areas in the operation of the library programme?

## Question 27

What uses are made of the library space?

## Question 28

Do the staff help develop any other activities in addition to the basic function of the library as a lender of materials and provider of information?

## Question 29

Does any forum exist for you to express your views about aspects of prison library service provision?

## Question 30

How satisfied are you that the library budget is sufficient to sustain effective provision of services? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD C).

Could you please explain why you chose that particular answer?



**CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

Final questions to all respondents:

Is there any aspect of library provision you would like to comment upon?

Do you have any general suggestions for improvements to the library?

[IN PILOT STUDY: Have you any comments you would like to make on this questionnaire?]

Thank you for taking part.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUIRED FROM ALL PRISON ESTABLISHMENTS

- Certified Normal Accommodation
- category of prison
- current inmate population
- average length of sentence
- average length of stay
- ethnic composition
- average age of inmates
- proportion of lifers
- proportion of sentences under 2 years
- total number of staff employed within the prison
- copies of written agreements between establishments and the appropriate public library authority
- job descriptions of professional librarian, Prison Officer librarian, inmate librarian and Education Officer
- mission statement of library if applicable
- inmate access to the library eg opening hours, time allowed to choose books
- provision made for inmates unable to use the library eg segregation unit, hospital
- full details of library staffing arrangements
- stock profile, including numbers of newspapers and magazines
- numbers of prisoners and staff using the library
- details of physical aspects of library building
- are any improvements planned eg computerisation
- any details of library induction courses
- details of stock exchanges and selection procedures
- loan arrangements eg any non-book material available for loan
- details of library activities
- budgetary arrangements

# APPENDIX 7

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR EX-OFFENDERS

### CONTENTS

- PART 1 THE MODELS OF REHABILITATION
- PART 2 THE ROLE OF THE PRISON LIBRARY
- PART 3 THE USE OF THE PRISON LIBRARY
- PART 4 POST-RELEASE EXPERIENCE
- PART 5 THE EXPERIENCE OF READING

## PART 1 - THE MODELS OF REHABILITATION

I would like to start off by asking you some general questions about prisons.

## Question 1

What do you think should be the purposes of a prison?

## Question 2

The concept of rehabilitation has been viewed in many different ways by many different people. I will now read out some of these. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement, according to the scale on this card (SCORECARD A).

When you have picked a category for each statement, please explain the reasons for your choice.

A Rehabilitation means sorting out prisoners' everyday problems, such as housing, employment, family welfare and money management.

B Rehabilitation means ensuring offenders do not get reconvicted.

C Rehabilitation means treating prisoners and curing them of their mental deviation.

D Rehabilitation is more likely to happen in the community than in prison.

E Rehabilitation means reforming moral attitudes and behaviour.

F Rehabilitation is something that not many staff in the prison service really believe in.

G Rehabilitation is a process that involves the prison, the individual and community services in a co-ordinated programme.

H Rehabilitation means helping the offender over the disruptions caused by the prison sentence itself.

J Rehabilitation means addressing the reasons why the offence were committed.

## Question 3

The statements which I have just read out are all listed on this card (STATEMENT CARD A). Please select one statement which most closely corresponds to how you personally view rehabilitation.

Can you explain why you chose that particular statement?

## Question 4

According to your view of rehabilitation, to what extent would you agree that prisons, in general, are successful in rehabilitating inmates? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD A).

Can you tell me why you think this is?

## Question 5

How is it possible to know, whilst the offender is still in prison, if he has been successfully rehabilitated?

## PART 2 - THE ROLE OF THE PRISON LIBRARY

I would now like to ask you some questions about the role of the prison library.

## Question 1

What do you think should be the objectives of a prison library?

## Question 2

How would you justify the presence of the library in a prison?

## Question 3

The roles and purposes of prison libraries have been viewed in many different ways by many different people. I will now read out some of these. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement, according to the scale on this card (SCORECARD A).

When you have picked a category for each statement, please explain the reasons for your choice.

A Prison libraries are an agent of control in providing an additional activity in the regime to keep prisoners occupied.

B Prison libraries are part of the Education Department.

C Prison libraries should not just concentrate on supporting courses or rehabilitation programmes but meet the individual needs of each inmate.

D Prison libraries offer inmates a constructive use of free time.

E Prison libraries help inmates educate themselves.

F Prison libraries help in rehabilitation.

G Prison libraries empower the inmate with information.

H Prison libraries are a mainly recreational resource.

## Question 4

The statements which I have just read out are all listed on this card (STATEMENT CARD B). Please select one statement which most closely describes how you personally view the prison library.

Please explain why you chose that particular statement.

## PART 3 -USE OF THE PRISON LIBRARY

I would now like to ask you some questions about your own use of the prison library. in the last prison you were in.

## Question 1

In the last prison you were in, did you use the library there?

## Question 2

If YES:  
Why did you use the library?  
GO NOW TO QUESTION 3

If NO:  
Why didn't you use the library?  
GO NOW TO Question 35

## Question 3

How satisfied were you with the amount of access you had to the prison library? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD C).

## Question 4

Do you think you were treated in any way differently in the library than you were in the rest of the prison?

If YES:  
In what ways?  
Why do you think this was?

## Question 5

Do you think inmates behaved differently in the library than they did in the rest of the prison?

If YES:  
In what ways?  
Why do you think this was?

## Question 6

Would it have made any difference to you whether the librarian was a civilian or an officer?



If YES:  
In what ways?

Question 7

Would it have made any difference to you whether the librarian was male or female?

If YES:  
Could you explain why?

Question 8

How important was the library to you? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD B).

Could you explain why you chose that answer?

Question 9

Do you think that all staff who worked in that prison had the same opinion of the library's value?

Why do you think that was?

Question 10

Do you think that in the provision of library services, the librarian should be guided only by what the prisoners say they want?

Could you explain your answer?

Question 11

In providing the library service, should the librarian take into account the overall objectives of the prison?  
Could you explain your answer?

Question 12

Were prison officers able to use the library?

What did you think about that?

## Question 13

If you couldn't find exactly what you were looking for when you visited the library, who of these people listed on this card would you have generally first asked for help? (SCORECARD D).

Can you explain why you would have approached that particular person first?

## Question 14

Did you ever look in the library catalogue?

If YES:

What did you look for?

Did you find what you were looking for in the catalogue?

If NO:

Was there any reason why you didn't use the catalogue?

## Question 15

Did you ever used to look at any leaflets in the library?

If YES:

Which ones were they?

Did you take them away with you?

If NO:

Is there any particular reason why you didn't look at any leaflets?

## Question 16

Did you ever look in the community information files?

If YES:

What did you look for?

Did you find it?

If NO:

Are there any reasons why you didn't need to use the community information files?

## Question 17

Did you ever use the library to find information about further education or training opportunities outside the prison?

If YES:

What did you look for?

Did you find it?

Question 18

Did you ever use the library to find out any other information?

If YES:

What did you look for?

Did you find it?

Question 19

If you asked the library staff a question how satisfied generally were you with the reply? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD C).

Professional librarian  
Prison Officer librarian  
Library orderlies

Could you explain why you chose those particular answers?

Question 20

Did you ever use the library in connection with any Education or training courses run in the prison?

If YES:

What did you use in the library?

Question 21

Did you ever use the library to find out or learn about things by yourself?

IF YES:

Can you explain?

Question 22

Did you read any of the newspapers in the library?

Question 23

Did you read any of the magazines in the library?

## Question 24

Were there any specific books, magazines or newspapers which you think should have been available in the library?

## Question 25

Do you think there were enough facilities in the library (for example, tables, chairs, space), to enable you to browse through books or magazines?

## Question 26

Did you use the library as a place to read?

## Question 27

Did any special collections or displays of books in the library encourage you to read them?

## Question 28

In what ways do you think the library could have become more involved in the activities of other departments within the prison?

## Question 29

How did you make your views known about aspects of prison library service provision?

## Question 30

Did being in prison in any way change your reading patterns? For example, did what you read change, or the amount of things you read?

## Question 31

Was there anything you wanted to accomplish while you are in prison, for example, something you wanted to learn or changes you wanted to make in yourself?

Could you explain your answer?

IF YES:

Did you have any help with these while you were in prison?  
Was the library of any help?

Question 32

While you were in prison did you think it is was better to forget the outside, or try and keep as much contact as possible with what was going on?

Was the library of any help to you in this respect?

Question 33

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the services of the prison library were able to help you in any way prior to your release? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD A).

Please explain why you chose that particular answer.

Question 34

IF YES:

In what ways do you think the library was able to help?  
(OFFER PROMPTS IF REQUIRED)

IF NO, OFFER PROMPTS:

PROMPT QUESTIONS:

1 Was the prison library able to provide you with any information about accommodation eg housing associations, boarding schemes?

2 Was the library able to offer you any information on the community in which you intended to settle eg location of law centres, CABx, leisure facilities, family centres?

3 Was the library able to provide you with any information to help you with money management?

4 Was the library able to provide you with any information about welfare rights or benefits?

5 Was the library able to provide you with any information to help you with careers or employment opportunities?

6 Was the library able to offer you any help with reading or mathematical skills?

7 Did the library help in any way to improve your general level of education?

8 Was the library able to offer you any help to improve your relationships with people?

9 Was the library able to offer you any help on particular problems you may have? (PROMPT IF REQUIRED eg anger control, assertiveness training, gambling, alcohol, drugs and substance abuse).

10 Was the library able to offer you any insight into your own pattern of specific offending behaviour? (PROMPT IF REQUIRED eg sexual/child abuse, burglary, drunk driving, car theft).

#### Question 35

Were there any times while you were in prison that you wanted some advice but were unable to obtain any?

IF YES:

Could you tell me about these?

#### Question 36

Do you think the library staff should provide inmates with advice?

Could you explain your answer?

#### Question 37

In a typical week how much time would you usually have spent on these activities?

- a work or full time education
- b visits and writing letters
- c with friends and socializing
- d group meetings
- e watching TV
- f listening to radio or music
- g sports and hobbies
- h reading
- j other things

#### Question 38

What times in the day did you usually do these things?

## Question 39

In percentage terms, how much of the time would you say you felt bored?

## Question 40

What did you do when you are bored?

## Question 41

Do you feel the way you think and act has changed in any way because of the time you spent in prison?

IF YES:

Could you explain in what ways?

## Question 42

Do you think that people can change for the better while they are in prison?

I would now like to ask you some questions about yourself.

## Question 43

How long was your last sentence?

## Question 44

What was the name of the prison from which you were released?

## Question 45

Have you ever been in prison before that?

IF YES:

- a How many times have you been in prison?
- b How long were you there each time?
- c How old were you when you first went in?

## PART 4 - POST-RELEASE EXPERIENCE

I would now like to ask you questions about some of the things that have happened since you were released.

## Question 1

Is there any information or advice you would have liked to have had, but didn't get, before you were released?

If YES:  
What was it?

## Question 2

Was there any information or advice which you received before you were released which you found particularly useful?

## Question 3

Has there been any information or advice you have needed since you were released?

If YES:  
How did you obtain it?

## Question 4

Did you use a library before you served your prison sentence?

If YES:  
What did you use it for?  
How many times a week, on average, would you use the library?

If NO:  
Is there any particular reason why you didn't use a library?

## Question 5

Have you used a library since you have been released?

If YES:  
What did you use it for?  
How many times a week, on average, would you use the library?

If NO:  
Is there any particular reason why you haven't used a library?



## Question 6

Have you bought any books since you were released?

If YES:

Which ones were they?

## Question 7

Do you regularly buy any magazines or newspapers?

If YES:

Which ones?

## Question 8

Do you spend any part of the day reading?

## Question 9

Since you have been released, how much of the time have you spent reading compared to the amount of time you spent reading in prison?

## Question 10

What do you do when you are beginning to feel bored?

## Question 11

How much of the time, in percentage terms, would you say you felt bored?

## Question 12

Do you want any further education or training now?

If YES:

How will you find out about these?

## Question 13

How do you view your prison sentence now?

## Question 14

Does it make any difference to the people who you are friends with that you have served a prison sentence?

## Question 15

How satisfied are you that you will **not** be convicted of some offence within two years of your release? Please choose an answer from this card (SCORECARD C).

## IF RECONVICTION THOUGHT LIKELY:

What kind of things do you think would help prevent you being reconvicted?

Did you have any help with these while you were in prison?

Was the library able to offer any help?

## IF RECONVICTION THOUGHT UNLIKELY:

Were there any particular things which happened to you in prison which makes you think that?

Was the library able to offer any help?

## Question 16

How important is it to you **not** to be reconvicted? Please choose answer from this card (SCORECARD B)

## Question 17

Do you have any plans now?

## IF YES:

Did you have you any help with these plans while you were in prison?

Was the library able to help with any of these plans?

## PART 5 - THE EXPERIENCE OF READING

I now want to ask you some questions about reading in general.

## Question 1

Why do you prefer to read rather than do something else?

## Question 2

Do you think that reading, as an activity itself, has affected you in any way?  
Can you explain?

## PROMPT IF NECESSARY:

-Has there been any improvement in your reading skills?

Has reading given you a more creative use of time?

-Has reading been in any way a learning experience for you?

## Question 3

Do you think that reading about other people's ideas can change the way you think about what is right and what is wrong?

## IF YES:

Can you think if there has been any times when you have read something, perhaps in a magazine or a book, that has changed the way you thought about something?

## Question 4

If the way you think about what is wrong and what's right changes, does that mean the way you behave will change as well?

## GIVE EXAMPLE IF NECESSARY:

For example, many young offenders believe that stealing cars is wrong, but they don't think it is a very serious crime. Do you think if they came to realise that car theft was a serious offence that would stop them stealing cars?

## IF YES:

Can you remember if there have been any times when you have acted differently because of something you'd read?

**APPENDIX 8****SCORECARD A**

- 1                    STRONGLY AGREE**
- 2                    AGREE**
- 3                    NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE**
- 4                    DISAGREE**
- 5                    STRONGLY DISAGREE**

## SCORECARD B

- 1           **VERY IMPORTANT**
- 2           **IMPORTANT**
- 3           **NEITHER IMPORTANT NOR UNIMPORTANT**
- 4           **UNIMPORTANT**
- 5           **VERY UNIMPORTANT**

## SCORECARD C

- 1           **VERY SATISFIED**
- 2           **SATISFIED**
- 3           **NEITHER SATISFIED NOR DISSATISFIED**
- 4           **DISSATISFIED**
- 5           **VERY DISSATISFIED**

## SCORECARD D

- 1 PRISON OFFICER LIBRARIAN
- 2 LIBRARY ORDERLY
- 3 PROFESSIONAL LIBRARIAN
- 4 FELLOW INMATE
- 5 WOULD NOT ASK ANYBODY FOR HELP

**APPENDIX 9****STATEMENT CARD A**

**A Rehabilitation means sorting out prisoners' everyday problems, such as housing, employment, family welfare and money management.**

**B Rehabilitation means ensuring offenders do not get reconvicted.**

**C Rehabilitation means treating prisoners and curing them of their mental deviation.**

**D Rehabilitation is more likely to happen in the community than in prison.**

**E Rehabilitation means reforming moral attitudes and behaviour.**

**F Rehabilitation is something that not many people really believe in.**

**G Rehabilitation is a process that involves the prison, the individual and community services in a co-ordinated programme.**

**H Rehabilitation means helping the offender over the disruptions caused by the prison sentence itself.**

**J Rehabilitation means addressing the reasons why the offences were committed.**



## STATEMENT CARD B

- A Prison libraries are an agent of control in providing another activity in the regime to keep prisoners occupied.
- B Prison libraries are part of the Education Department.
- C Prison libraries should not just concentrate on supporting courses or rehabilitation programmes but meet the individual needs of each inmate.
- D Prison libraries offer inmates a creative use of time.
- E Prison libraries help inmates educate themselves.
- F Prison libraries help in rehabilitation.
- G Prison libraries empower the inmate with information.
- H Prison libraries are a mainly recreational resource.