

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

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## ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the contribution made by the prison library to the rehabilitation of adult male offenders.

The research was undertaken in ten prison establishments in England and Wales, and examined a diverse sample of the inmate population. A qualitative methodology was employed, using semi-structured interviews. In total, 124 interviews with inmates, 62 interviews with staff and 20 interviews with ex-offenders recently released from custody, were conducted.

The project examines different components of prison library operations and their impact upon the rehabilitative process. Principally, the role of the library as an educational resource, as an information provider and as a source for recreational reading are analysed. In addition, the influence of religious material supplied by the library is also discussed.

Throughout the study particular reference is made to the value of cognitive-behavioural interventions with offenders. Through such interventions inmates can begin to take responsibility for their own actions and address their own pattern of offending. A library service can support such interventions in three principal ways: empowering the prisoner with information, providing help with a range of practical skills and helping change inmates' attitudes and behaviours. A key factor examined is the potential of the library to provide an appropriate learning environment for prisoners to tackle these issues and internalise pro-social responses.

The central conclusion of the study is that there has been a failure of all parties to fully realise the rehabilitative potential of the prison library. Four main factors are identified - a lack of appreciation of the unique environment in which prison libraries operate, the persistence of the view that the prison library is simply another branch of the public library service, the narrow perception of the role of the prison librarian and a failure to integrate the work of the library with the work of the prison.

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# INTRODUCTION

In the past, prison libraries have been closely associated with a rehabilitative function (Fyfe, 1992, px). For example, in the nineteenth century, the prison library provided positive moral literature and religious texts in order to convert the inmate, both spiritually and behaviourally. As theories of criminal behaviour and reformation became less simplistic, the clarity of the rehabilitative role of the prison library dimmed. Although the provision of a library within every prison establishment is now a statutory requirement, its role and purpose in relation to the rehabilitation of the offender is unclear. Often, the prison library tends to be perceived as a "good thing", but with little evidence presented as to why, or indeed how, the library can have any kind of beneficial effect (Koons, 1988, p53).

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The present study seeks:

- 1 To examine current rehabilitative strategies employed by the Prison Service Agency.



2 To examine the role and rationale of prison library provision at ten selected penal establishments in England and Wales.

3 To evaluate the contribution of the prison library to the rehabilitative process.

4 To develop recommendations which will seek to improve the effectiveness of that contribution.

#### PREVIOUS RESEARCH

An exhaustive literature search and an examination of bibliographies (Hartz, 1987; Morris, 1991) revealed that, in comparison to North America or Scandinavia, very little has been written about prison libraries in England and Wales, and even less research has been conducted within them.

The material which has been published falls into four main categories. First, there has been a limited amount of academic research. Those studies which have been conducted in this country have tended to focus on the reading needs of prisoners (Price, 1984), or the supply side of provision (Wright, 1987a; Lithgow, 1992).

Second, many of the public library authorities supplying local prison establishments have published reviews of the service they provide (Hoy et al, 1989; Nottinghamshire County Council, 1990; Dorset County Library, 1992).

Third, some policy documents defining standards, outlining responsibilities and recommending guide-lines for provision have been published (Library Association, 1981; Home Office 1993a; Home Office, 1994c).

Finally, a range of material has been published by those directly involved with the provision of prison library services. For example, the Prison Libraries Group of the Library Association produces the Prison Libraries Journal, and papers presented at the Prison Libraries Study School have also been published. Some articles have also appeared in the Library Association Record. The majority of this output has tended to adopt either of two approaches. On the one hand, articles have tended to be descriptive renditions of the daily routine, either from the perspective of the librarian (Snape and Curtis, 1980), the prison officer librarian (King and Young, 1994), the inmate orderly (Joel, 1990) or a member of the Education department (Taylor, 1994). The other type of writing has been one which tends to affirm the value of the prison library, but without ever really specifying how the library can assist in rehabilitation, or what particular aspects of service provision are most beneficial (Raven, 1993). Considerations as to the remit of the prison library, its place within the regime of the institution, and whether the objectives of the prison library service are congruent with, supportive of, or in antithesis to, those of the Prison Service have been largely ignored. It is these particular questions which this research will seek to address.

In North America, examination of these issues has received greater attention. However, only a small amount of research has actually been conducted and this has tended to focus on the use of bibliotherapy. Burt, in a study of two correctional institutions, found no significant attitudinal change in participating inmates (Burt, 1972). House, however, administered a bibliotherapy project in a number of correctional centres in Texas and concluded :

"It seems clear that library-sponsored bibliotherapy activities can be beneficial to both the inmates and the institution and that they should be a part of the total treatment/rehabilitation effort" (House, 1977, p533).

Other research has examined the problems associated with service delivery (LeDonne, 1974; LeDonne, 1977).

However, in contrast to many of the articles published in the U.K., some attention has been given to the fundamental question of the relationship of the prison library to the institution it serves. The rehabilitative impact of the prison library has received some particular attention. Hartz for example, has written that there is no evidence that libraries or books are a "viable rehabilitative force" (Hartz, 1987, p6). Indeed, Hartz strongly favours the "nothing works" hypothesis, arguing that "criminals will continue their criminal roles until the day they die, either by natural causes, or by terminal misadventures" (Hartz, 1987, p7). However, most writers, on both sides of the Atlantic, have tended to assert, almost as a given truth, but with little real evidence to support their beliefs, that the prison library has a rehabilitative role. For example, Gulker

has argued that the prison library provides an "essential ingredient in the rehabilitative process" (Gulker, 1976, p327). Similar conclusions have been reached by Floch (1952), Engelbarts (1972), Hale (1974), Rubin (1974b), Howard (1985), Dickey (1984), Heeks (1985), (Souza, 1989), Sullivan (1989) and Kaiser (1993).

Other writers have favoured the view that the prison library must operate as a branch of the public library service, differentiating itself from the institution:

"It is very important that library programmes be seen as a library project and not an arm of corrections; the goal is for inmates' self-understanding, not for corrections' increased control" (Rubin, 1974b, p442).

Similarly, in a seminal article, Barone wrote:

"If there is anything we cannot afford, it is this kind of unreal perspective on prison libraries - the belief that libraries support (and are supported in return by) rehabilitation programmes...Prison libraries should commit themselves solely to the policy of the right to read and detach themselves from the overall rehabilitation programme" (Barone, 1977, p294).

However, Coyle has taken a different view. He argues that prison librarians have tended to replicate the operation of the public library in the type of service they deliver. Accordingly, support for educational or therapeutic programmes has amounted to little more than a half-hearted concession, and instead the service has become user-led, focused principally on the provision of recreational and leisure reading. Coyle concludes such a library service "denies the overreaching reality of the correctional mission" (Suvak, 1989b, p32). Instead, Coyle argues

that librarian should adopt correctional goals, and develop a library service based around individual change and rehabilitation (Coyle, 1987).

The absence of any research to confirm the assertions outlined above raises some doubts as to the validity of the underlying arguments. Furthermore, in some cases, hope and faith have tended to replace empirical analysis. What prisoners themselves want from a library service, and whether satisfaction of these wants can be viewed as rehabilitative, have thus far remained unasked and unanswered questions. The current research will address these important issues.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT**

The report is divided into ten chapters. In the first of these, the relationship between imprisonment and rehabilitation is critically addressed. As part of this review, the causes of crime, the concept of rehabilitation, the purpose of imprisonment and the difficulty of evaluating interventions are examined.

Chapter Two describes the methodology employed in the study and outlines the design of the research instrument. Background information on the test sites and respondents is also given. In addition, the particular problems of conducting research within prison establishments are discussed.

In Chapter Three the historical association between prison libraries and the development of successive models of rehabilitation is outlined. Special attention is given to contemporary initiatives, particularly cognitive-behavioural interventions with offenders.

Chapter Four analyses the relationship between the prison library, education and the rehabilitative process. It suggests that the role of the prison library is important in the self-education of prisoners, in improving literacy skills, facilitating open learning and providing a challenging perspective toward addressing patterns of offending behaviour.

In Chapters Five and Six, the part that the prison library can play in the provision of information within prison establishments is examined. Chapter Five discusses some of the factors which determine the level and nature of such provision. In Chapter Six, evidence from the research is presented to show how in practice prison libraries have responded to the demands and constraints placed upon them.

The influence of recreational reading and its rehabilitative influence is discussed in Chapter Seven. The roles of reading as a coping mechanism, to help reduce stress, a mental stimulus, a means of using time creatively, a diversionary activity and as a means of empowerment are all examined.

The power of religious and spiritual literature as a rehabilitative force, and the involvement of the prison library in supplying such

material, is investigated in Chapter Eight. The organisations which donate some of these resources to prison libraries, and their motives for doing so, are critically analysed.

In Chapter Nine, the constraints on library operations are identified. These include limited staffing and resourcing, physical and geographical limitations, negative attitudes held by both users and those responsible for service delivery, poor awareness of service provision and the priority and function of the library within the regime. However, it is argued that the lack of clarity concerning the rationale and legitimacy of the prison library constitute the largest obstacles.

Chapter Ten reviews the themes which run through the thesis, summarises the findings of this study and provides some recommendations for future service development.

## CHAPTER ONE

**IMPRISONMENT AND  
REHABILITATION**

The cost of running the Prison Service is over one and a half billion pounds, and over 38,000 staff are employed to supervise around 50,000 prisoners. The average cost of keeping someone in prison for a year is about twenty three thousand pounds (Home Office, 1994b, p4). The total cost of providing a prison library service (that is, the sum of payments to individual public library authorities), is one and a half million pounds - about thirty pounds per prisoner per year: Individual offenders, however, are spending longer in custody - the average length of sentence imposed by Crown Courts has increased from 17 months in 1981 to 22 months in 1993. The average time spent in custody by life sentenced prisoners has risen from 10 years in 1982, to over 14 years in 1993 (Central Statistical Office, 1995, pp164-166). Indeed, the Home Secretary has told judges not to be concerned about imposing long sentences, as 21 new prisons have been opened since 1985 (Daily Telegraph, 10/10/1994, p1).

Every day hundreds of men are released from prison. Yet, within two years, over half of them will be reconvicted for another offence. If they are under 21 years old, nearly 70% of them will



be reconvicted (Central Statistical Office, 1995, p161). The Deputy Assistant Commissioner of Police, Larry Roach, has argued in a Scotland Yard discussion paper entitled "Police and Prison: No Deterrent", that the rehabilitative effects of prison are "laughingly negligible" and that custodial sentences could even lead to an increase in crime (Inside Time, August 1993, p8).

The general public are, of course, appalled (Daily Express, 13/3/1995, p1). For surely it is not unreasonable to think that if a person commits a crime and is sent to prison, when they are released they should not commit any more crimes? In this respect, therefore, prisons are implicitly equated with a responsibility for social transformation, and in some sense they always have been (Player, 1992, p3). Indeed, this very purpose of custody gave rise to the nineteenth century labels of "Houses of Correction" and "reformatories". Whilst also inextricably associated with the extension of more systematic methods of social control, these institutions were nevertheless part of a broad process to engender positive change in the offender, rather than solely to punish (Foucault, 1991, p16).

However, in making this link between imprisonment and the rehabilitation of the offender we are implicitly making four distinct assumptions:

- (i) that we know what causes crime
- (ii) we know what is meant by the term rehabilitation and that we therefore know what will stop a person committing crimes
- (iii) we know that a custodial sentence will effect a change in the individual from a criminal into a law abiding citizen

(iv) we have a way of measuring the success of the process

## 1.1 THE CAUSES OF CRIME

That there have been so many theories of the causes of crime is really proof positive that we cannot say with any degree of certainty why one individual will engage in criminal activity and another will not. It is also important to recognise that whatever particular model of criminal causality is advanced is likely to be influenced by, or in some cases modelled upon, contemporary political thought. For example in the 1980's, Margaret Thatcher, who strongly advocated promoting personal, rather than societal, responsibility, argued that crime was a manifestation of the failure of individual morality:

"the main person responsible for each crime is the criminal"  
(quoted in Brake and Hale, 1992, p9).

### The Person Centred Model

Probably one of the earliest theories was espoused by Lombroso, who attempted to correlate individual morphology and criminality (Lombroso, 1911). Later known euphemistically as "constitutional psychiatry", further research in this area was undertaken by Hooton (1939) and Sheldon (1949). Some theorists have also argued in favour of varying degrees of psychological determinism. For example, Eysenck's research and the development of his theories of extroversion and conditionability, led him to conclude that:

"We now have good evidence for the implication of psychoticism, extroversion and neuroticism as predisposing factors in the juvenile and adult criminality" (Eysenck, 1987, p44).

In the 1960's, the ascription of criminality as a function of individual pathology again resurfaced. However, this model again proved inadequate, for both the causal factors of deviancy and the prescribed treatment were strictly defined in culturally specific terms, which themselves may be unrelated to criminality (American Friends Service Committee, 1971, p341). Furthermore, the model became locked in a tautology. It defined crime as an individualised condition arising from personal problems, inadequacies or conflicts. If crime was an abnormal response, thence criminals themselves were abnormal or "sick", and the only response to "sickness" was treatment. It could countenance no other cures or causes. MacNamara concluded the model had "little, if any, empirical validity" (MacNamara, 1977, p439).

Other research has correlated crime with boredom (West and Farrington, 1977; Williamson, 1978; Johnson, 1979, Nee, 1993). The increase in numbers of single parents has also been cited as a causal factor (Dennis and Erdos, 1993). Some studies have concluded that low self esteem may be a predisposing factor in criminal behaviour (Thompson, 1974; Eitzen, 1976). The argument has also been put that criminality has little do with inappropriate value systems or negative socialisation, but is essentially a latent characteristic, and so increased opportunities to commit crime, and temptations of high rewards, will result in higher rates of offending (Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986, p12). Significantly, a recent study of computer crime was entitled

"Opportunity Makes a Thief" (Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England, 1994).

Finally, current research by the American National Institute of Health is attempting to re-establish a biological base for predicting delinquency. For example, low levels of the neurochemical, serotonin, have been correlated with behavioural characteristics such as alcoholism, fire-setting and suicide. The researchers argue that "in such persons, experimental treatment with serotonergic drugs should be initiated" (British Broadcasting Company, 1993, p26).

However, the person centred model has been criticised on the grounds that it inevitably defines a treatment response which is too narrow:

"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).

#### The Situation Centred Model

Other theorists have expounded a political or social determinism. Because offenders originate disproportionately from the most economically and socially disadvantaged sections of society (Walmsley, 1993, pvii), crime is seen as almost an inevitable phenomenon borne out of society's structural economic and political inequalities (Prins, 1982, p43; Brake and Hale, 1992, p114). Social deprivation and disorganisation have been cited as a "common

element" among offenders (Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986, p5). Allen, for example, has stated that the existence of a permanently marginalised underclass, "a pathological subpopulation", unresponsive to any social policy interventions, has made the claim of offender re-integration "a bad joke" (see Allen, 1981). A recent research report from the Employment Policy Institute concluded that:

"the growing sense of illegitimacy of a social order that countenances mass unemployment along with increasing income equality, can eradicate the normal moral constraints on crime" (quoted in Guardian, 15/2/1995, p3).

However, Home Office researchers have found no significant correlation between levels of unemployment and recorded crime (Guardian, 15/2/1995, p3).

The sociologist, Howard Becker, has argued that criminal activity by the few is necessary, and almost to be condoned, in order to promote group cohesion and stability in the rest of society (Becker, 1973). Solomon and Lemann concluded from their research that situational group dynamics and the influence of sub-cultural milieus were much more important than personality variables in determining individual responses (Solomon and Lemann, 1951, p12). Wilkins has also argued that negative social labelling, often commencing at a very early age, becomes a "self-fulfilling prophecy" in modelling an individual's behaviour (Wilkins, 1967, p82). Finally, defective family socialisation is seen as a critical factor in differentiating criminals from non-offenders (Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985, p311).

However, these models have been criticised on the grounds that far from explaining criminality, they provide little more than "a romanticised view of powerless deviants" (Thio, 1974, p147).

Furthermore, all these theories tend to externalise the causality of deviance, placing it somewhere in the wider environment. They also tend to imply that it is only wider social or political change that can reduce crime, rather than imprisonment, or challenging the behaviour of particular individuals (Prins, 1982, p50).

Sutherland has also noted that many of these theories may reflect the differentials in types of criminal opportunities available to different classes, and also the variation in the way that certain types of criminal activity are perceived and subject to sanction within the criminal justice system. As a result the supposed causal factors may only be characteristics of a certain population group, although they may have some correlation with some types of criminal activity (see Sutherland, 1949). Finally, these theories all fail to account for dissimilarities in individual behaviour in response to similar situations (Lillyquist, 1980, p14).

#### The Cognitive Model: an Interactionist Approach

The work done by researchers such as Ross and Fabiano (1985), in which particular cognitive patterns have been identified in many criminals, offers perhaps the most realistic base for interventions with offenders. The 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 cognitive

deficits, resulting in subsequent criminal behaviour, 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, 1987b, 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, 1992, p41). The programmes emphasise the "critical elements" of self-control and perspective taking (Williamson, 1993, p55), together with "consideration and interpretation of competing consequences" of behavioural alternatives (Jones, 1992, p12). Significantly, the model is not deterministic, but allows for a synthesis of the individual and environmentally weighted arguments:

"It incorporates all the factors distinctive of offender populations. It includes social behaviour, cognitions and moral processes, as well as social processes such as family upbringing and levels of unemployment" (Hollin, 1990, pp16-17).

As currently delivered in U.K. prison establishments, the cognitive skills programme comprises seven components - problem solving, negotiation skills, social skills, emotion management, creative thinking, values enhancement and critical reasoning. These modules are delivered in 35 sessions, 2 or 3 times a week to small groups of prisoners, ideally about 7.

## 1.2 THE MEANING OF REHABILITATION

In addition to the problem of confusion about the causes of criminal behaviour, there is also a very real problem of defining

exactly what rehabilitation is, and thus, how it can be brought about, how it should be measured and whether it can occur within the context of a prison environment at all (Tittle, 1974, p386).

Many attempts have been made to define rehabilitation - to some it implies a change in moral attitudes and behaviour (Glickman, 1983, p3), to others it is concerned with overcoming the negative effects of the prison sentence itself (Davies, 1974, p5). It has been viewed as a process of curing mental deviation (Floch, 1952, p452), and as "providing fair opportunities for treatment for all those who are willing and fit to take advantage of them" (Gonsa, 1992, p14). Others have taken a pragmatic approach and argued it means becoming more law-abiding (Bean, 1976, p6). McGuire and Priestley have argued that "rehabilitation means community reinstatement and should be concerned with solving individuals' everyday problems in relation to housing, work, family welfare, money management" (McGuire and Priestley, 1985, p16). Lillyquist has advanced the idea that rehabilitation should be concerned with manipulating broad cultural values and the social environment (Lillyquist, 1980, p41). Rachels however has argued that rehabilitation in this sense is:

"often nothing more than the desire to impose white middle class values associated with the work ethic, and it becomes questionable whether or not it is right to try and remake the personalities and values of people in another image" (Rachels, 1979, p317).

However, perhaps the definition to find most current favour is exemplified by Roberts, and reflects the cognitive-behavioural perspective:



"the process whereby offenders acquire the personal and social skills necessary to function as law-abiding citizens, while the values, attitudes and behaviours that they have adopted to support a criminal lifestyle are modified to become more consistent with acceptable social functioning" (Roberts, 1992, p13).

### 1.3 THE PRISON ENVIRONMENT AND REHABILITATION

#### The Purpose of Prison

As noted above, confusion exists about the causes of crime, and also about what rehabilitation actually means. Furthermore, there is an ambivalence concerning the purposes of prison. For example, the authors of the Woolf Report noted:

"There was insufficient clarity about what the Prison Service should be doing and how it should do it" (Woolf and Tumim, 1991, para10.1).

In order to try and remedy this deficit, the authors listed four purposes themselves (Woolf and Tumim, 1991, para10.24):

- (i) to carry out the sentence of the court
- (ii) to treat prisoners with justice
- (iii) to discourage crime, by deterrence and rehabilitation
- (iv) to hold prisoners securely

However, even at this very broad level, there have been some doubts expressed that the work of the prison itself is unable to contribute toward achieving these purposes, and furthermore, that

some of these purposes are irreconcilable. For example, Platek has argued that it is naive to assume that the existence of prisons will deter criminal behaviour, for prisons cannot of themselves solve social problems (Platek, 1994, p30). The leading criminologist, Professor Norval Morris, of the University of Chicago, has also stated that prisons only marginally affect the crime rate. Morris has argued that if it is indeed true that prisons mean less crime then the U.S. should be the safest country in the world. Furthermore, he has asserted that variations in rates of imprisonment or sentence length would make only "marginal and at present, immeasurable differences to crime rates" (quoted in Home Office, 1993b, p3). Morris concludes that while the real purpose of prison may lie in its role as part of the social control process of the criminal justice system, its primary objective should be to assist those offenders who want, or can be persuaded, to turn away from crime - a rehabilitative function.

4

A number of additional purposes of imprisonment have however, been identified. Principal among these is that prison should be a place of punishment, not just in the sense of the deprivation of liberty, but also that prisoners should feel a sense of being punished as a direct result of the conditions under which they are being held. For example, the Prime Minister has made clear his view concerning the purpose of custody, arguing that "There is a place for punishment and a place for prison" (Daily Telegraph, 10/9/1994, p1). Similarly, the Home Secretary has also lent his support to the theory that "prisons work", for he has stated that punishing the individual offender deters that individual from future offending and also has a general deterrent effect upon other

individuals in society (Guardian, 15/10/1993, p1). In order that these events can occur, "prison is not intended to be a pleasant place" (Prison Service News, December 1993, p1).

Closely related to this punitive function, is the idea that offenders are also sent to prison in order that society may exact its retribution. However, some critics have argued that it is almost impossible to devise any rational measure for this tariff, whilst the very idea of retribution may be "irreconcilable with the idea of rehabilitation" (Middendorff, 1967, p200).

The assistant editor of the British Medical Journal, Richard Smith, has also argued that one purpose of prison is to serve as a "sump", a refuge of the last resort for "inadequate and desperate people" (Smith, 1983, p1617).

It is also important to recognise that at any particular time, adducing a theory of the causes of crime and an appropriate definition of rehabilitation, will also determine how the purpose of prisons are perceived during that period. While in the early part of this century, advancing an individual centred model of criminal responsibility would have been associated with punishing the recalcitrant, today such a theory primarily results in an emphasis on the identification and management of offending groups. There is less concern now expressed about the antecedents of offending behaviour than its effects, or increasingly, the supposed or predicted effects. This line of reasoning imposes upon prisons a role increasingly geared toward containment and

incapacitation, rather than any other purpose (Feeley and Simon, 1992, p466).

On the other hand, if a situation centred theory of crime is proposed, then it is argued that holding a specific individual in custody can have little or no rehabilitative effect. Consequently in such a situation, prisons will be regarded as important for their effect of general deterrence, and for their success in containing dangerous or socially disruptive criminals, or those perceived likely to be so. Alternatively, prisons may be seen as an important part of the formal social controls inherent in the criminal justice system generally. In either case, the rehabilitative function of prisons will tend to be much less strongly advanced.

If however the cognitive model of criminality is accepted, then interventions with offenders whilst they are in custody have significant potential to influence behaviour (Hollin, 1990, p152).

Currently, no one single theory of criminality holds particular sway over the rest. Hence, confusion exists over the purpose of prisons and what they can and cannot do (Woolf and Tumim, 1991, para10.1). In his own report on prison regimes, Tumim has pointed out that:

"Prisons will always return to the basic purpose of custody unless a stronger alternative purpose is identified for them" (Tumim, 1993a, para9.6).

## The Rehabilitative Ideal

As noted earlier, the modern prison system has never been solely concerned with the deprivation of individual liberty. Today, most prison service staff and most civilian staff working in prisons would tend to agree that rehabilitation is one of their principal objectives. The 1985 survey of staff attitudes found that 62% of all staff said the purpose of a prison should be "the rehabilitation of prisoners for a useful life" (Marsh et al, 1985, p56). Likewise, the Central Council of Probation Officers has stated:

"The traditional aim of the Probation Service is to restore offenders to law abiding life and its main purpose is to reduce reoffending" (Woolf and Tumim, 1991, para10.32).

Furthermore, the current Statement of Purpose of the Prison Service clearly identifies a rehabilitative objective:

"Her Majesty's Prison Service serves the public by keeping in custody those committed by the Courts. Our duty is to look after them with humanity and to help them lead law-abiding and useful lives in custody and after release".

However, it has been argued that these broad statements of positive purpose bear little relation to the realities of actual prison life. In 1981, the annual publication produced by the Prison Service, the Report of the Work of the Prison Department, contained a telling paragraph:

"Certainly there is no evidence that prison has any systematic deterrent or rehabilitative effect: as the May Committee noted, the words of Prison Rule 1 that the purpose of the treatment and training of convicted prisoners should be "to encourage them to lead a good and useful life" are in present

conditions simply a pious aspiration" (quoted in Tumim, 1993a, para1.11).

In a similar vein ten years later, the Woolf Report, commissioned after the riots at Strangeways in 1990, noted that for many offenders, the experience of prison was essentially negative, and led to a weakening of their employment, family and community ties (Woolf and Tumim, 1991, para10.27). Results from the staff attitude survey cited earlier, found that only 1% of Prison Service staff believed prisons were "very successful" in rehabilitating inmates, while 49% believed they were "not at all successful" (Marsh et al, 1985, p57). Why should this be so? Some critics have stated that it is the poor physical conditions which exist that make the possibilities of rehabilitation particularly difficult. Others have asserted that there are inadequacies in the design and delivery of regimes. Alternatively, the nature of the prison experience itself has been cited as an important factor in constraining rehabilitative initiatives.

### The Influence of Prison Conditions

Stern has argued that the Prison Service cannot expect to achieve its ideal of "changing human beings and sending them back out into the world crime free", when that work is constantly undermined by poor conditions and a physically negative and isolating environment (Stern, 1989, pp65-66).

Woolf and Tumim in their report also asserted that the poor conditions which characterise many prison environments serve to counteract any positive rehabilitative initiatives:

"the conditions which exist at present in our prisons causes a substantial number of prisoners to 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, para10.27).

However, since the publication of the Woolf Report, there have been considerable improvements to the prison estate. The Prison Service is on target, for example, to end "slopping out" altogether by 1996, in line with Lord Woolf's recommendations. There is a major modernisation and building programme and, despite the rising prison population, there has been a substantial reduction in overcrowding (Home Office, 1994b, p3). Indicatively, the 1991 National Prisoner Survey revealed that 78% of prisoners considered that "some prison offices have been helpful to me", and 71% agreed that "most prison officers treat prisoners fairly here" (Central Statistical Office, 1995, p167).

Nevertheless, there are still inadequacies. Judge Tumim recently reported that living conditions in some parts of Leeds prison were "an affront to human dignity", and even with a reduced inmate population, there was "not sufficient space in the prison for industrial work, skill training, education, tackling offending behaviour and recreation" (Guardian, 15/2/1995, p8). Even at new, purpose built prisons there have been criticisms. At one such establishment, the governor expressed his "disappointment at the inconsistency and short sightedness of the planners", and listed a

number of shortcomings, including the fact that prisoners would have to eat as well as defecate in their cells, as the dining room was "inadequate" (Criminal Justice, 11/1991, p4).

However, there is no simple relationship between physical conditions within a prison and its success rate in diverting inmates from crime (Platek, 1994, p30). Mathieson has noted that even the most well resourced Scandinavian prisons have "consistently failed" to positively rehabilitate offenders (cited in Roberts, 1992, p15). Just as there is little or no evidence that harsh regimes deter re-offending, there is no evidence that simply providing prisoners with very good conditions will necessarily have any impact on their future behaviour (Smith, 1983, p1616). For example, John McVicar, when inspecting a newly built "luxury" prison, argued:

"I find it bizarre to suggest that if you treat people well in prison they will reform. They have spent a fortune trying to give the place a less oppressive air so it won't feel like prison. It won't stop them re-offending again" (Sunday Times, 2/12/1990).

Judge Tumim has agreed that while concerns should rightly be expressed about physical conditions, the crucial task of the Prison Service is to challenge anti-social behaviours, implement a positive regime, and provide the inmate with useful skills that are transferable to the outside environment:

"Prisons should not be nice, they should not be nasty. Those are sentimental approaches. Prison should be active places...where if prisoners are going to lead useful lives, they come out with some pride in themselves and some ability to actually do something useful" (Tumim, 1993b, pp16-17).



## Regime design and delivery

Within prison establishments, the authorities have great power to determine how the daily lives of inmates are organised. However, the design and implementation of all activities must take into account the over-riding questions of security and the maintenance of order and discipline (Home Office, 1985, p4). Managing the tensions between control and rehabilitation have been termed by Galtung as "the organisation of dilemma" (quoted in Blomberg, 1967, 164). Some critics have argued that, while essential, these considerations of control mitigate, or even negate, positive work with prisoners, by removing individual responsibility and constructing a rigidly controlled social environment (Flynn, 1977, p16). For example, a group therapist, formerly employed at Wormwood Scrubs, has stated:

"I felt frustrated because the little that could be attempted in individual or group sessions once or twice weekly seemed to become lost during the 24 hour day in a custodial, non-therapeutic atmosphere" (quoted in Gunn, 1978, p143).

In fact, Woolf and Tumim have argued that since the Mountbatten Report, there has been an over-concentration on security considerations, to the detriment, and in some cases, the exclusion, of other roles (Woolf and Tumim, 1991, para10.40). Whilst pointing out the many recent positive changes occurring within the Prison Service, they still affirmed that the "inevitably coercive" atmosphere of prison acts as a constraint upon rehabilitation, with the result that:

"It is now generally accepted that, particularly with young offenders, that there is a risk that a custodial sentence,

instead of making it less likely that the offender will offend again, increases that danger" (Woolf and Tumim, 1991, para10.25).

In order to minimise these risks, Tumim has strongly advocated that it is essential that regimes are designed in order that inmates are engaged in purposeful, constructive activity (Tumim, 1993a, para1.8). However many inmates interviewed for the present study reported unsuitable work, under-employment and workshop closure:

"I always think of this place like it should be in the Urals somewhere. It's miles away from anywhere. People are walking about in these mad clothes and all we do is chop up bits of wood all day. And it's supposed to be a training prison. It doesn't do anything for anybody" (Inmate, Prison J).

"Prison can be a negative environment. I feel this prison is a negative environment. It doesn't teach anybody anything. They insist it's a working prison, so everyone must go to work. But there's no work for them. So they go and book on, then sit down and go to sleep. And they spend all day doing that. How much more negative can you get than that?" (Inmate, Prison A).

Consequently, high levels of boredom were recorded among inmates, with an overall absence of any constructive activity:

"Boredom and prison are spelt the same" (Inmate, Prison B).

There is also a substantial variation in how individual establishments have approached these questions of design and delivery. Some have tended to concentrate on process rather than outcome, with the result that the regime has been designed merely to house inmates, or in some cases to appease them, with the least possible disruption. For example, the Project Director of

a newly opened prison defended the regime and conditions there, not by arguing in favour of their rehabilitative value, but by stating:

"It makes sound financial sense. If prisoners are happy, we need fewer staff to look after them" (Sunday Times, 2/12/1990).

Finally, lack of awareness of prisoners' needs has also been recognised as a factor inhibiting effective programme design:

"Very little work of any kind has been done in this country to ascertain prisoners' perceptions of their own experiences. We do not know what are the factors that most affect prisoners' view of regimes and we clearly need to establish some facts on this if we are to develop a more considered approach" (Home Office, 1984, para100).

It is not only the design of regimes which has been criticised - concern has been expressed that initiatives, in some cases, have not been correctly implemented. Several reasons for this failure have been cited. They include inadequate staff training and motivation, insufficient resourcing and weak or biased evaluation (Guy, 1992, p5). In his review of regimes in 1993, Tumim considered that improved staff training, a recognition of their skills, together with a "fundamental re-evaluation" of their roles were the most important issues to be tackled (Tumim, 1993a, para9.1). Failure to address these concerns, combined with repeated poor programme results, or outright failure, has resulted in low staff morale, a resigned fatalism that "imprisonment has failed" and consequently the absence of any strategy beyond that of containment (Tumim, 1993a, para1.9).

## The Influence of the Prison Environment

If some of the purposes of prison can be compromised by poor prison conditions, or inadequate regimes, other purposes may be inherently incompatible or unrealisable. Some writers have argued that irrespective of the regime or the conditions within particular establishments, it is the nature of prison itself which has precluded, and will forever preclude, any hope of rehabilitation:

"The basic evils of imprisonment are that it denies autonomy, degrades dignity, impairs or destroys self-reliance, inculcates authoritarian values, minimises the likelihood of beneficial interaction with one's peers, fractures family ties, destroys the family's economic stability, and prejudices the prisoner's future prospects for any improvement in his economic and social status. It does all these things whether or not the buildings are antiseptic or dry, the aroma that of fresh bread or stale urine, the sleeping accommodation a plank or inner-sprung mattress, or the interaction of inmates takes place in cells and corridors ('idleness') or in the structured setting of a particular time and place ('group therapy')." (American Friends Service Committee, 1971, p33).

One of the most influential pieces of research to demonstrate the negativity of the prison experience per se, was the experiment conducted at Stamford University in 1975, by Zimbardo. Twenty four students, pre-selected for their maturity and stability, were randomly assigned roles of prisoner or guard. The prisoners were "arrested" early Sunday morning and taken to a mock prison. The role playing guards were instructed only that they should maintain good order, whilst refraining from physical contact with their charges. However, within 6 days the experiment was aborted, after 5 prisoners had to be released, suffering from acute anxiety, extreme depression and psychosomatic illnesses. Many of the other prisoners were depressed and fearful, while some

prisoners had been force fed. Zimbardo concluded that a custodial environment distorts behavioural norms, and may even necessitate the adoption of behavioural abnormalities:

"In the contest between the forces of good men and evil situations, the situation triumphed. Individuals carefully selected for their normality, sanity and homogeneous personality traits were, in a matter of days, acting in ways that, out of this context [original emphasis], would be judged abnormal, insane, neurotic, psychopathic and sadistic" (Zimbardo, 1975, p47).

Although criticisms can be made of Zimbardo's study, chief among them that the guards had no training in how to adapt to their role, it is clear that the custodial environment is important in affecting the behaviours of both staff and prisoners. Many writers have asserted that this environment is unlikely to favour interventions with offenders (Wineman, 1969, p1089; Tittle, 1974, p389; Gonsa, 1992, p13). Several reasons have been advanced for the development and persistence of a negative custodial environment. These include offence-status inversion and the influence of sub-cultures, habitual substance abuse, high levels of aggression and the inappropriateness of prison to function as a learning environment.

1 Offence-status inversion and the influence of sub-cultures  
Within the prison environment there may be a strong criminal sub-culture which is characterised in part by an inversion of the status attached to offending. Furthermore, prison separates inmates from law abiding forces and networks and instead forces law breakers to mix with other law breakers. Some researchers have noted a "contamination" effect whereby less experienced prisoners

are negatively influenced by particular leaders among the inmate population - usually those prisoners who have a history of recidivism, those with longer sentences, those with a higher visibility of deviance and those with a history of rule infraction (Wineman, 1969, p1089; Bean, 1976, p125). Staff may in fact collude with this leading clique in order to ease problems in the maintenance of order (Blomberg, 1967, p164), further devaluing the integrity of any rehabilitative initiatives. Other critics have observed a conferring of status by lower order offenders upon recidivists or upon those guilty of more serious offences (see Morris, 1985). At worst, even more deviant behaviour patterns may be learned as offending skills are exchanged and offending behaviour is reinforced (Roberts, 1992, p14). For example, this prisoner said:

"If you put them in prison, they just get to know harder things, stronger things, they get to know people who've done a completely different crime. I'm in here for burglary, a person could be in for fraud and he's telling me about the amount of money he's earned through fraud, so I think to myself "well that's got to be easier than burglary". At least you're not taking the risk of going into someone's house and getting beaten up at the end of the day. Therefore you're just learning more and more about crime - because people don't talk positive in here. What you speak about is what they've had, what they haven't had, what they are going to do when they get out of here, what's the best possible way to go about it. That's their conversations. So you just find yourself in that catchphrase situation, you're just learning more and more about crimes. So you go out there and you're going to have that attitude again - "let me try a bit of fraud", and you just wind up back behind the door again, and then you start feeling self-pity for yourself and at the end of the day you put it down to the government or authority" (Inmate, Prison B).

Similarly, this inmate commented:

"Prison has made me worse - you've got positive and negative people, but because you're aware of the negative things

outside, you seem to always get mixed up with the negative things inside - no matter how much you want to be positive, it's like a magnet, it draws you back to your old roots - you get involved with drugs, you get mixed up with bad attitudes and the next thing you know you're getting nicked and all of them sort of things - it makes your sentence harder. And so when you go out there, prison hasn't done anything - all it's done is made you worse in the way you think about authorities. And there's a lot of bullying and intimidation by prison staff - if they don't like you, they make sure you know they don't like you. So therefore if that's happened to you in prison, you're going to go out there with a bad attitude towards authorities, plain and simple, no matter if it's the police, government or whatever, you've got that negative response - you don't respect them. That's what prison does to a lot of people, because they don't try and help us. Prison is a waste of time. It is. It don't do nothing - all it does is take you away from people you love. Prison don't teach you no better - so what are we learning? It's a merry go round isn't it?" (Inmate, Prison E).

For some groups of offenders these processes of status inversion and contamination through sub-culture interaction, can give rise to particular concern. For example, sex offenders will tend to be all grouped together in either segregated wings, or in a designated Vulnerable Prisoner Unit - this inmate, himself a sex offender, expressed doubts about the wisdom of this policy:

"I've got a problem with this prison, because I think it's a bad idea to put people with the same crime in one prison. I know these prisoners here have all come off the rule and you can see the idea behind this kind of prison, but there's so much collusion here, people talking about their crimes, and there's a lot of justifications for their crimes in here, people get together in groups and justify their crimes and that's not on at all. I challenge things like that, because of the therapy I've had and I don't accept things like that any more. But there are people who are weak minded here who will and that's very dangerous, very damaging. If you are in an environment where everyone is saying it's OK to rape someone or whatever, then you're going to have that belief. So it's very dangerous to put so many people like this in one prison. I really disagree with that. But the reason - yes, these people have got to be segregated. People can be affected by coming here, it can corrupt them" (Inmate, Prison K).

Generally, as the custodial orientation increases, there is a tendency for peer solidarity, both on the part of staff and inmates, to become more pronounced (Blomberg, 1967, p183).

Similarly, it is argued that larger establishments, those with more authoritarian regimes and those which have a high turnover of staff and inmates will tend to be characterised by a higher degree of social distance between the two groups. Research by Clemmer (1958), Sykes and Messinger (1960), Cressey (1961) and Morris and Morris (1963), found the existence of strong inmate sub-cultures with prescribed characteristics of behaviour. These codes of behaviour comprise five major norms:

- (i) be loyal to other prisoners
- (ii) don't argue with other prisoners
- (iii) don't back out of fights
- (iv) do your own bird
- (v) in any dispute, officers are always wrong

Blomberg has asserted that these normative codes encourage solidarity among inmates and increase group dependency which "automatically decreases the accessibility to influences from external rehabilitative forces...and is likely to have negative consequences on post-release behaviour" (Blomberg, 1967, p186). Wineman (1969, p1089), argued that the influence of the inmate sub-culture would tend to distort the total prison environment, further devaluing any rehabilitative initiatives. These distortions included physical brutalisation, psychic humiliation, sexual traumatising, condoned use of feared indigenous leaders for behaviour management, chronic exposure to programmeless



boredom, unclear groupings, enforced work routines in the guise of vocational training, and unwarranted violations of privacy. In order therefore to maintain order, Wineman argued that authorities would tend to employ even more stringent forms of social control, further diminishing the potential of any positive interventions. Wineman concluded that:

"faced with this, only some hidden, miraculous strength on the part of any captive can prevent further breakdown or damage to his functioning. But much miraculous strength is not likely to reside in the people who become captives" (Wineman, 1969, p1090).

However, some researchers have expressed the view that acceptance of the inmate code of behaviour is neither internalised, universally held or ultimately transferred to the post-release environment. For example, Wheeler noted that many inmates privately dissented from the code (see Wheeler, 1961), while Cloward and Glaser found that most inmates were interested in self-improvement and expressed, though not necessarily to other inmates, a degree of conformity to staff values (see Cloward, 1960; Glaser, 1964). Furthermore, Tittle has argued that many of these negative inmate responses may be situation specific, and are not transferred or generalised outside the institution (Tittle, 1974, p389). Some of these arguments were affirmed when an inmate participating in this study revealed:

"There's 800 people here and maybe 6 or 7 talk openly. Because most times in prison you're talking about crime, you're talking about you, what you've done in your life, because there's image here, you have to put them barriers up here, got to be tough, you know - but you don't talk about feelings, feelings are not spoken about in here" (Inmate, Prison B).

## 2 Substance abuse

The availability of drugs within prisons are regarded by some staff within the Prison Service as exerting an overall negative influence within the regime. For example, the Governor of HM Prison Highpoint has argued that:

"The work being done at Highpoint is being undermined by the huge amount of gratuitous violence, much of which is drug related" (Daily Telegraph, 30/7/1993, p2).

The Chief Inspector of Prisons has stated that drug use can inflate the scale and intensity of prison disturbance, can help corrupt staff, can increase levels of intimidation and by reinforcing habitual consumption can negate the effect of rehabilitative initiatives. On the other hand, the same report also noted that "many staff acknowledged the benefit of moderate amounts of alcohol and cannabis being available to prisoners" (Daily Telegraph, 30/10/1992, p6).

Many inmates who were interviewed attested to the seriousness of the drugs problem, both 'hard' and 'soft', within the prison environment:

"If you're in prison, it don't stop people bringing drugs in - to me, it's like the street sometimes in prison with the situation with drugs - you've got access to everything, like you have on the street. So therefore you find yourself in the same situation and you might be feeling at a low ebb that day and a person offers you what you were originally taking on the outside, take it that once, take it that next day, before you know it you're doing it on a regular basis, like you was on the outside. Then more problems occur, you might not be able to pay what you owe them, so it goes on and on, and more and more problems - it doesn't stop, because it's here. I'd say 80% of the prison population have got drugs problems - their crimes are either a result of drug taking - either they've gone out there to steal more money for their habit, or they've gone out there under the influence of

drugs, had a fight or whatever - so to me they should have a lot more things like counselling, drug awareness groups, things like that, so people can get different outlooks on things, especially drugs, because when they go back on the wings, and when there's drugs freely available, and if you've got the means to get it, you're going to get it, because you're in your cell and you want the days to pass quicker and drugs help the day pass quicker, they make you relax, they help you forget about prison, so you shut yourself off from your problems. So I'd like the prison authorities to start wising up to the facts about drugs - they talk big but their actions are weak, very weak. It's a shame, because they're putting people away for stupid things and there's people coming into jail who've not got a problem with drugs but in prison they develop a drugs problem. It's crazy" (Inmate, Prison B).

Research conducted by the Institute of Public Health at Glenochil prison in Scotland, found that 25% of inmates who injected drugs said they began this practice whilst in prison (Independent, 3/1/1995, p9). Some Scottish jails have now decided to adopt a harm reduction approach by, for instance, providing sterilising tablets to inmates in order to clean syringes. However, the Prison Reform Trust has argued that there is "scant evidence" to support either a contamination or escalation hypothesis (Prison Report, Autumn 1994, p3).

### 3 The prevalence of aggression

Levels of violence and intimidation, both among inmates, and by inmates upon staff, are high within many prisons. However, the total number of assaults by prisoners on staff and other inmates has shown a 6% fall in the 12 month period prior to April 1995, the first such fall in five years (Guardian, 3/5/1995, p5). Nevertheless, recent research has found that 35% of officers reported feeling worried and 67% reported feeling fearful at some point (Adler, 1994, p6). It has also been recognised by the Prison Service that the incidence of bullying is not confined

solely to Young Offenders Institutions (Home Office, 1992c, para6.25). Flynn has argued that the nature of the prison environment makes it "impossible" either to protect prisoners from assault or identify those engaged in disruptive behaviour (Flynn, 1977, p16).

Some groups of inmates may face particularly high levels of aggression and intimidation from other prisoners (Twinn, 1992, p52). The inmate code usually contains a pecking order of offences - that is, some prisoners who have committed certain types of crimes receive kudos from other prisoners, while some groups of offenders have to be segregated from other prisoners because their crimes are thought by the rest of the inmate population to be morally reprehensible. Sex offenders are typically at the bottom of this order, and the hostile environment in which they inhabit may tend to preclude any rehabilitative initiatives, as this prisoner reported:

"I never found many positive vibes anywhere else in the prisons I've been in. Like most people, it's difficult to explore yourself, because the whole time you have to be very aware of yourself physically, you have to be aware of yourself emotionally, because if people see a chink they are likely to dive in and make life difficult for people, so consequently you have to be pretty self-contained because you're quite vulnerable in prison, because there's some people that would really take advantage of you if they thought they could get away with it, so consequently you keep yourself pretty much tight up. Guys on the numbers [i.e. Rule 43] are facing people who are continually vindictive, continually bullying towards them. They get a really rough time. They really do get a rough time" (Inmate, Prison K).

#### 4 An inappropriate learning environment

Principally because of sub-culture pressures, it may be easier for inmates to rehearse negative behaviours, such as criminal skills or learned helplessness, than to internalise positive ones.

Hence, control of the learning environment is crucial (Laycock, 1979, p400). However, it has been argued that prison is not an appropriate learning environment in which to transform the behaviour patterns of offenders. The adoption of new learned behaviours is considered to be situation-specific, requiring interaction with, and feedback from, the particular environment in which the new behaviours are going to be practiced. Thus:

"even if prisoners did learn new ways and better ways of coping while they were in prison, they would still be unlikely to improve their behaviour on the outside...Evocation of a behaviour is strongly linked to the presence of stimuli that were present when that behaviour was learned...When environments vary considerably, the transfer of learning is usually minimal...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).

Even for those prisoners who undergo therapy programmes whilst in prison, they may achieve little from it, because from a prisoner's point of view, the principal object of therapy is to secure release, rather than adopt new learned behaviours.

Furthermore, prison is a controlled environment - changes in inmate behaviour that do occur are artificially induced, principally in response to the force of stated regulations, and subsequently maintained by the threat of punishment, rather than reward or reinforcement. Therefore, once these controls are removed, upon release for example, the negative, maladaptive behavioural responses are likely to return. As a consequence, Zamble and Porporino argue that prison becomes, at best, a 'deep freeze' where original behaviours remain unchanged and the adoption

of new learned behaviours is precluded (Zamble and Porporino, 1988. p151) .

Inmates may also suffer from low motivation and an inability to believe they can exert any control over their own lives, combined with a lack of any positive reinforcement to promote any change in behaviour or lifestyle (Roberts, 1992, p15). Furthermore, they may be subject to pressures from within the sub-culture, where co-operation with staff may be interpreted by other inmates either as collaboration or as a sign of weakness.

Finally, any treatment given within the prison environment is affecting only one element, the offender himself - whereas there are many other factors which contribute toward criminal behaviour. For example, confinement of the offender within a custodial setting usually results in a loss of community ties and often in a breakdown of personal relationships - key factors in determining patterns of future reoffending. The geographical isolation of many prisons, and the present lack of localised community prisons may be significant influences in these processes. For example, the 1991 National Prisoner Survey revealed that the average distance travelled by visitors to prisons was 62 miles. For over half the visitors the journey time was over one and a half hours (Walmsley et al, 1993, pxi). Over half the number of prisoners who were serving between 5 and 10 years reported that their marital status had changed since they had come to prison (Walmsley et al, 1993, pviii).

Thus, for a number of reasons, the prison environment may be an unsuitable one for inmates to learn new behaviours, while the post-release environment may be wholly uncondusive to promoting non-criminal behaviour. For those from ethnic groups, who form 15% of the prison population, but only 5% of the general population (Walmsley et al, 1993, pvii), their problems may be even greater:

"You can't just go out there and say I'll pack it in and get a 9 to 5, because I've tried that, and the only employer I've ever had, they think, well, you're black in the first place, so they've got a different outlook on you altogether from the start, they've got that wary outlook, they don't trust you 'cause you're a black man. Therefore, there's a bridge in between that relationship straightaway. And you being a conscious person, you can sense them sort of things, so at the end of the day you think 'this ain't gonna work out', so you start being negative towards him, in slight little ways and at the end of it you get sacked, 'cause you knew it weren't an ongoing thing from the off. That's how it is" (Inmate, Prison B).

#### 1.4 MEASURING THE SUCCESS OF THE PROCESS

Evaluating the effectiveness of rehabilitative initiatives within the prison environment is a highly complex procedure. As noted above there are problems in defining what rehabilitation is, but there are also problems in trying to measure it and deciding what constitutes success. Tittle; for example argues that:

"Determining whether people are rehabilitated while in prison is rendered exceedingly difficult by the impreciseness of the concept. On one hand, if rehabilitation is taken to mean correcting defects, one is faced with the prospect that the treatment may have no bearing on future crime. On the other hand, if rehabilitation is equated with law-abiding behaviour, analysis is confused because much 'rehabilitation' may be independent of the prison process" (Tittle, 1974. p387).

These problems associated with definition and methodology presented special challenges for this study. Typically, researchers investigating the effectiveness of rehabilitative initiatives have adopted a macro approach - they have isolated a specific treatment programme or initiative, and using longitudinal analysis, assessed its worth by reference to reconviction rates or psychological testing techniques. These approaches are examined in more detail below. It will be shown that these techniques are inadequate in general, and inappropriate in particular, for the present study.

#### The use of reconviction rates

Perhaps the most common evaluative technique used takes the form of a longitudinal study, whereby a programme is devised, selected prisoners are allocated to either experimental or control groups, the programme is delivered and then reconviction rates between the two groups compared (see Shaw; 1974; Fowles, 1978). High reconviction rates are interpreted as a low rate of offender rehabilitation and an indicator of ineffective programme design and delivery. However, this technique has been criticised on numerous grounds.

1 Should all subsequent re-offending be taken into account, or alternatively, only offences of a serious nature, or should only offences similar in type to the original conviction be included in indices of failure or success? There may be also be problems, for example, in defining a "serious" crime. If length of



sentence imposed is the criteria chosen, then different sentencing practices among judges will also have to be taken into account. In addition, how far should extenuating circumstances be taken into account when determining the gravity of the reconviction? (see below, 3). Some researchers have also attempted to provide a classification scheme for released offenders - distinguishing between "occasional recidivists" and "habitual recidivists", and between "clear" and "marginal" successes and failures (Hood and Sparks, 1978, p176)

2 It has been argued that the commission of a further offence upon release should not necessarily be taken to indicate a failure in either the rehabilitation of the individual or indeed the programme itself. For example, it is possible that although a person may commit a further offence upon release, they may have shown improvement in other aspects of social and behavioural adaptation (Prins, 1982, p279).

3 Although an individual may have gained insight into their patterns of offending behaviour and resolved not to become involved in criminal activity when they are released, factors external to the individual's own beliefs and outside the scope of the programme conducted within the prison, may push the individual into committing new offences. Tittle argues that the use of reconviction rates as an indicator of rehabilitation implicitly assumes crime is a result of some personal defect:

"correction of individual deficiencies such as personality or psychic disorders, poor occupational skills, insufficient education, limited moral consciousness, or anti-social attitudes - the kind of things most people mention when they

are forced to specify the shortcomings that prisoners presumably have - may be unrelated to the probability of recidivism" (Tittle, 1974, p386).

Lack of support, in both financial and moral terms, the labelling of the individual as an ex-offender, disruption to work record, loss of contact with family and friends and accommodation problems, together with other aspects of social functioning which, while only indirectly related to patterns of offending behaviour, may nevertheless increase the likelihood that further offences will be committed (Priestley et al, 1984, pp146-149).

4 Some rehabilitative programmes "fail", in terms of subsequent high reconviction rates because they are not delivered as originally intended. This may occur for a variety of reasons - for example, lack of staff training, course compression because of staff shortage, or instability or volatility of the particular inmate group.

5 This type of research method has been criticised on the grounds that it may be ethically unsound (Prins, 1982, p281). For example, it would be impossible to deny a group of inmates access to library services and then several years later examine differentials in reconviction rates. In addition, there are likely to be problems in establishing control groups, particularly if this is interpreted as a denial of treatment.

6 There may also be practical problems in implementing the programmes which can adversely affect later evaluation. Studies often require offenders be split into two or more groups to

evaluate programme impact. However, ensuring that groups are comparable in terms of offender characteristics may be difficult. There may be loss of cases over time, as prisoners are discharged, transferred to other institutions or released following successful appeals. Maintaining stable conditions within the control group may also be problematic - for example, awareness of participation in a research study, may motivate supervisors of control subjects to improve conditions within their group. In an attempt to overcome these difficulties the technique of offender matching has been developed, whereby similar offenders are individually matched, and after-conduct compared. However, this practice implicitly assumes the researcher is aware of all the factors which may induce later criminal behaviour. In addition, it may be impossible to find perfect matching cases for all individuals involved in the study. Another commonly used technique to ensure group comparability involves the use of reconviction prediction tables, first developed by Mannheim and Wilkins to assess treatment effectiveness in borstal training (see Mannheim and Wilkins, 1955). The expectancy that an individual will be reconvicted is calculated (based on certain key factors - for example, number of previous convictions), and this is compared to the subsequent actual rate of reconviction to provide an indicator of treatment effectiveness. Nevertheless there are several criticisms which can be made of this technique. First, there is some doubt that the tables may be able to predict the variable effects of programmes upon particular groups within the inmate population (see Gibbens, 1959). Second, as in the case of offender matching, the reliability of reconviction prediction tables rests largely on how accurately the factors associated with

reconviction have been identified. Finally, the required accuracy and detail of the personal information on offenders' backgrounds may be very poor. As a result, many reconviction tables tend to rely on a restricted range of those factors for which information is available. Studies which rely heavily upon such tables may therefore draw erroneous conclusions, based upon limited data (Hood and Sparks, 1978, p185).

7 For some groups of offenders, measuring subsequent reconviction rates may be a very poor indicator of the impact on offending of rehabilitative initiatives. For example, in regard to sexual offences, it is now largely accepted that there may be little relationship between the recorded level of offending and the true rate of offending in the community (Kelly, Burton and Regan, 1992, p20; Saunders-Wilson, 1992, p47) - one estimate has argued that 95% of all sexual offences (excluding very serious cases of rape), may be unreported (see Radzinowicz, 1964). When all types of crime are considered, the British Crime Survey estimated that less than 40% of all offences are actually reported to police (Brake and Hale, 1992, p99). Furthermore many offenders are not caught, with undetected crimes being unequally distributed among different categories of offenders, and a proportion of those who are charged are not convicted. The Head of the Directorate of Inmate Programmes of the Prison Service, with particular responsibility for sex offenders has argued:

"The impact on offending is traditionally measured by recidivism rates, but for many sex offenders the time between re-convictions can be lengthy and it may be many years before the effectiveness of the programmes can be judged" (Guy, 1992, p6).

Other researchers have concluded that "recidivism, as measured by reconviction for a similar offence, is not a dependable measure in assessing either risk or 'rehabilitation' " (Kelly, Burton and Regan, 1992, p20).

8 There is growing controversy about how recidivism rates should be interpreted. Some practitioners do not now consider high reconviction rates to be a universal indicator of programme failure. Instead these high rates are offered as evidence of increasing success of the criminal justice system in monitoring patterns of offending behaviour (Feeley and Simon, 1992, p455).

9 The relationship between reconviction and evaluation of rehabilitative programmes which contain an intensive degree of post-release supervision, is a very complex one. There is some evidence that such programmes, where offenders are closely monitored, can result in an artificially high reconviction rate. For example, minor violations of supervision requirements, or the committal of petty offences, which may have previously been overlooked, may result in the offender returning to prison. The reverse is also true - if after-care officers adopt a more lenient approach to offenders, overlooking minor transgressions, then an artificially low recidivism rate will result. Because of the lack of consistency in this area, Takagi has concluded:

"recidivism rates cannot be utilised as the dependent variable in assessing correctional effectiveness...apparent recidivism can be 'controlled' by officials" (Takagi, 1969, p198).

10 Even if rehabilitation programmes can affect an offender's behaviour, concern has been expressed that neither the Prison Service nor the Probation Service may have the resources to provide the necessary levels of throughcare deemed necessary to support these programmes (Sampson, 1992, p12). In addition, the Criminal Justice Act (1991), provides that all offenders sentenced to a term of imprisonment of over 12 months must be subject to supervision by the Probation Service upon release. This will entail a vast amount of new casework. The result may be that possibly effective initiatives may be seen to 'fail', in terms of high reconviction rates, not because of their internal inadequacy, but because of lack of external reinforcement. Finally, the new arrangements for release under supervision mean that treatment of the offender is expected to continue within the community for the remaining period of the offender's sentence. Thus, should reconvictions during this time be considered an indicator of failure, if the programme has not yet been completed?

11 There has recently been a change in the objectives of the penal system, as made explicit in the Criminal Justice Act (1991). The dominant trend is now bifurcation, or selective incapacitation. Sentence length has traditionally been determined by the gravity of the offence and an assessment of the character of the offender, but judges may now take into account an assessment of the risk that the offender, particularly those found guilty of violent or sexual offences, may commit further crimes. Identification of risk also enables shorter sentences and community-based penalties to be imposed on the low-risk offender. The objectives of this approach are:

"to reduce the effects of crime in society not by altering either offender or social context, but by rearranging the distribution of offenders in society. If the prison can do nothing else, it can detain offenders for a time and thus delay their resumption of criminal activity...If such delays are sustained for enough time and for enough offenders, significant aggregate effects in crime can take place although individual destinies are only marginally altered" (Feeley and Simon, 1992, p458).

There is a likelihood therefore, that prison will become to be considered as little more than a dumping ground for those high risk offenders who are considered to be unresponsive to social work methods. Thus, rehabilitative programmes operating within prisons will be working with an inmate population likely to be increasingly unresponsive to such initiatives (although society will have most to gain from the reform of these prisoners). Recidivism rates are thus likely to increase - indeed, it is an implicit assumption of the bifurcation approach that the offender will return to prison. In this context, analysis of reconviction rates will provide little insight into an evaluation of the efficacy of rehabilitative initiatives, but will tell rather more about the current objectives of the criminal justice system.

12 There is a strong likelihood that even though a particular programme may be potentially effective, in that it presents inmates with the opportunity for positive change, when measured by the single factor of reconviction it may be classified as a "failure". For example, positive effects of programmes may be counteracted by other inmates. Participation in rehabilitative initiatives may be perceived by other inmates as a violation of the inmate code and as collusion with the system. This is an

important issue, as the most powerful sources of social reinforcement for prisoners tend to be other prisoners (Priestley et al, 1984, p6). In relation to the Sex Offender Treatment Programme specifically, although this may be a valid general observation, Sampson has concluded:

"The programmes are only likely to be offered to a small number of prisoners at a time, and they will only represent a small proportion of their weekly activities. There will be ample opportunity therefore for the prisoners who are not on the programmes to undermine the impact on the participants' attitudes" (Sampson, 1992, p11).

If only reconviction rates are taken into account, any understanding of the operation of these other processes which are working to undermine programme effectiveness, will tend to be overlooked.

13 A major problem of constructing longitudinal studies using the criteria of reconviction rates is that it is almost impossible to replicate the experiment, a difficulty recognised by Fowles in his study of prison welfare (Fowles, 1978, p20). For example, there may be changes over time in the functions and organisation of institutions, changes in sentencing policy, alterations in the composition of the prison population and modifications to treatment programmes.

## Evaluation

Defining the relationship between reconviction rates and rehabilitation is highly complex. In 1978, some research was conducted for the Home Office to discover if there was any



relationship between greater welfare provision for prisoners and a lower recidivism rate. The study found that despite considerably higher levels of welfare provision for the experimental group, the difference between the one year reconviction rates for the two groups was not statistically significant (see Fowles, 1978). The authors of the report nevertheless added this footnote:

"The value of social work in prison should not be assessed solely by recourse to recidivism rates. The degree to which it contributes to the provision of humane conditions of containment, the maintenance or improvement of family relationships and better social functioning, although less easily assessed, is also an important consideration" (Fowles, 1978, p22).

Similarly, Gunn and Robertson, in a 10 year follow-up study to their prior research at HM Prison Grendon, argued that reconviction rates were an unsatisfactory indicator of the success of the establishment. Instead, they concluded that the regime should be seen as a catalyst, giving men who want to change "the opportunity of spending their time in prison constructively" (quoted in Wilson, 1992, p21). The now much quoted remark made by a staff member at Grendon that while they may not be able to make some inmates less criminal, they certainly could make them happier and better adjusted criminals (cited in Prins, 1982, p280), makes an important point. Simple reconviction rates are only a crude indicator of re-offending, they do not measure factors which may in the longer term influence patterns of offending behaviour (see Thornton, 1987a).

The implication is that there are other influences, inherent in the programmes themselves, which have an impact on offenders, and

that these have intrinsic value. The recent Council Of Europe report on prison education, which included an examination of library services, stressed that prison education should address itself to the needs of the 'whole person' and not "restrict itself too much to tackling the prisoner's inadequacies that led to crime" (Warner, 1989, p7).

Research by a group of Quakers in this field concluded:

"It is ironic that although treatment ideology purports to look beyond the criminal's crime to the whole personality, it measures its success against the single factor of an absence of reconviction for a criminal act" (American Friends Service Committee, 1971, p342).

To evaluate a complex process by reference to a single, often unreliable, statistic is a gross over-simplification. Other evaluative techniques are required.

### Psychological Testing

Some researchers have argued that in addition to minimising the possibility of future reconviction, the concept of rehabilitation also implies an internalisation of a new set of values and attitudes (see Zamble and Porporino, 1988, Ch.11). Many studies have therefore tended to employ a wide range of attitudinal measures in order to provide some indicator of the impact of the programme and to study the content of the experience which offenders undergo. Attitudinal measures of the impact of rehabilitative programmes imply a predictive capability - on the basis of results of tests carried out on the offender whilst they

are still in prison, forecasts of future behaviour are implicitly being made. This is in contrast to the use of reconviction rates, whereby programmes are evaluated according to offences already committed.

However, the use of these testing procedures as an evaluative or predictive mechanism has been strongly criticised:

"Accumulated evidence consistently points to the low correlation between test responses and behaviour. Thus if there is any improvement in self-concept, attitudes or personality traits, this does not necessarily mean that the individual will behave more acceptably within the community" (Lipton, Martinson and Wilks, 1976, p621).

What are the problems inherent in attitudinal testing procedures and why should there be such a poor relationship between attitudinal change in prison and subsequent behavioural change when released?

1 There are a variety of criticisms associated with the motivation of inmates to participate in rehabilitative programmes. For example, some inmates may take part in such initiatives only because they perceive that refusal to do so may prejudice their chances of an early release. Thus there may be little incentive for inmates to participate honestly in such programmes, with the consequent reduction of the correlation between any 'changes' in attitude and subsequent behaviour. Furthermore, some prisoners may be reluctant to reveal the full nature of their offending behaviour in case these new facts are taken into account by the prison authorities and result in either further charges or have a negative impact upon their release date.

2 Some inmates may regard the programmes as an opportunity to convince the authorities that they are fully rehabilitated and thus pose no risk if released. Thus, test scores may be deliberately falsified by inmates, in order to show a positive adjustment in attitudes (Hartz et al, 1987, p6). For example, in an aversion therapy experiment conducted at HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs, designed to modify behavioural responses in sex offenders, inmates subsequently disclosed that they had been able to falsify the monitoring mechanism (Sampson, 1992, p11). It was found that results obtained during the experiment, which used mild electric shocks, exposure to a variety of pornography and a penile plethysmograph to measure response, could be influenced if prisoners masturbated shortly before they were tested. Lipton et al have noted the problem of differentiation between genuine responses and learned, appropriate responses (Lipton et al, 1976, p621). Cohen and Taylor also found that some inmates were so familiar with the tests that the results were of little worth:

"The standard tests were known to the men who frequently told stories about fiddling this or that test in order to achieve particular concessions in the prison. One of them described in detail how to fill in one personality test in such a way as to ensure that he was given outside work during the summer" (Cohen and Taylor, 1981, p35).

3 Inmate attitudes towards attitudinal testing in general may prejudice particular testing situations. House, in an experiment to determine the effects of participation in book discussion groups on selected attitudes argued:

"Because inmates are required to participate in many testing situations, they are sceptical as well as apathetic toward tests in general" (House, 1977, p533).

4 Many attitudinal tests are poor predictors of reconviction because they lack external validity or take little account of interaction effects. For example, it may be impossible to establish a control environment to evaluate changes in attitude in response to changes in a single variable. Barone, in his critical analysis of bibliotherapy projects in prisons, argued that such studies may be less effective in measuring the effects of prescribed reading than in describing patterns of institutional adjustment (Barone, 1977, p295).

5 It is unfortunate that much of the research conducted in this area has contained methodological shortcomings (Hood and Sparks, 1978, p192). For example, in her study of reading groups and attitudinal change, House commented:

"because of problems in our data-gathering techniques, we could not conclusively prove or disprove our hypothesis" (House, 1977, p533).

6 There is some evidence that over time test scores of a group will tend to regress toward the mean (Lipton et al, 1976, p621). In addition, computation of group average scores will tend to mask differential change among particular individuals or groups of individuals.

7 Aside from the debate over the internal reliability of the tests themselves and problems of inter-test comparability, many testing procedures tend to examine attitudes facet by facet, which

presents only a limited view of overall change (Debuyst, 1967, p114). Cohen and Taylor also argue that many of the standard tests and personality inventories are inappropriate for use within a prison environment (Cohen and Taylor, 1981, p35). Despite the large number of tests available, they can never measure all the factors which influence individual behaviour. Thus, their predictive ability to forecast future levels of criminality is limited.

### Evaluation

To summarise, use of reconviction rates and structured psychological testing techniques have proved methodologically inadequate because of low predictive and evaluative capabilities in determining the relationship between rehabilitative programmes and future offending patterns. Different methods of research and analysis are required to discover what effect particular initiatives are having on particular prisoners.

### 1.5 AN OVERALL SUMMARY

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Because we are uncertain about what causes crime, so our attempts to stop crime are similarly muddled. The Home Secretary has himself stated that "no one knows how to prevent crime" (Independent, 4/11/1993, p5). Furthermore, rehabilitation is hard to define, it is a difficult concept to address in any treatment or therapy programme, and "results" are almost impossible to compare or to quantify in an absolute sense.

Perhaps not surprisingly therefore, there have been calls to abandon the rehabilitative ideal and concentrate instead on "designing out" crime, or more radically, legalising or decriminalising certain behaviours. For example, in a speech to the Social Market Foundation, the Prime Minister, John Major, urged architects, planners and developers to use good lighting, video cameras, strong locks and barriers to beat ramraiders. He stated that car manufacturers should develop more effective alarm systems and immobilisers, and encouraged the police to use more closed circuit and video surveillance technology to monitor would-be offenders. Mr. Major also announced the government was looking seriously at national identity cards, photo driving licences and smart card technology. The public too was encouraged to join a national partnership against the criminal - "all of us can show by our attitude that we condemn and reject loutishness, vandalism and crime" (Daily Telegraph, 10/10/1994, p1).

Tittle has also argued that the idea of rehabilitating offenders, or tertiary prevention, should be forsaken within prisons altogether, leaving this task to community based initiatives:

"Prisons could then perform the job they are suited for - punitive detention for the purpose of implementing vengeance, generating deterrence, or reinforcing normative imperatives" (Tittle, 1974. p393).

However, Tittle's position may be overly pessimistic, for it is clear, whatever particular indicator is used, that for some offenders, some programmes do work. Furthermore, a fact which Tittle ignores, is that these programmes may be achieving positive results with the very offenders who have proved unresponsive to

other initiatives. The reason why many offenders, and the overwhelming majority of first offenders, are in prison is that other legal sanctions have failed. For example, in research conducted by Kent County Constabulary, it was found that, on average, the first custodial sentence was imposed at 18 years, after the individual had committed 13 offences. Of these, 58% did not receive a second term of imprisonment before the age of 25. John Phillips, the Chief Constable, argues this is "Quite a success" (Independent, 29/7/1994, p18).

Nevertheless, it remains a fact that attempting to deliver successful rehabilitative programmes within a prison environment is very difficult. Many researchers are arguing that interventions based on developing cognitive-behavioural skills are likely to be the most effective (Hollin, 1990, p152; Nuttall, 1992, p41). In accordance with this approach, it is the objective of this research to examine some of the issues outlined above and to determine to what extent the provision of prison library services can influence the rehabilitation process, particularly in regard to the enhancement of cognitive skills.



## CHAPTER TWO

**THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

A library within a prison differs greatly from a library outside the custodial environment. It has a different client group, with very different needs. There are particular additional materials that it must stock and certain things that must be controlled. Access to the prison library may be strictly monitored or supervised by uniformed officers. The prison librarian has to interact with, on the one hand, people who have committed crimes so serious that the courts have deemed they must be isolated from the rest of society, and on the other hand, a range of professional people with a multiplicity of information demands.

Currently, prison libraries are the responsibility of four principal bodies. First, Governors of individual establishments are responsible to the Home Secretary for the delivery of the library service in their particular prisons. Second, the Education Training and Advisory Service (formerly the Chief Education Officers Branch) of the Prison Service can provide support and advice to Governors. Third, the Education Co-ordinator at each establishment has responsibility for day to day operational matters. In some prisons, this management link has been abandoned and the Head of Inmate Activities now has direct

responsibility for library provision. Finally, the local public library authority actually provides the service.

The involvement of a local library authority is a comparatively recent initiative. The first recorded intervention dates from 1942, when an agreement was reached between Hollesley Bay Borstal Institution and East Suffolk County Library to operate the Institution's library as a normal branch Library. In 1944, a similar scheme began operation in HM Prison Durham and this new arrangement was gradually adopted throughout the whole country.

## 2.1 PRISON LIBRARIES AND THE MODELS OF REHABILITATION

Prison libraries have always been closely involved with rehabilitation (Fyfe, 1992, x). The extent of their contribution however, has been determined by two principal factors, the kind of rehabilitative model which was in favour at any particular time and the changing objectives of librarians themselves. The earlier models adopted a person-centred approach, whereby remedying moral shortfalls and anti social characteristics of the individual were considered to be the key factors in modifying criminal behaviour (Stern, 1989, p45). Other models have taken a situationist approach, where changing the environment is seen as the principal determinant (McGuire and Priestley, 1985, p205). The interactionist school argues that both the offender and their environment should be taken into account when developing reformative interventions (Lillyquist, 1980, p22). Current theory tends to favour a cognitive-behavioural model, where criminality

is considered to be a result of inadequacies in social skills and distorted perceptions, brought about by factors such as faulty social learning or immersion in a negative sub-culture (Huff 1987, p231).

That there has been such a succession of paradigms indicates the complexities of the issues involved. Most criminologists today would argue there is no quick fix solution to the question of offender rehabilitation (Lillyquist, 1980, p23). Furthermore, as there are many influences which contribute to criminal behaviour (Clarke, 1977, p281), there are elements in each of the models of reformative interventions which may need to be adopted to suit particular individuals in particular settings.

## 2.2 THE REFORM MODEL

Prior to 1900, criminality was correlated with a lack of moral and spiritual precepts. Providing appropriate reading matter to remedy these defects was thought to be of great significance - the convict, quite literally, was a "moral defective". Elizabeth Fry for instance, considered that an essential component in the reformation of women prisoners was a thorough reading of the Scriptures (Engelbarts, 1972, p29). Similarly, at Millbank:

"The chaplain whose name was Daniel Nihil, had those prisoners, who exhibited no strong interest in reading the Bible, sermons or other religious literature, whipped or removed to dark cells where they might languish for periods of up to three weeks" (Engelbarts, 1972, p29).

The chaplains who distributed these reading materials were almost always zealous religious reformists and they took great care that the texts they selected for their charges emphasised positive values. For example, at Lincoln County Gaol was to be found "The Pious Christian's Daily Preparation" and "Syneg's Answers To All Excuses For Not Coming To The Holy Communion." At Brixton there was "The Evil Consequences Of Attending The Race Course", "Missionary Records of China" and "A Peep Into The Gin Shop" (Report of the Directors of Convict Prisoners, 1853, quoted in Forsythe, 1987, p58). However, on one of the convict hulks moored on the Thames, the chaplain considered Dickens' "Household Words" to be unsuitable (Watson, 1951, p12).

Book collections began to develop on an ad hoc basis within each institution to serve a defined, particular purpose. By 1850, most of the larger prisons had their own libraries containing religious and moral texts (Forsythe, 1987, p58). Parkhurst for example, had a library of over 600 books aimed at providing a religious and moral foundation to a virtuous life. Books of an educational nature were gradually reduced, as they were considered to unrealistically raise inmate's expectations of the nature of future employment. Recreational reading was not permitted - only those items which it was considered would induce ethical or moral change were allowed.

The pertinent question is why in prisons, which were essentially punitive institutions, were libraries supported and even encouraged? Coyle argues that during this period the prison library derived its legitimacy from its role as resource for

religious and moral improvement (Coyle, 1987, p13). In this sense, the library's function was compatible, indeed synonymous, with the objectives of the institution.

### 2.3 THE REHABILITATIVE IDEAL

During the 1914-18 war 6000, mainly middle class, conscientious objectors had been jailed, while imprisoned suffragettes also drew attention to the plight of women inmates. As a result, attention began to be focused on the conditions within English prisons.

This was the background to the publication in 1922 of "English Prisons Today", written by two conscientious objectors who had suffered imprisonment - Stephen Hobhouse (a Quaker) and Fenner Brockway (editor of the Independent Labour Party's "Labour Leader"). The book helped initiate major changes in the penal system. Within a few years the prison cap, the broad arrow uniform and the silence rule had all been abolished, while limited association between inmates and even entertainment were introduced. Emphasis began to be placed on restoring the criminal to a previous condition, rather than on changing them into law-abiding citizens (Coyle, 1987, p26). The idea that the criminal could be reformed through punishment, isolation and contemplation was gradually rejected. It was now advocated that rehabilitation of the individual could be achieved through meaningful work and training, but principally through education (Brockway, 1912, p173).

Again, this model provided the library with both a rationale and a legitimacy, although the role of the library was still very clearly defined by the prison authorities. In addition to educational material, it was only to permit very restricted types of recreational reading which would help lead to moral betterment. Any literature which did not contain this kind of implicit message was not regarded as in any sense rehabilitative, and considered to be "mental dope" and indicative of sloth (Banks, 1958, p225). Thus, in 1931, the National Society for Penal Reform argued that:

"as for crime and mystery stories it is undoubtedly wise to reduce them to a minimum in the prison library. Our efforts should be directed towards substituting interest in adventure books dealing with exploration, the sea and pioneer life for interest in the detective and crime stories which the average citizen outside the prison reads constantly, and which the prisoner wishes to read" (quoted in Banks, 1958, p225).

#### 2.4 THE TREATMENT MODEL

After World War Two, there was a new period of penal reform. Corporal punishment was abolished in 1948, and finally, the death penalty in 1965. There were attempts also to minimise the use of imprisonment - the First Offenders Act (1958), for example, required courts to provide reasons if a custodial sentence was to be imposed. Despite these efforts, both the crime rate and the prison population increased rapidly - in 1939 there were 10,000 inmates, in 1945, 15,000 and in 1952, 25,000.

The response of government marked a new direction in penal policy: henceforth, inmates were to be "treated". The 1959 White Paper,

"Penal Practice in a Changing Society", argued for more institutions, and specialized units - "where hard work and God had failed, group therapy and Freud were to succeed" (Ryan, 1983, p21). In 1962, the first purpose built psychiatric prison opened at Grendon Underwood, to operate as a "therapeutic community", while the "Norwich experiment" (whereby prison officers were assigned to particular prisoners and required to get to know them), received some temporary acclaim (Priestley, 1989, p149).

Prison librarians also began to see a new role for themselves in this model. There was an opportunity to become more integrated with other agencies working within the prison and to obtain greater professional recognition for their own services. There were also experiments with the use of bibliotherapy:

"The reason the library can play a very important role in the rehabilitation process is that it can help to realise the ideal of group therapists in that it can surround the inmate with a perceptual intellectual atmosphere of the type which is necessary to bring about a definite change in his behaviour patterns" (Floch, 1952, p454).

This rehabilitative function was recognised by the American Correctional Association, which argued that prison libraries could provide "a therapeutic release from strain, and a positive aid in substituting new interests for undesirable attitudes" (American Correctional Association, 1966, p504). Some limited research did show that bibliotherapy projects could help engender a short term change in a selected number of attitudes (see Burt, 1972; House, 1977, p533), although no evidence was provided which established a positive correlation between bibliotherapy and a reduced recidivism rate. Some critics were scathing of the whole process:

"Sound mental health, among even the "normal" segments of the population, is a precarious commodity to preserve and promote. Allowing librarians to, in effect, treat thought disorders would be akin to permitting the profoundly retarded to design nuclear generating plants" (Hartz, 1987, p42).

The philosophy behind prison library service provision was still that improvement could be achieved through reading, although it was stressed that a wider and less prescriptive range of books would have this effect. Indeed, it was now argued that:

"didactic and moralist works...by their ethical attitude are perhaps the least suitable for prisons, since they merely force the prisoner into further contemplation of his isolation and the reasons for it, and aggravate his condition instead of alleviating it" (Murison, 1988, p197).

However, the existence of the "treatment" model itself was short-lived. Its premises were faulty (that crime was an illness and therefore criminals could be treated), it was inadequately implemented (with insufficient numbers of psychologists and minimal, if any, training of prison officers) and it failed to have any impact in reducing recidivism rates or the prison population (Ryan, 1983, p42; Stern, 1989, p47).

In 1964, two important pieces of legislation were passed. First, the Prison and Borstal Rules 1964, made it obligatory for a library to be provided in every penal establishment, and that inmates should have the opportunity to borrow and exchange material. Secondly, the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, Section 7, decreed that "it should be the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient service for all persons desiring to make use thereof". Authorities were able to



charge for these services "where facilities go beyond those ordinarily provided".

## 2.5 'NOTHING WORKS' AND THE LIBRARY

From about the 1960s, many prison librarians began to argue that the traditional role of the prison library - of prescribing a limited range of overtly reformatory material - was becoming outmoded (see Rubin, 1974). In marked contrast, public libraries were expanding their role. The increase in non-book media, the growth in electronic sources of communication and data handling, the establishment of co-operative systems for information sharing and a growing emphasis on the provision of user-centred services began to have an enormous impact.

At the same time, there was intense debate about the objectives of imprisonment and how successful prisons were in achieving them. In 1976, the publication of a book entitled "The Effectiveness of Correctional Treatment: A Survey of Treatment Evaluation Studies" (Lipton, Martinson and Wilks, 1976), was to have a profound influence on the debate surrounding rehabilitation. Examining 231 studies, Martinson, in an earlier paper of his own, concluded:

"With few and isolated exceptions, the rehabilitative efforts that have been reported so far have had no appreciable effect on recidivism" (Martinson, 1974, p25).

Additional research (Brody, 1976; Stern, 1989, p47), and a rising prison population (1966 - 33,086, 1970 - 39,028, - 1976 - 41,443)

seemed to point to the same depressing conclusion: 'what works? nothing works'. As the prison authorities themselves began to see the objective of reforming offenders as increasingly unattainable (Home Office, 1990a, p151), the role of the prison library as a rehabilitative force was further undermined.

## 2.6 REHABILITATION AND REINSTATEMENT

As the limitations of the rehabilitative ideal in general, and the treatment model in particular, were exposed, the belief that the penal system could have a "curative" effect began to be less widely held:

"We have become decreasingly able to meet virtually any of the objectives expected of us other than the simple "incapacitation" of the offender for the period of his sentence. Certainly there is no evidence that prison has either any systematic deterrent or rehabilitative effect" (Home Office, 1981, para16).

If prison could do little to "improve" the moral disposition of the offender, then initiatives were focused on helping the offender recover from the effects of the prison sentence itself. This model takes the pragmatic view that if prisons cannot, in the majority of cases, have any demonstrable rehabilitative effect, then at the least, they can provide the offender with as much information as possible to assist him/her in a variety of practical ways upon release (Gonsa, 1992, p18; McGuire and Priestley, 1985, p16).

The role for the prison library in such a model could be significant. For example, it can provide inmates with information, helping to reduce the negative effects of institutionalisation (Plotnikoff, 1992, p17). It can also provide services to a section of the community who tend to be highly socially disadvantaged and 'information-poor' (Stout and Turitz, 1977, p505). Other commentators have also drawn parallels between the role of community libraries providing essential information and the potential which exists for prison libraries to provide a similar service (Hendry, 1984, pp98-99).

However, although it seems an attractive argument that if offenders have an increased awareness of the resources available to them to help solve their problems, reduced recidivism rates will follow, there is no evidence that more intensive information provision does affect subsequent reconviction (McGuire and Priestley, 1985, p19).

## 2.7 THE COGNITIVE-BEHAVIOURAL MODEL

This model is founded on the premiss that criminality is correlated with maladaptive social and reasoning skills (Nuttall, 1992, p41). These include an inability to delay gratification, negative self-image, impulsiveness and lack of self-control, a tendency to externalise blame and responsibility, rigid and concrete thinking patterns which predispose persistence in anti-social behaviours, weakness in interpersonal problem solving, a failure to see the perspective of others, egocentric values and a lack of critical

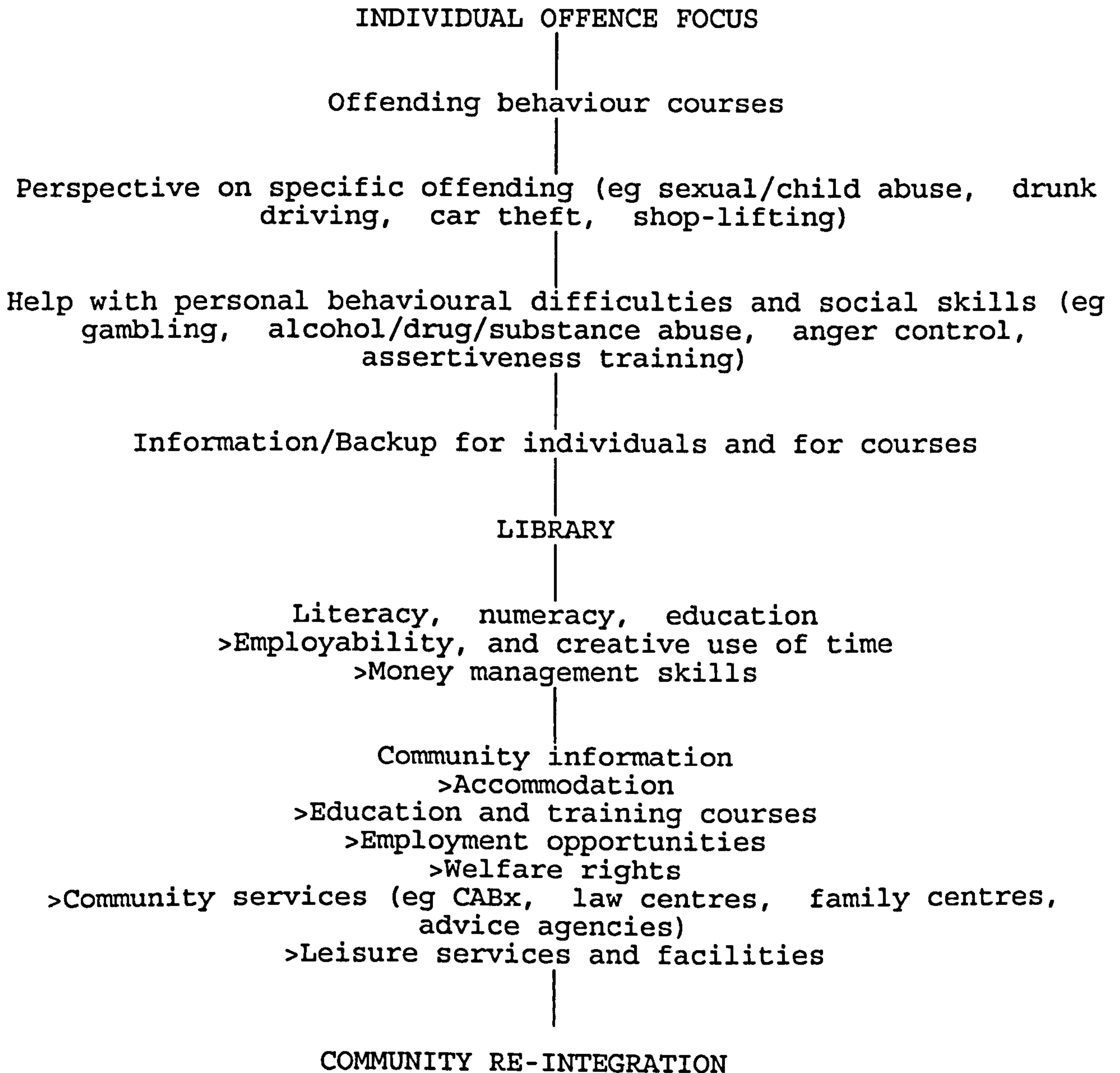
reasoning (see Ross, Fabiano and Ewles, 1988; Hollin, 1990; Williamson, 1993). It is argued that these skills are absent, or inadequately developed, in many offenders because of faulty interaction between an individual and their environment, for example, poor socialisation or immersion in a delinquent sub-culture (Maclean, 1992, p23). However, because these skills can be learned, it is possible for individuals to change their criminogenic attitudes and behaviours:

"Reformation is achieved when higher cognitive and moral functioning lead to the acquisition of new values that will guide the actual behaviour of the offender" (Jones, 1992, p12).

In essence, the cognitive-behavioural model has two principal themes. First, to explore the reasons why the offence was committed and resolve these using specific offending behaviour courses. Challenging and modifying particular distorted perspectives of thinking, cognitive deficiencies and patterns of reasoning are essential elements in this strategy. At present a Cognitive Skills Programme, consisting of thirty five sessions, is being run in eight prisons, with shorter versions being developed for use in local prisons. Cognitive-behavioural interventions, such as cognitive restructuring, also form a significant part of the Sex Offender Treatment Programme, where offenders are encouraged to identify distorted beliefs and counter them with the truth. The second objective of the intervention strategy is to re-integrate the offender into the community, by confronting aspects of social functioning that are only indirectly linked to the offending behaviour. The offender gradually learns

FIGURE 1

The Role of the Library in the Cognitive-Behavioural Model  
(After Roberts, 1992, p19).



to understand and accept responsibility for his own actions, and is provided with the necessary skills for bringing about positive changes in his offence-related behaviour and attitudes.

Because of the holistic nature of the approach, the library may have a central role to play. It provides an opportunity for library services to be expanded and for the library itself to become more completely integrated into the institution, thus restoring both the rationale and legitimacy of the prison library service. The library can provide a range of books and other materials to assist, and co-ordinate, rehabilitative initiatives in other departments, provide back-up material for offending behaviour courses and offer support for the individual to access these resources independently. It can also help inmates improve poor literacy skills which have been positively identified with criminality (Brown, 1975, p159). Library services can help offenders develop numeracy skills, become more aware of money management, obtain educational qualifications and improve social skills. These factors may all help increase the employment potential of offenders. Libraries can also help provide the offender with a variety of information to maintain contact with the community and help assist in re-integration. Figure 1 illustrates the role of the library in this model.

## **2.8 SELECTIVE INCAPACITATION**

There has recently been a shift in penal policy which may result in a complete re-think of the objectives of rehabilitation and the

library's role in that process. The policy of selective incapacitation is designed to reduce the crime rate, not by the rehabilitation of individuals, but by manipulating the distribution of offenders in society (Feeley and Simon, 1992, p458). For example, longer sentences are given to particular offenders, or groups of offenders, who are considered likely to commit further crimes, while shorter sentences and community-based penalties are imposed on the low risk offender. The Criminal Justice Act (1991), made explicit this trend toward bifurcation, by providing that judges could impose longer sentences, particularly on those guilty of offences of a violent or sexual nature, to take account of perceived future risk. Player has argued that the Act will "firmly relegate [rehabilitation] to a subordinate position" (Player, 1992, p4).

One of the consequences of this policy is that prisons may become little more than a containing area for high risk offenders serving long sentences who are considered to be unresponsive to social work methods. It has been argued that the goals of any rehabilitative initiatives within such a system are likely to be more concerned with "managing costs and controlling dangerous populations rather than social or personal transformation" (Feeley and Simon, 1992, p465).

In such a situation, library services will have to be modified in order to deliver an appropriate service to an increasing number of these prisoners, who have implicitly been labelled as recidivists. The library can act as a connection to the world outside through its provision of information, newspapers and periodicals, it can

serve to help replicate conditions in the outside world and it is another point of contact with civilians. The particular difficulties of delivering library services to long term prisoners will be discussed in more detail later.

Furthermore, an American writer on library science has argued that if it is accepted that the state should manage risk populations by incarceration then "the state's interests, reflected in the goals of correctional institutions, should therefore determine the nature and purpose of library service to prisoners" (Coyle, 1987, p32). Such arguments would have important implications for a prison library service provided by an independent local authority. In addition, this line of reasoning has important consequences for the prison library's mandate and level of operation.

## **2.9 RATIONALE AND LEGITIMACY REVISITED**

It has been argued above that, in the nineteenth century, the objectives of the prison library were broadly similar with those of the institution it served. This helped establish a justification for the library's existence and affirmed the library's purpose. Increasing debate about what imprisonment could achieve and changes in the perspectives of prison librarians themselves has meant that this clarity and congruency of rationale and legitimacy no longer exists. Although for many prison librarians successful rehabilitation is a desirable outcome of imprisonment, they increasingly have begun to see their primary objective as providing a user-driven library service, geared to meeting demands without



elitism, discrimination or ulterior reformatory motives (Coyle, 1987, p48). Barone, in an article that was influential on both sides of the Atlantic, 'De-programming Prison Libraries', even argued that the prison library "should detach itself from the overall rehabilitation programme" (Barone, 1977, p296). Furthermore, it was argued that the rationale for the user-driven model was unrelated to the philosophy or programmes of the institution, but was firmly rooted in the "right to read" (Rubin and Souza, 1989, p47). Some prison educationalists and librarians welcomed this as a liberating development, as they were now able to shape their own agenda without having to take into account concerns associated with rehabilitative programming (Jones, 1992, p9). More recently, the Council of Europe in its wide-ranging Report on Prison Education (see Council of Europe, 1990), has asserted that the institutional definition of rehabilitation is too narrow, and 'treatment-oriented', to define the objectives of library services; instead, efforts should be geared to developing "the whole person" (Warner, 1989, p7). The paradigm of library services favoured by the Report is the 'adult education model', able to offer inmates the widest possible number of opportunities to realise their own potential, and alter on their own initiative, their pattern of offending behaviour.

As a result of these trends the roles and purpose of the prison library have become less determined by specific institutional goals, and increasingly modelled on the public library. Indeed, it is a recognised objective that the service in a prison library should, as far as possible, mirror that of a typical branch library (Library Association, 1981, p14). Yet for a variety of

reasons, which are examined in Chapter 9, even this target of service provision has not been realised in many establishments, and prison libraries instead have often tended to develop as "a demand-led, mainly recreational service" (Hoy et al, 1989, p96).

In this study, for example, some inmates and staff who were interviewed argued that they saw the library simply as a place where prisoners could go to relax and to have a break from the pressures of institutional life, rather than a place where anti-social behaviours may be challenged:

"You want to come to the library to get away from it all. If it went the other way, you'd be coming in and looking at the librarian as a screw. No, you don't want all that. You want to come in here, get yourself into a good old book, have a bit of a chit chat with the other cons what's in here. No, I don't think it should be integrated with anywhere else - it should be kept separate as it is" (Inmate, Prison C).

Some respondents argued that if prisoners required any information or advice with regard to their offending behaviour or to assist with re-integration, there was no need for such material to be stocked within the prison library as it was available from other departments within the establishment:

"The library shouldn't take them into account, because there are other departments within the prison to deal with prisoners' problems. There's a resident psychiatrist and psychologist here. You've open access to them. You've got the prison management team, who are ready to deal with these types of problems. I don't think the library should burden itself with people's problems. The library is solely for leisure and enjoyment. I don't see why the librarian or the officer in there should be burdened with specialised problems that he may not be able to deal with anyway. Obviously you have got blokes in here who are worried about things, but that's why you've got probation" (Prison Officer, Prison A).

In antithesis, an American writer has argued in favour of very close links between the prison library and the institution it serves. Coyle considers that neither inmates nor society benefit from the situation where the prison library exists as a neutral counterbalance to institutional life. He argues that the library should not "recreational", that most fiction be excluded (Coyle, 1987, p96), and instead:

"be limited to those services and materials that are broadly educational, that foster a deeper knowledge and understanding of the environment, or contain the kind of practical information helpful to inmates who expect to function as contributing members of society" (Coyle, 1987, p90).

Coyle bases his argument on three main premises. First, with regard to recreational provision, he declares that libraries have no mandate to mitigate the severity of a custodial sentence by increasing the happiness or comfort of the inmates. Second, library facilities, along with other services available within the prison, such as education, vocational training and counselling, should be provided primarily because they advance the state's goals and objectives, and ultimately, the public interest. Third, within the institution, only those programmes which work towards, or enhance, pro-social inmate behaviour should be countenanced - indeed, prisoners have no right to expect anything beyond this level of provision.

Although within the U.K., the rights of inmates to library facilities are somewhat different to those pertaining in the United States, the statutory responsibility for service provision, resting with the Home Secretary, makes no reference to the nature

or quality of the service which must be provided. The Prison and Young Offender Institution Rules 1988 state only that:

"A library shall be provided in every prison and, subject to the directions of the Secretary of State, every prisoner shall be allowed to have library books and exchange them" (quoted in Home Office, 1993a, p3).

Coyle's position is an extreme one and received little support from those interviewed for the purposes of this study:

"If the library was just literature trying to rehabilitate, I don't think it would work at all. You've got to have fiction and fantasy books, because prison is after all a fantasy world. Prison is a fantasy place. Everybody that's in the prison lives in a cocoon, in a totally false environment. There's nothing to do with reality in prison, so if you take away the fiction, I think the library would be a total failure" (Inmate, Prison E).

"What is the institution trying to do? I don't know what it's trying to do. If they started to run the library as a tool to look at somebody's offending behaviour it would become part of the system of control, and would be seen to be that, and it wouldn't get used" (Inmate, Prison C).

Similarly, this prison officer argued that a library geared wholly to the "change-based model" favoured by Coyle (Coyle, 1987, p90), would have little positive effect:

"Inmates often want to get away from prison life, and if the library is going to be an extension of the prison, if they were to see it that way, it wouldn't be half as popular as it is. They do often want little snatches in the day where they can get away from prison routine, away from the feeling that they're in prison. If somebody is going to spend 5, 8, 10 years in a place like this, obviously you want moments when you wish you weren't here, and a library is one of the places they can go. I honestly don't see the point of having a library that's geared 100% to their problems" (Prison Officer, Prison K).

However, Coyle's deliberately provocative analysis, nevertheless contains some important points. In order for the prison library to become actively involved in the rehabilitation process, it must become actively involved in the life and culture of the institution it operates within. This is not to say the library must serve the establishment at the expense of serving the prisoner. In fact, both prisoners and staff expressed very clear and positive views about how they saw prison library services should be delivered to assist the rehabilitative work of the institution. Many prisoners argued that they favoured an expansion of library services in this area:

"Where you're trying to change behaviours, you need to find out as many different avenues of what's right and wrong, to find as many challenges to your way of thinking as you can. And I think the broader the spectrum you have, the greater your knowledge, and the greater the knowledge, the greater the good. I would like to see a bigger section in there of that kind of literature - the drugs, the alcohol, abuse, all the rest of it. It would be all too easy to say because the guys want to use this as an escape from everything else that's going on, which is pretty high pressured anyway at the best of times, then you're saying we won't bother educating them in other areas - I think that's abrogating responsibility" (Inmate, Prison D).

"I think the library should target those areas which might help people. I'm an alcoholic myself and most of my crimes are alcohol-related, and I think there should be more information given via the library on that sort of thing. The library could easily get in touch with Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous and get them to give literature, pamphlets. If it stopped a certain percentage offending again, yes, it would be a good thing. I don't think they do that sort of thing here" (Inmate, Prison F).

"I do think the library should have a section where it helps with the general role of the prison - how it would be arranged I don't know. But having a centre say for job interests - let's say you were in here and became interested in a certain line of work, the library could help by suggesting courses and particular reading material that would further your interests. There perhaps could be a section, and someone with expertise, to suggest to people certain reading which

maybe would help them understand their own problems, and certain books which might relate to them. If we imagine a novel, a person could relate to a character in that novel, and through that, see themselves. It happens all the time on television doesn't it - programmes are designed to help children assume a model or a role and see things in particular characters. Maybe it could be worked in a similar way in prison. Yes, I do think you could have an area within the library that could help people look at themselves" (Inmate, Prison E).

"I think the library should be a source of information for people's problems - be it drugs, drink, anxiety, but I don't think they should turn it into a clinic. They should make people aware and give them a better understanding through literature" (Inmate, Prison A).

"If people go to the library then they could be a little more vulnerable when they're there, and that would be a good opportunity to flash that sort of material in front of them. Then it will give them pause for thought. It's worth a try. Look at the alternatives. Nearly all prisoners, they've got a base problem that causes them to offend - drugs, drink - so it's necessary, if it's possible, to get somebody to address those sorts of things" (Inmate, Prison H).

For most inmates therefore, the notions of the library as a source of bland novels to kill the time or of a place geared solely to address particular aspects of offending behaviour were inadequate. Although many prisoners may never have used a library before (Warner, 1989, p8), it is perhaps surprising that they should have had such a clear vision of what the prison library could be, and of the very specific ways in which it might be used to their advantage.

However, in order to achieve this kind of service provision, there must be a recognition that simply to provide a library service which attempts to mirror that provided to citizens outside, is an inadequate basis on which to deliver a service to these isolated communities which have their own unique needs and demands.

Perhaps most crucially, prison librarians must develop a more proactive approach to marketing their resources to the rest of the prison and become more involved with the working life of the establishment. Furthermore, they must ensure that the rationale for the prison library is fully legitimised by the regime, allowing the library a fully inter-active role in the new multi-disciplinary approach toward offender rehabilitation.

## **2.10 EVALUATION**

The prison library has shown a potential to contribute to the rehabilitative process, whatever particular model of reform is advanced, but the extent of this contribution is constrained by a number of variables. Rehabilitation of the criminal is a complex task, with most researchers and practitioners now agreeing there is no single or simple solution. Rehabilitation requires a holistic approach to individual offence behaviour. This study will examine how far the prison library as a resource in its own right, and in providing support for other departments and initiatives, can contribute to this process.

## CHAPTER THREE

**METHODOLOGY**

In the previous chapter, the difficulties inherent in attempting to quantify the effectiveness of rehabilitative initiatives were analysed. The use of reconviction rates or psychological testing procedures were found to be inappropriate methodologies for the present study.

**3.1 THE USE OF INTERVIEWS**

Like many psychological testing techniques, interviews can be used to help determine the impact upon individuals of particular events. However, interviews do not only record results - they also give scope for individuals to explain their own experiences and their perceptions, thereby enabling outsiders to obtain a greater understanding of the processes involved. Particularly with regard to prison library services, which are not delivered as a formal, structured programme, interviews may be the only methodological tool available which can be employed to obtain this kind of information. Hood and Sparks conclude:

"It is not enough to consider only deliberate variations in treatment; descriptive research is needed which will bring



out any differences in the experiences which prisoners may actually undergo, whether these are a result of treatment policy or other factors" (Hood and Sparks, 1978, p211).

This is the crucial advantage of interview techniques in this kind of research, particularly as changes in perceptions, attitudes and values may not necessarily be reflected by an immediate fall in reconviction rates. For example, an Education Co-Ordinator at Prison K argued:

"We can't say what's going to help them or not can we? We can only hope it works. Nobody will know for at least twenty years whether the regime here is having any effect on the men, because these things take such a long time to show results. A man might be released from here and not re-offend for ten years, but if we've stopped him re-offending during those ten years because of anything he's learned here, then it's worked for ten years. I don't think you can be any more optimistic or pessimistic about it than that. But I do see a lot of changes in people. I see lots of confidence building and I do think that a lot of these men have a problem with lack of confidence. I think we are changing attitudes. I see lots of changes - I don't know if they'll revert or not, but you do see lots of changes in people".

### 3.2 ADVANTAGES OF INTERVIEWS

For the purposes of this study, the most preferred data gathering instrument was the use of semi-structured interviews. Some of the many advantages which the use of interviews have over other techniques previously described are listed below.

1 Interviews are usually conducted on a one to one basis with individuals, or in small groups. Hence the data obtained tends to both "soft" and "rich", and especially revealing about the impact of personal experience. However, the results can also be

used in a systematic way to develop typifications. These are not ideal types or formal, explanatory models, but typical views which most people will approximate to. The extent of the generalisations possible from this process will depend on how far the results replicate previous research findings, the stringency of the methodology and whether the conclusions seem valid within the universe of human experience.

2 Interviews may often be the only way to find out what individuals are really thinking - to enter their world. Determining the effects of reading for example, a solitary activity which may result in very different impressions on different individuals, can only really be achieved through the use of a personal interview. Interviews allow the individual to express, with depth and immediacy, the impact of particular events, in their own words and in the environment where those processes occurred. Their individual perceptions defined by their social context, identity and interests can be used as a mechanism for identifying the reality of social processes.

3 Furthermore, if data obtained from interviews are used in conjunction with other information, particularly empirical sources, in a process of triangulation or cross-checking, the possibilities of establishing a more complete picture will tend to increase. These other sources may include records from pre-release units detailing needs of prisoners upon release, information on probation work conducted with inmates or types of information used by inmates in the library.

4 Analysing the effects of rehabilitative initiatives using quantitative indicators or predictors of reconviction rates will tend to present only a general overview of an outcome and a very fragmented picture of how programmes actually influence individuals. The objective of the interview method is to highlight and raise awareness of the process, as perceived by particular individuals, rather than to infer sweeping generalisations. Such awareness is necessary in order to devise new strategies for improving the effectiveness of rehabilitative programmes.

5 The interview method, particularly when used within a context of a penal establishment, can offer a set of views not normally accessible. There is evidence from other researchers in the field of penology (Cohen and Taylor, 1981; Parker, 1979), that the use of interviews enables the researcher to obtain information on a range of subjects, which would not normally be communicated to the authorities. Such views can help in an emancipatory way by recognising and articulating constraints, helping explain how factors interact, unravelling the complexity of human action and providing an opportunity to understand human meaning from the individual's point of view. The richness of data from interviews can also help provide an insight into the real world and can contextualise other indicators.

6 Because of the individual nature of the interview method, it is more likely that this approach (as opposed to more highly structured procedures), will reveal whether different types of offender will be more or less responsive to the rehabilitative

programme. Similarly, it may be erroneous to assume that the same programme will be delivered and evaluated in the same way at different institutions. For example, the bibliotherapy study conducted by House indicated how particular staff attitudes can affect the outcome of a programme (House, 1977, p530). Data from interviews may provide the researcher with a unique source of information on the differential impact of programmes.

7 Finally, inmates are very familiar with the interview method. Even first offenders, by the time they have reached prison, are likely to have been interviewed numerous times, in a variety of contexts and for a range of different purposes. There may of course be a danger that because inmates are so used to being interviewed that they become adept at either concealing, or distorting, particular responses. However, in this study inmates did not have any strong motive to be anything less than frank. They were fully aware that the interview was confidential and anonymity was guaranteed. There were neither brownie points to be gained from the prison authorities, nor kudos to be derived from other prisoners. Other studies, including those examining very sensitive issues with inmates have reported high levels of genuine responses. For example, in a study examining the link between homicide and drugs, where convicted murderers were interviewed whilst in prison, researchers were asked to evaluate the truthfulness of respondents. The highly experienced interviewers considered that 52% of respondents gave "honest" answers, 29% were "somewhat honest" while only 13% were considered "dishonest". The researchers concluded that "self reports can be

valid and reliable sources of information" (Spunt et al, 1994, p20).

### 3.3 DISADVANTAGES OF INTERVIEWS

However, there are some disadvantages in using interviews in this kind of way:

1 Unless the study is longitudinal, the analysis will be located within the prison. It is not possible therefore to take into account outside experiences which will affect the outcome of the rehabilitative programme. For this reason, the present study included interviews with a small number of offenders recently released from custody.

2 The interview method is particularly subject to the development of interaction effects between researcher and respondent which can negatively affect the results of the study. Some inmates may express hostility if the interviewer is perceived as a representative of authority, or is regarded as exploiting inmates in order to gain information solely for themselves. Furthermore, there may be a possibility that the intervention of the researcher may contaminate the study. Avoidance strategies taken to avoid distortion are given below.

3 Some inmates may feel they have something to prove to the interviewer and edit their responses accordingly. They may for example, want to show they consider themselves intellectually or

morally superior to their fellow prisoners or the prison staff.

This Head of Inmate Activities for example, observed that:

"You can go round all day talking to our men and you'll always get new things come up. I think that's the nature of the exercise in any prison establishment - how can I either win you over, or how can I make the system better to prove to you that I'm quite clever" (Governor, Prison K).

Of course, this Governor may have been doing exactly the same when he was making these comments, showing that he was better than inmates at psychological games. He may also have been guilty of being unduly cynical about inmates' suggestions, and complacent in prejudging any possible improvements in regime activities.

Strategies adopted in this study to avoid elite bias are discussed below.

4 There may be a tendency, particularly for outside observers, to consider the accounts of participants as a kind of objective truth, and to construct theories from these specific instances. Data from interviews may be often be situation specific, and the researcher must be wary of constructing positive correlations between processes and outcomes. Furthermore, although respondents' accounts may appear to be well informed, they will still tend to be influenced by their own interests and concerns, giving rise to insincere or learned responses. Thus, analysis of interviews will not necessarily result in the derivation of formal, predictive models. However, "all settings and subjects are similar while retaining their uniqueness" (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975, p12), and it remains possible while studying any single subject in

any single setting to make observations about general social processes.

5 Some researchers have encountered problems in encouraging inmates to participate fully in the interview process (Williams, 1991, p16). Dammer, in his study of American prisoners found that a number of inmates did not wish to participate - some inmates resented being in a "fishbowl" with outsiders invading their space, some inmates simply saw no advantage in giving up their time for which they could envisage no apparent payback, while in some prisons, inmates expressed concern that other prisoners may be suspicious of them being seen talking to unfamiliar outsiders - the implication being they could be police officers (Dammer, 1994, p8). In a study of murderers in New York State prisons, 27% of inmates contacted refused to co-operate (Spunt et al, 1994, p12). Reasons given included: "It's none of your business", "There's not enough in it for me" and "I'm trying to forget what's happened". However, many other studies have reported high levels of inmate co-operation (see Cohen and Taylor, 1972, p10). Inmate reluctance was not a problem at all in the present study, with only one inmate declining to co-operate (due to pressure of his work in the print-shop!).

6 There are inherent difficulties in relying on inmates to make assessments and predictions of their own future behaviour. As Debuyst argues:

"The answers are doubtless useful in revealing what the inmate thinks of his own situation, but they in no way provide a valid measure of the true effectiveness of treatment" (Debuyst, 1967, p117).

### 3.4 EVALUATION

Obtaining a valid measure of programme effectiveness is the Holy Grail for researchers in this area. Interviews as a methodological tool are inadequate in many ways, but they are the only mechanism available for understanding the process of change at a personal level. For example, a Home Office research study, which relied on the use of inmate interviews, reported:

"The individuals seen were in a unique position to comment on their behaviour" (Nuttall, 1977, p84).

To begin to see how prison library and information services can affect the individual, we need to understand the individual.

### 3.5 PARTICULAR PROBLEMS OF CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN PRISON ESTABLISHMENTS

The principal part of the research took place within the ten prison establishments listed in Appendix 1. However, in order to obtain a post-release perspective, 20 recently released ex-offenders were also interviewed at intervals throughout 1994. These subjects were contacted through a NACRO (National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders) housing project which offered accommodation for people immediately after their release from prison. As residents moved on to other forms of more permanent housing, new residents were asked if they would like to participate in the study. Three main difficulties were encountered in conducting this part of the research. Many of the



residents had recently been released from a nearby Vulnerable Prisoner Unit and were very concerned about anonymity, many residents were unwilling to co-operate and many residents proved unreliable in keeping pre-planned appointments.

Conducting the main body of the research within the prison establishments themselves, posed some unique challenges. These fall into four main areas - operational factors, relationship factors, institutional factors and process factors.

#### Operational Factors

Any research conducted within prison establishments has to receive prior approval from the Regimes, Research and Development Directorate of the Prison Service Agency. Factors which the Directorate take into account when considering access include:

- relevance of the proposal to the work of the Prison Service and Home Office
- the contribution which could be made to the body of existing knowledge on the subject
- duplication or conflict with current research that the Prison Service may also be undertaking
- pressure on resources within the establishments where the research is to be located.

Accordingly, the Directorate requested a comprehensive research proposal, full details of the methodology to be employed and a thorough curriculum vitae of the researcher. Five months elapsed

from first application until final approval. Access facilities were granted subject to three conditions:

- anonymity to be maintained in the thesis itself, and in any publication, to ensure that no individual inmate, member of staff or establishment could be identified
- the Prison Service to appoint its own research supervisor to jointly oversee the study
- the Prison Service reserved the right to view and comment on the thesis, or any article, prior to their publication.

In addition, before the study could commence it was necessary that the researcher received security clearance from the Criminal Records Office. Some prisons visited during the study stipulated they must carry out their own CRO check before access could be granted.

Two of the original ten prisons selected withdrew from the study - one prison had lost all documentation and felt it could no longer participate; in the other establishment, building works and staff shortages caused many postponements and to mutual relief, finally withdrawal. Accordingly two other prisons were approached, which broadly mirrored the original establishments in terms of size, security category and location. Selecting the two prisons for the pilot study was jointly agreed with the Prison Service supervisor. In addition, several other prison establishments were visited informally in order to gain a wide a perspective as possible.

Due to the size of the project, the large number of different sites and inevitable difficulties of dealing with a large

organisation, careful planning was essential. In addition, because the study was so time consuming - the lengthy wait for approval from the Prison Service itself, implementation of the pilot study and the three week period spent at each establishment conducting the main part of the research, by the time the last site had been visited, over two years had elapsed since the initial request for co-operation had been made. Staff turnover during that period caused additional difficulties.

### Relationship Factors

It was essential to the success of the research to gain the co-operation of the uniformed prison staff. This was important because at some establishments an officer escort was required at all times, and even at lower security prisons the assistance of an officer was required to enable passage through the locked doors and gates. Even waiting for an escort from the main gate took up to thirty minutes in some cases, at busy times of the day, or perhaps according to perceived priority of the visit. In such a situation, honouring a previously made appointment can be problematic. Furthermore, Dammer (1994, p5), has argued that prison officers can also have a more direct influence upon the research process, by controlling the pattern of interaction with inmates and the length of time spent in direct conversation. For example, some prison officers may be unwilling to allow lengthy contact with inmates who are perceived to be difficult, for fear that the inmate may provide the researcher with information that is damaging or untrue. Obtaining the co-operation of officers was achieved simply by being friendly, endeavouring to provide them

with as much information as possible about the research and stressing that it could make their job easier. It was considered to be important to remain as objective as possible about the research, and not appear to take any particular side. Overall, the level of staff co-operation from each establishment was high.

In addition to securing the assistance of the officers in general, it was also found necessary to gain the support of someone who could serve as a liaison between the researcher and the institution - to facilitate the daily visits to the prison, to set up contacts and to help provide some of the resources necessary for completion of the study. On occasion, the Head of Inmate Activities proved useful, at other times the Education Co-Ordinator or the librarian.

Finally, it was necessary to obtain the co-operation of the inmates themselves. As noted above this was not a problem, particularly when the institutional liaison had promoted the study. Developing an initial rapport with inmates involved finding some common ground - discovering which football team they supported was often fruitful. In order to maintain levels of co-operation it was essential that particular groups of inmates were seen not to be excluded from the study - particular attention was given therefore to establishing a correct balance of interviewees from ethnic groupings.

## Institutional Factors

Security must always take precedence within a prison establishment and rightly so. It was vital therefore, to remember at all times the nature of the environment and the behavioural characteristics of the population. Sometimes it seemed easy to divorce the sin from the sinner and forget the very serious nature of crimes that individuals had committed. Once this distinction has been eroded, the risk of being manipulated by some prisoners, who are often adept at identifying susceptible individuals, increases. There were times when inmates would ask a favour - for example, to post a letter, or bring them in a certain item "which they were allowed to have anyway". Honesty at all times with inmates was essential.

On the other hand, it was important not to feel intimidated by prisoners, as this can be an equally dangerous security consideration. Prisons are highly volatile environments and any increase in the risk factor could jeopardise not only personal security, but that of other staff and other prisoners as well. At some prisons, a short briefing by Security was given to help define the particular problems faced by that institution.

As a result of the institutional environment, there is a lot of "down time". In most prisons, morning activities will cease at 11.30 and not resume until 2.00pm. This time was sometimes used to make new contacts among the staff or to elicit background information about the prison.

Finally, Becker has pointed out that research within an institutional environment faces problems of accusation of bias by superordinates. Becker argues that the hierarchy of credibility is threatened if sub-ordinates are given the opportunity to voice their own opinions which may challenge the status quo. Becker argues:

"Institutions are refractory. They do not perform as well as society would like them to. Hospitals do not cure people; prisons do not rehabilitate people; schools do not educate students. Since they are supposed to, officials develop ways both of denying the failure of the institution to perform as it should and explaining those failures which cannot be hidden. An account of an institution's operation from the point of view of subordinates therefore casts doubt on the official line and may possibly expose it as a lie" (Becker, 1966, p242).

#### Process Factors

The formal operation of actually conducting the research was also not without its difficulties. There were problems in arranging appointments with some staff, because of leave, shift patterns, pressure of work and unforeseen contingencies. On occasion even though a specific time and location was arranged for an interview, this was not always translated into practice. Sometimes there were emergencies or security alerts and staff would be transferred from their normal duties to deal with these. If cell searches were required for example, normal activities would cease and inmates would be confined to their wings. Inmates can suddenly become unavailable for interview - they may have been transferred to the segregation unit for a disciplinary infraction, or even transferred to another prison. They may be called away for a visit, for medical treatment or perhaps a more tempting activity

has presented itself. Interviews can also be interrupted on the same grounds.

Conducting interviews with inmates required both care and sensitivity. Before agreeing to the interview each ex-offender and each inmate was required to sign a consent form (see Appendix 2 and Appendix 4), a copy of which was then given to Security for inclusion in their personal file. The consent form was designed to address seven principal issues:

- to provide brief information about the study
- to make it clear that participation was voluntary
- confidentiality and anonymity was assured
- withdrawal at any time was possible
- agreement to participate would have no influence upon the inmate's current or future position
- the interview would only be audio taped with the inmate's permission
- to provide clear information as to what would happen to the audio tape once the interview was over

Two inmates did not want the interview taped, and one inmate requested a copy of the transcript.

In addition, prior to the interview, each ex-offender and each inmate was also given an information form (see Appendices 3 and 5), giving brief details of the study. It was considered important that inmates should not simply agree to take part, but have the knowledge to give their informed consent.

Finding somewhere to actually conduct the interviews was a problem in some prisons. A prison is not a purpose built research environment. In some establishments the researcher was given an office to work from, while in one prison a cell was allocated (with no power point). Interviews were also conducted in photocopying rooms, in wing offices, in the hospital, chapel, in kitchens, classrooms, cells and even in storecupboards!

In interviewing inmates it was important not to be "offence-inquisitive", and confine the interview to address the relevant issues. However, many men were quite willing to discuss, often at great, almost interminable length, their offending behaviour. Other prisoners wished to hijack the interview to expound upon some particular grievance they had with the criminal justice system. It was found that if these inmates could get their pet subject off their chest, and if open hostility was not expressed to it (but not too much enthusiasm), then they often became very amenable interviewees. In addition, the researcher was not unaware that for some inmates the chance to participate meant nothing more to them than an afternoon out of their cell, or away from a boring activity in the workshops (see Adler, 1994, p11). Nevertheless, most of these inmates did become genuinely interested - it was at least something new to talk about, and they were being asked to express their views, something which happens fairly infrequently within the prison system.

During all the interviews conducted with inmates, great care was taken to frame the questions as clearly and concisely as possible. This is important for two reasons - many inmates are educationally



disadvantaged, while for other prisoners, institutionalisation or prisonisation can be a very rapid process. The range of vocabulary can decrease rapidly and some prisoners may find great difficulty in expressing themselves clearly. Inmates were given time to reflect and articulate their responses in a coherent way, before moving on to the next question.

### 3.6 THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

The interview schedules (see Appendices 6 and 7), were carefully designed to extract the maximum possible information from each respondent with the minimum number of questions. Accordingly, every effort was made to keep to the printed interview schedule. Nevertheless, there were times when this was not the case. Inmates were encouraged to ask questions, expand on previous answers or to come back to unanswered questions in order to take time to think about their responses. Furthermore, at certain points in an interview, in order that the respondent could be persuaded to reveal more of their own experiences, a certain element of self-disclosure by the interviewer was considered essential. Hence inmates and the researcher had on occasion lengthy, two-way conversations about drugs, politics, Michael Howard, Derek Lewis, personal reading tastes, publishing, education and a variety of other topics. It must be added however, that none of these conversations compromised staff, other inmates or general security in any way. They did however give inmates the opportunity to express themselves more fully.

## The Prison-Based Interviews

Different combinations of the interview schedules were devised, in order that questions requiring specialist knowledge could be directed to particular respondents. All respondents however, were asked the questions in Parts 1, 2 and 3, which address respectively, the models of rehabilitation, the role of the library and its impact. Particular respondents were then asked a range of specialist questions - these were addressed to inmate orderlies, prison officer librarians, Education Co-Ordinators, governors, professional librarians and senior librarians. Inmates were then asked the questions in Part 4, while professional library staff were asked those questions in Parts 5 and 6, which examine staffing issues and operational issues. Library orderlies were only asked questions in Part 6. Scoresheets were coded in order that variations in response between types of inmates, categories of staff, and between inmates and staff could be differentiated.

For some questions respondents were asked to rate their responses according to a five point Likert scale, some questions required a yes/no response, while others were completely open ended. Scorecards were provided where necessary in order that inmates could choose the response they considered most appropriate (Appendix 8).

Questions in Part 1 were designed to establish views of the purposes of imprisonment in order to obtain insight into how prison employees perceive their jobs, and how prisoners perceive their

sentence. The adjudged importance of rehabilitation as a purpose of imprisonment, together with its feasibility and likelihood, can be gauged directly from these replies.

Question 2 was designed to see which model of rehabilitation respondents favoured. Their choice would have an important influence on how they viewed the prison library.

Statement A refers to the reinstatement model of rehabilitation (McGuire and Priestley, 1985, p16), where criminality is causally associated with the social environment.

Statement B refers to the pragmatic definition adopted by Bean (1976, p6), where rehabilitation is equated with reform of the individual.

Statement C refers to the treatment model, where crime is considered to be pathological and curable (Floch, 1952, p452).

Statement D refers to the social work model, in which custodial programmes are by their locus operandi doomed to failure (Roberts, 1992, p15).

Statement E refers to the reform model which equates lack of moral principles with criminality (Gladstone Committee, 1895, para 25, quoted in Stern, 1989, p45).

Statement F refers to the nothing works model (Runcie, 1990, p10).

Statement G refers to the multi-mode approach of throughcare and aftercare (Nuttall, 1992, p40).

Statement H refers to the "neutralisation" approach, whereby ex-prisoners are given temporary assistance in order to help establish themselves as law-abiding citizens in the community (Bean, 1976, p140).

Statement J refers to the offending behaviour model where crime-specific programmes are used as a rehabilitative tool.

Questions 3 and 4 were designed to compare perceptions of rehabilitation with current practice. Are they different, and if so, why? Questions 5 and 6 asked respondents for their views about the effectiveness of rehabilitative initiatives within a prison environment, while question 7 was concerned with measurement of the success of these programmes.

In Part Two, Questions 1 and 4 were designed to examine how individuals' views of library objectives, correlate with those objectives published by, for example, the Library Association (Library Association, 1981), Council Of Europe (1990) and the Standing Committee on Prison Libraries (Home Office, 1993a).

Would there be any difference in the emphasis placed upon rehabilitation between these private and published objectives?

Statement A reflects the opinion voiced by Hartz (1987, p9), as to the 'diversionary' effect of the prison library.

Statement B asks respondents to consider the nature of the relationship between libraries and Education departments (Ripley, 1989, p17).

Statement C was designed to elicit respondents' views as to how far libraries should be responsive to institutional programmes (Warner, 1991, p15).

Statement D reflects the view that library use is of itself a 'good thing', because it is a constructive activity (Channon, 1982, p3).

Statement E was designed to see whether respondents considered the library could assist in the process of self-education (Barone, 1977, p297).

Statement F asked respondents directly to evaluate the rehabilitative potential of the prison library (Hartz et al, 1987, p6).

Statement G was designed to address the links between information, empowerment and rehabilitation (Albert, 1989, p126).

Statement H was designed to examine respondents' views as to the role of the library as primarily a provider of leisure reading (Losi, 1979, p82).

Question 2 asks respondents to consider how far the library at their own prison is successful in meeting personal objectives defined in the previous question, while Question 5 asks respondents how far the service meets published objectives.

Question 3 examines why respondents consider library services should be present within prisons. To what extent are considerations of rehabilitation taken into account?

Part 3 was concerned with the impact of the prison library. Questions 1 and 2 addressed the issue of integration. The Standing Committee on Prison Libraries noted: "Consultation and discussion is essential if the library is to achieve its potential as a central feature of the life of an institution" (Home Office, 1993a, para7.17). Similarly, Artininan argued that library services which are well integrated with other departments are able to help inmates make informed decisions, assist personal growth

and increase self empowerment, with the result that "successful re-entry into society is increased" (Artinian, 1991, p31).

Question 3 asked for personal evaluations on a variety of library issues, ranging from levels of access to issues of civilianisation and gender.

Questions 4 and 5 were designed to ascertain whether library services can deal with some problems more effectively because inmates perceive they will receive a different response from library staff. Brenneman (1979, p84), argued that library services can help in rehabilitation by offering a "haven in a heartless world". Responses to these questions can be compared with similar questions addressed to inmates (see Part 4, Questions 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7).

Question 6 asked how far should library services be user-led? Barone (1977, p294) argued that correctional goals, including rehabilitation, are not necessarily relevant to library goals.

Question 8 examines the perceived importance of library services by different staff categories. Do different categories of staff have different perceptions of the library's importance? Some evidence exists (Stevens, 1992), that hostility between uniformed and civilian members of staff can reduce service effectiveness. Again responses can be compared with those of inmates when asked a similar question (Part 4, Question 9).

Questions 9, 10, 11 and 12 explores to what extent staff considered information provided by the library could assist in the rehabilitation process. Again staff responses can be compared to inmate responses (see Part 4, Questions 33, 34, 35 and 36).

Because of the importance of community re-integration in the rehabilitative process (Woolf and Tumim, 1991, para10.29), questions 13 and 14 examined the efforts made to encourage library use when inmates are released.

Question 15 examines the reaction of staff to the proposition that the increasing scale and diversity of problems may mean librarians may have to take a pro-active, advisory approach.

At the moment, prison staff are not permitted access to the prison library (Library Association, 1981, p45). Question 16 explored reactions to this ruling. However, the Guidelines noted that at Rampton Special Hospital "considerable social as well as economic advantage has been found in staff and patients sharing the same stock" (Library Association, 1981, p45). Rubin (1974, p539) argued inmates should take priority because they have no alternatives.

Questions 17, 18, 19 and 20 were designed to explore opinions about the role of reading in general and what impact it can have on an individual (see Albert, 1989, p126; Engelbarts, 1972, pp143-148; Hartz, 1987, p6; Hendry, 1984, p97). Responses can be contrasted with responses from inmates to similar questions (Part 4, Questions 43-47).

Part 3 also includes separate sections of questions for particular groups of respondents. Section A comprises some preliminary questions for inmate librarians. Library orderlies occupy a central role in the effective operation of the prison library. They are a link between inmates and staff and it is essential that they fully understand the nature of their role and receive adequate support from other civilian and uniformed staff. Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 were designed to see how far orderlies were aware of these factors.

Library orderlies tend to work the longest hours of any employed prisoner. According to the Library Association Guidelines (Library Association, 1981, p30), the minimum recommended working hours for library orderlies are roughly double those of the professional librarian, and one third more than the officer librarian. It is essential therefore that they should be as well trained as possible. Questions 8, 9, 10 and 11 were asked in order to assess the quality and quantity of training that orderlies receive.

Evaluating levels of job satisfaction, and particular likes and dislikes, are useful in developing effective services that can achieve objectives, hence questions 12, 13 and 14.

Questions 15 and 18 were designed to examine to what extent library orderlies had input into the development of library services.



Traditionally, library staff have had to assume responsibility for a variety of tasks only marginally related to provision of library services - questions 16 and 17 were designed to discover the extent of any other duties. For example, library orderlies may have to deliver newspapers ordered by inmates, or distribute magazines sent in to prisoners from outside. Could time spent on these duties be more profitably spent in the library itself?

Question 19 was designed to find out how confidently inmate orderlies could deal with a range of library tasks. Responses to this and many other questions can be compared with responses to similar questions given by other staff.

Section B contains some questions specifically for prison officer librarians. In some establishments, Prison Officer Librarians provide the principal input into the library when the librarian from the local authority is not present. They are also responsible for security and good order within the library. However, some prison libraries do not have prison officer librarians - for example, in low security category prisons, an officer librarian is not considered necessary. In other establishments, where inmates may only visit the library under escort, the escorting officer is responsible for the maintenance of order and discipline.

Questions 4, 5, and 6 were asked to discover to what extent rehabilitation is seen as a principal objective. Wilkins (1977, p119) found "a great difference in the perception of institutional

goals between correctional administrators and librarians employed in correctional institutions".

Question 7 was designed to see whether Prison Officer Librarians are given enough support by their colleagues. Is the post treated seriously? Do other officers see the role as one of providing security cover or as managing library resources?

Questions 8 and 9 were included to examine how satisfied Officer Librarians are with their own role. Do they wish to expand their role in any ways which would have any impact upon rehabilitation?

Questions 10, 11, and 12 were concerned with how well informed Officer Librarians are about current library issues. How much contact do they have with other professional librarians?

Questions 13 and 14 were concerned with staffing arrangements. Given that the Officer Librarian is likely to spend more staff hours in the library than the professional librarian, is there a well trained relief available?

Questions 16 and 17 asked respondents for their general views on management issues.

Questions to the Education Co-Ordinator, in Section C, were primarily concerned with establishing the nature of the relationship between the library and the Education department. Questions 1 and 4 were included in order to examine whether roles had been clearly defined.

Given that the Education Co-Ordinator is responsible to the Governor for overall management of the library and its integration into the prison regime generally, questions 2 to question 8 were intended to evaluate the extent of the Education Co-Ordinator's commitment, in terms of awareness, input and training.

Questions 9, 10 and 11 were asked in order to assess the range and extent of opportunities provided by the Education department.

Does the library have a role to play in supplementing this work?

Questions 12, 13 and 14 were designed to examine whether communications between staff in the Education Department and staff in the library were effective. Is it possible for the library to provide an integrated service?

Section D contains questions to be addressed to governors. The content of these questions have been discussed above.

Section E contains questions to be addressed to the professional librarian. Again, the form of many of the questions are identical to those asked to other groups of respondents, allowing comparisons of responses to be drawn.

Question 7 was designed to ascertain to what extent the library is integrated into the institutional culture, and thus able to play a full part in achieving the institutional objectives.

Question 8 was included to see whether staffing arrangements exerted any constraint on library effectiveness.

Question 9 was designed to see whether certain groups of the prison population received any differential treatment. A recent Council of Europe report noted: "For those who are mainly confined to particular sections of a prison, ways should be found to enable these prisoners to have full access" (Council Of Europe, 1990, para8.8)

Question 10 was included in the belief that it would help determine levels of professional isolation.

The questions for Senior Librarians in Section F have already been covered in previous sections.

Part 4 of the schedule was specifically for administration to inmates. Questions 1 and 2 were asked to establish purpose and levels of usage of the library. Responses to questions 3 to 7 can be contrasted with responses by staff to similar questions in Part 3.

Question 8 asked inmates for their views on the importance of the library to them. Any variation in response may be associated with a range of factors, including sentence length or type of prison. For example, Williams and Matthews (1987, p365), found in a survey of prisoners held on remand that one of the least preferred privileges was access to the library, while Evans and Jones (1991,

p386) quote an inmate, "The library has been an absolute lifeline since I have been here".

Questions 9 to 12 can be contrasted with questions 6, 11 and 16 in Part 3.

Question 13 was designed to find out with whom inmates feel most comfortable when asking for information. Partly because of the sub-culture and partly because of the long hours worked by orderlies, there is some evidence (Stevens, 1992), that inmates will tend to approach the library orderly first when requesting help.

Question 14 to 19 and question 22 were designed to see to what extent inmates accessed information independently. Encouraging inmates to take on responsibility for their own lives is an important factor in the rehabilitative process (Woolf and Tumim, 1991, para10.27).

Question 20 asks inmates to evaluate the helpfulness of library staff in answering queries. If inmates perceive they are likely to obtain useful information from library staff they are likely to have a positive evaluation of the service, and be more willing to approach staff.

Question 21 asks inmates for their views on integration of the library with the Education department. Responses can be compared to those of the Education Co-Ordinator in Part 3, Section C, Questions 12 to 14.

Questions 23 and 24 were designed to find out information concerning usage of newspapers and periodicals. Penney (1984), quotes an experiment by Cosio (1969), where inclusion of 75 different newspapers doubled prison library attendance. Research by Burt (1977), found inmates had strong interest in current affairs, which was satisfied by reading periodicals.

Question 25 was designed to discover if inmates were aware of any gaps in the library stock.

Questions 26 and 27 reflect Tumim's argument (1991, p7) that overcrowded cell accommodation may mean that use of the library as a study space is essential.

Question 28 was asked to find out what kind of promotional activities stimulate use.

Question 29 asked if inmates were aware of any ways in which the library could expand their services. It is possible that inmates may have knowledge of courses being run elsewhere in the prison which could benefit from library back-up.

Question 30 was designed to see if inmates were aware of any channels available for feedback.

Questions 31 and 32 were designed to see if the library had any role in helping inmates to get through their sentence.

Questions 33 to 36 were designed to see what input the library had in providing inmates with pre-release information. Responses can be compared to similar questions put to staff (see Part 3, Questions 9, 10, 11 and 12).

Responses to questions 37 and 38 can be compared to staff responses to question 15 in Part 3.

Questions 39 and 40 were designed to discover how inmates structure their day and the time spent reading.

Similarly, questions 41 and 42 were designed to investigate levels of boredom and whether reading was used to alleviate it.

Questions 43 to 50 were asked in order to investigate the specific role of reading in prison, and its role in changing attitudes and behaviour. Again, responses can be compared to similar questions put in Part 3 (questions 17 to 20).

Questions 51 to 54 were asked in order to obtain background information on the respondent and contextualise responses.

Questions 55 and 56 were asked in order that predictions of future behaviour could be compared with prior responses, and factors likely to predispose behaviour in a particular way could be identified.

Questions in Part 5 were addressed solely to professional staff working in the library, and were principally concerned with their own role.

Questions 1 and 2, concerning length of service, were included because experience and trust may be crucial factors in developing a rapport with inmates.

Question 3 was asked to discover whether the respondents' feelings of accountability correlated with the defined organisational structure. If not, then objectives may be difficult to attain, communications may be hampered and service quality is likely to suffer.

In question 4 respondents were asked to identify what factors inhibit effectiveness. Which, if any, of these factors are likely to affect rehabilitative initiatives?

Questions 5, 6 and 7 were asked in order to identify future career patterns. The job of prison librarian involves dealing with a demanding client population, typically working in professional isolation, often only on a part-time basis and with little opportunity for promotion. Loss of such staff may constrain library effectiveness. Dolan argues that "Good arrangements by the employing authority and the establishment can help to overcome some of the limitations in career prospects which can arise in specialist posts" (Dolan, 1991, p43).



Questions 8 to 10 were asked to discover what factors determine levels of job satisfaction, and whether they had any impact upon the operation of the library.

Questions 11 to 14 were included because training is essential in order to ensure effective service delivery. The Woolf Report noted that, "More attention should be paid to training by the Prison Service. There should be a better structure for training aimed at enhancing an officer's career development" (Woolf and Tumim, 1991, para15.54).

Question 15 was designed to discover whether any journals dealing with penology or criminology are read, enabling staff to have a current perspective on rehabilitation practice.

Question 16 was asked to find out whether other duties reduce the time available for library work.

Question 17 was asked in order that staff could evaluate their workload. Library staff at some prisons have responsibility for a range of tasks not normally associated with delivery of library services, and which contravene equal opportunities and sexual discrimination policies laid down by the Prison Service and the public library authority.

(i) For example, a recent analysis found nearly 60% of magazines sent in to inmates at one prison could be classified as pornographic (Stevens, 1992, p39). These magazines are processed and then delivered to inmates by the prison officer librarian and the library orderlies.

(ii) Concern has recently been expressed that the amount and the nature of pornographic material available to sex offenders in particular, within prison establishments, may have a negative effect on rehabilitative programmes (see Cowburn, 1992).

(iii) Library officers may also be engaged in the hiring of videos, despite complaints by staff and prisoners to the governor, portraying scenes of gratuitous violence in a sexual context, which will be shown to sex offenders (Cowburn, 1992, p45).

Questions 18 to 22 were asked in order to discover whether library staff receive enough support to perform their duties effectively. For example, Pybus has argued that: "The management of prisons tends to concentrate on issues which are central to the operation of a prison. The library is seen as a peripheral but valuable service, but when the chips are down it does not rate highly in the eyes of most management executives" (Pybus, 1992, p11).

Question 23 was asked in order to ascertain the degree of interaction between library staff in different establishments.

Part 6 of the schedule was addressed to all library staff and was designed to obtain information about practical aspects of library operations. If the proposition is accepted that the prison library can have some influence on offender rehabilitation, then it can be argued that factors which increase inmate use of the library should be encouraged. Thus, in addition to well trained, pro-active staff it is essential that services are promoted, resources are used in the most efficient way and that effective policies for the library are devised.

Questions 1 and 8 were asked to determine the effectiveness of the library services in reaching the target population.

Questions 2, 3 and 7 inquired about promotion of library services. Promotion is essential, because "Most inmates are new library users...As a result the concept of a library as an information centre, as a community centre is a concept with which they are not familiar" (Smith, 1992, p34).

Questions 4 to 6 were designed to elicit more information about aspects of library services to particular groups of inmates - for example, ethnic groups, inmates in the hospital or segregation unit.

Questions 9 and 10 were designed to examine the responsiveness of library services to inmate and departmental needs.

Questions 11, 12 and 13 inquired as to how and when the effectiveness of library services are monitored in order to ensure they can meet their objectives.

Question 14 addressed the question of access - no objectives can be attained if the library is not open, and good library facilities are useless without access (Tumim, 1991, p7).

Question 15 asked about community information, which is essential in assisting re-integration after release. Responses to this

question can be contrasted with inmate response to a similar question (see Part 4, question 16).

Questions 16 and 18 were concerned with stock management - the range, quality and availability of resources. It has been argued that "The library as a Learning Resource Centre includes not only traditional library services but also audio-visual materials collection, audio-visual equipment distribution, audio and video learning laboratories, tutorial services, legal reference resources, career information centres and learning assistance centres" (Artinian, 1991, p31). Similarly, the Council of Europe report (1990, para2.7) argued that a comprehensive library designed to meet the needs of the 'whole person' is the most realistic objective for a library, and that it can assist inmates to "choose for themselves to turn away from crime".

Question 17 addressing the question of freedom of access for inmates was considered particularly important. There is some evidence that prisoners may be reluctant to ask for information in case they are deemed to be a trouble-maker (Plotnikoff and Woolfson, 1992, p17).

Questions 19 and 20 inquired about the extent of support and integration of library services with other initiatives (See also Part 3, questions 1, 2 and 3). How far can any rehabilitative potential of the library be spread through the prison? It has been argued that librarians should "survey the range of activity available in the prison so that the library responds to and reflects every possibility" (Semple, 1992, p31).

Questions 21 to 25 explored this theme further with particular reference to the relationship between the Education department and the library. Hartz for example has commented that "Librarians, for some unknown reason, have had a a tendency to believe that teachers are good managers of libraries when librarians are unable to fill the job...This is not so! Those of us who work (or have worked) in prison libraries know that the library programme is often the lowest in priority, usually lacking an adequate budget, staff, facilities and moral support from the education supervisor" (Hartz, 1987, p4).

Question 26 to 28 were all concerned with identification of ways in which library services could be improved to increase quality of delivery. For example, library space can be utilised for publicity, or as a social space to attract inmates (Semple, 1992, p31). Libraries can promote or help establish book reviews, newsletters, literary prizes or writers in residences. Displays of prisoners' work at local libraries, or local artists visiting the prison to give performance and run workshops (see Peaker and Vincent, 1991) help stimulate community links and assist reintegration.

Question 29 addressed the question of feedback for professional staff.

## The interviews with ex-offenders

Parts 1, 2, 3, and 5 of the interview schedule for ex-offenders comprised questions already discussed above. A new section, Part 4, was devised to address post-release experience.

Questions 1 to 3 of Part 4 were concerned with information needs, and were asked in order to discover whether libraries need to provide any additional information to inmates who are about to be released.

Questions 4 and 5 asked about public library use before and after the sentence, to see if any changes had occurred.

Questions 6 to 9 asked about reading patterns since release. Responses can be compared to questions 1, 2, 22, 23 and 37 which had been asked previously in Part 3.

Questions 10 and 11 addressed the question of boredom. Again responses can be compared with answers to questions 39 and 40 asked in Part 3.

Questions 12 and 17 dealt with plans for the future and use of the library as a source of information in making these plans.

Finally, questions 13 to 16 asked respondents to review the effects of their sentence and evaluate their hopes for the future. If factors have been identified which are likely to increase the

possibility of reconviction, can library services have any part in mitigating these?

### 3.7 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Work began at the two pilot institutions in April 1993 and three weeks were spent at each prison. The principal benefits from the pilot study were gaining some knowledge of how long interviews were likely to take, establishing a familiarity with prison routines and in developing a timetable for the whole project. Very few changes were made to the interview schedules themselves, apart from some minor re-wording of questions and modifications to the running order.

Research at the ten test sites began in September 1993. Three weeks were allocated for work at each establishment, with a one week break in between. This programme was subject to some delay because of intervening bank holidays, last minute requests from individual establishments with high profile and high security category prisoners for further CRO clearance and other interruptions due to bureaucratic errors and staff shortages. The fieldwork was finally completed in September 1994.

### 3.8 SUBJECT SELECTION

Bearing in mind that the sample size of inmates interviewed at each prison was only about 12, great care was taken in selecting prisoners for participation in this study, although no claims are

made that those prisoners interviewed constitute a representative sample of the entire prison population. Ball argues that:

"a purposive sampling that selects informants from various levels and sectors provides for a coverage of as many perspectives as possible" (Ball, 1975, p107).

The sample broadly matched the average prisoner profile of each establishment in terms of age, sentence length, frequency of library use or non-use, ethnicity and levels of educational attainment. Altogether, excluding the pilot study, 124 inmates were interviewed and 62 staff. In regard to ethnicity, 100 of those inmates interviewed considered themselves White, 17 to be Black Caribbean, 6 to be Asian Pakistan and 1 to be Black African. Population characteristics of the sample are given in greater detail in Appendix 1.

Inmates were invited to participate in the study after careful consultation, both formally and informally, with as many members of the civilian, uniformed and non-uniformed staff as possible. The final selection of potential interviewees was made by the researcher. All but one inmate invited to participate agreed to do so.

No attempt has been made in the text to correct grammatical inaccuracies or edit any views, save to omit any reference which could identify particular individuals or establishments. Often respondents, both inmates and staff, expressed themselves with candour and frankness and in colourful language.



### 3.9 THE INTERPRETATION OF QUALITATIVE DATA

Just as the number of inmates interviewed did not constitute a randomly matched sample of the whole prison population, neither did their interview transcripts represent a condensed package of the views of prisoners. Rather they were the perceptions of a number of prisoners and staff at a particular time. They come complete with inbuilt prejudices, personal attitudes and individual interpretations. A criticism often voiced (Eysenck, 1987, p53), is how can the tiny proportion of subjects (in this case for example, only a quarter of one per cent of the total inmate population was interviewed), possibly be a reasonable sample? To what extent, therefore, are the research results generalizable or transferable? And, given that the presence of any researcher will distort the environment being studied, how far are the findings replicable? Furthermore, Miles asks what guarantees are there that conclusions drawn from this small sample are not just self-delusion on the researcher's part - is there any test of validity? (see Miles, 1979).

There is no doubt that moving from the particular to the general should be done with caution, and inference is no substitute for direct demonstration. However, as Platt points out:

"A single case can undoubtedly demonstrate that its features are possible, and, hence, may also exist in other cases and, even if they do not, must be taken into account in the formulation of general propositions" (Platt, 1988, p11).

The strength of qualitative data are that they illuminate the specific, through which we can understand the process, rather

like Miss Marple understanding the world through observing life in her village.

However, analysing the mass of qualitative data can be difficult. Miles and Huberman (1986, p230), note that in the absence of any agreed canons, algorithms or heuristics to validate either procedures or findings, three pitfalls tend to commonly occur - the holistic fallacy, elite bias and going native.

### The Holistic Fallacy

Many researchers have pointed to the temptation of over-enthusiasm in ascribing patterns to data, and the tendency to ignore or devalue, negative data. For example, in a Home Office Research Study examining parole, one of the researchers commented:

"Explanations [by men] were complex, sometimes defying straightforward analysis or complete understanding. In interpreting such explanations, a meaning and order may well have been subtly imposed on the men's own accounts" (Nuttall, 1977, p84).

### Elite Bias

Inevitably, some respondents are more articulate, more thoughtful and can talk at length and with enthusiasm. In addition, some respondents may be easier to contact, or more accessible. Analysis should avoid ascribing undue weight to the resultant transcripts - these respondents may constitute an elite group and may be highly atypical of the population.

## "Going Native"

In a closed environment it has been argued that it is all too easy to lose one's sense of perspective by "going native". For example, Becker has noted that:

"We fall into deep sympathy with the people we are studying, so that while the rest of the society views them as unfit in one or another respect for the deference ordinarily accorded a fellow citizen, we believe they are at least as good as anyone else, more sinned against than sinning. Because of this, we do not give a balanced picture...We neglect to ask those questions whose answers would show that the deviant, after all, has done something pretty rotten and indeed, pretty much deserves what he gets" (Becker, 1966, p239).

It is easy to see how this can happen. Prison is a highly structured, artificial environment, with very few of those things that, on the outside, make criminals seem so reprehensible. Nor are the stimuli present which facilitate and encourage them to persist in their anti-social behaviour. Whilst in custody, they can't steal our cars, burgle our houses, abuse our children or attack us in dark alleyways. Furthermore, prisoners are subject to strict behavioural controls and are, usually, on their best behaviour, in order to achieve their earliest release date. In short, while in prison they are divorced from all the negative factors present in the outside environment, and thus, many of these individuals seem to reveal attractive and engaging personalities. There may even be a temptation to identify so strongly with the subjects that considerations of objectivity become eroded. Cohen and Taylor, in reporting their 4 year study of Durham's maximum security E wing, argued that it was necessary

to empathise with the inmates in order to understand them. They concluded that:

"The staff's suspicion that we were "in league" with the inmates had therefore some basis" (Cohen and Taylor, 1981, p33).

### 3.10 STRATEGIES TAKEN TO AVOID BIAS

In order to overcome some of the pitfalls described above, as long a time as possible was spent at each site. Much of the time was simply spent "hanging around", talking to people not directly involved in operation of library services, even eavesdropping - simply in order to build up a more balanced picture of daily life in the institution.

In order to try and avoid the holistic fallacy, theories were tested on as many people as possible. The research supervisors were of great value in second reading all material, and providing an external perspective. Furthermore, throughout the report statements made by respondents are contextualised wherever possible by reference to previous published research.

To avoid elite bias, all respondents were treated equally, no differential treatment was given to staff as opposed to inmates, or between particular groups. Conscious efforts were made to avoid the domination by the "elite" of any particular group, and instead to seek out individuals on the periphery, whose views may not have been congruent with the majority. Amongst inmates for

example, "trouble-makers", those held in low regard by staff, inmates with particular difficulties or problems were all deliberately included in the interview sample. Status of the respondent, their level of educational attainment or ability to express themselves did not make any set of data necessarily "better" than another set.

Finally in an attempt to avoid "going native", a conscious effort was made to obtain as many perspectives as possible both from within the prisons studied and from other sources outside them.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# THE PRISON LIBRARY AND EDUCATION

The provision of educational facilities to inmates is seen as one of the key elements in a purposeful regime (see Home Office, 1991a). The 1989 Council of Europe Report on education in prisons identified three reasons why this should be so. Education can act as a normalising influence in the prison environment, it offers a second chance for many prisoners who may have been educationally disadvantaged in the past and it also has a rehabilitative function:

"education has the capacity to encourage those who try and turn away from crime" (Warner, 1989, p4).

## 4.1 EDUCATION AND REHABILITATION

The nature of the relationship between education and rehabilitation requires some further analysis - what specific criminogenic factors does prison education seem to successfully address?

1 Some commentators have asserted that prison education can assist prisoners in decision making and positively influence their cognitive and moral development (Duguid, 1981; Thornton, 1987b).

2 It has been argued that education improves job prospects, by helping develop basic education skills, vocational skills and work-habit skills (Timmins, 1989, p61). The mission statement of an education contractor serving a prison establishment examined in this study explicitly states that:

"Education programmes provide opportunities for prisoners to acquire qualifications which could be useful in the prison's work programme and/or which will improve their prospects on release".

However, Williams has argued that "the notion that training in work skills and habits will lead to offenders' rehabilitation is absurdly simplistic" (Williams, 1993, p43).

3 There is a belief that education provides opportunities for prisoners to gain a sense of personal achievement and self-respect. This may be particularly important for those many prisoners who have a background of educational disadvantage - for example, recent research, in a sample of 16 prison establishments indicated that "more than 1 in 2 inmates had a low level of literacy", compared to only 1 in 6 in the general population (Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, 1994, p16). A Home Office report examining education services noted that:

"The importance of basic education cannot be too strongly suggested. It helps to improve a person's ability to communicate, to broaden his interests, to introduce him to a wider circle of friends and gradually to improve his

competence as a person. It is unlikely immediately or by itself to correct anti-social behaviour, but there is little doubt that, over a period of time, if newly discovered skills or refurbished existing ones are developed, they will contribute to the strengthening of all round personal and social competence" (Home Office, 1985, p10).

4 The argument has been advanced that education is a constructive and diversionary activity which not only helps engender a more relaxed and less stressful regime, but also has a positive impact on the offender's post-release behaviour (Tumim, 1993a, p76).

5 It has been proposed that prison education has an empowering influence, enabling individuals to make more considered choices and accept responsibility for their own actions. According to Rivera, this process:

"allows individuals to transform themselves from what they were to what they can become. In place of the helplessness poor people often feel, a sense of control is instilled in them and this empowerment works to transform a criminal mentality into a progressive and law-abiding one" (Rivera, 1992, p30).

6 Similarly, Rivera and other writers have argued that education may help to raise levels of political and ethnic consciousness. Rivera argues that failure to be integrated into the community causes people to obtain material gratification through crime (Rivera, 1992, p31).

7 Some observers have argued that an individual's offending behaviour can be challenged through the work of the prison Education department - directly through the curriculum, and indirectly through the support of special programmes and as part of an overall commitment to an integrated regime. The Education Co-



ordinator also has an important role in providing information used as part of the inmate's sentence plan (Williams, 1993, p49).

8 One of the education contractors supplying prisons in this study has argued that education can "provide opportunities for prisoners to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for satisfactory family life - courses in parenting and on understanding the emotional needs of the opposite sex" (unpublished Strategic Plan 1994-1997, p3). Wilson and Herrnstein have argued that the family is the "central social institution" in determining values, and that differentials in family socialisation are a major factor in accounting for variation in criminality between individuals (Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985, p311).

9 Finally, it has been argued that evaluating prison education through the use of recidivism rates can provide little or no information upon the positive personal changes that individuals may undergo. Gains in self-esteem, self-expression, creativity, social skills, more constructive ambitions and aspirations together with increased feelings of responsibility have all been cited as achievements, worthwhile in themselves, irrespective of any link with subsequent rates of reconviction (Williams and Webb, 1993, pp125-128).

#### 4.2 INTEGRATION OF THE LIBRARY AND PRISON EDUCATION

The Library Association Guidelines for prison libraries make explicit reference to the role of the library as a support for the Education department:

"The more intensive use of libraries in prisons owes a great deal to the use of books and library materials to pursue interests awakened by education and training programmes, including newly acquired work skills. The public library's role in supporting such programmes is an essential one" (Library Association, 1981, p12).

There was however a range of opinion among staff and inmates as to what the nature of the relationship between the library and the Education department should be. This inmate argued in favour of minimal integration:

"I think it should be run as a separate entity. The Education are more interested in their courses than what prisoners want" (Inmate, Prison C).

At the other end of the spectrum, another inmate said:

"I think the library is part of the Education. I think if you're going to have a decent Education department you've got to have a decent library to go with it" (Inmate, Prison D).

An Education Co-ordinator argued that the principal role of the library was to support the work of the Education department, but that it should have other objectives too, even if he was not quite sure what these might be:

"As far as I'm concerned, the prime role would be to support the Education department. But also wider than that, it

should be to provide for the aesthetic side. I don't really know what they have got and what they haven't got" (Education Co-ordinator, Prison F).

Finally, an inmate considered that the library should develop its own objectives, rather than be subsumed by others, but should be able to co-operate with other departments when necessary:

"The level of education in prison, and the level at which they teach it, is extremely low. If you're doing reading and writing skills, other people don't want a library that's filled up with Janet and John books. Also if you're catering to the Education department, then you're going to be restricted in the diversity of subjects and books that you're going to be supplying. So I think it should be run separately. But there's no reason why the library cannot be made aware of education courses to get some key books, to get some key literature, but not explicitly so" (Inmate, Prison H).

In practice, the relationship between the library and the Education department was found to be very variable, and in some cases non-existent:

"I'm not too sure we've got any links at all with education at the moment. My personal opinion of the Education department is that it is very poor. Nearly every single class involves the teacher coming in and bunging a video tape on. Perhaps if you were doing sociology, or creative writing or whatever, what they should be doing is to say to you "I've ordered suitable titles, if you go to the library you can collect them from there. Go and see the librarian, we've had a chat about what books will be suitable for the subject and they have them on order, or will put them on order for you". But there's nothing like that, because the lessons aren't geared like that" (Librarian, Prison F).

At other establishments, the very opposite situation prevailed, as this art teacher reported:

"I constantly send people down to the library, I've referred at least four people down to the library today. That is because the librarian has made an effort to support the courses here - she's brought in books, got requests and when

the book fund comes in, she's responsive to our needs and that means we've been able to establish a stock within art. So like today, I've referred guys to those books, it's a starting point for them. In art, because we only see our students fairly infrequently, the library becomes an extension of our teaching, a bit like open learning. There's a resource and you can use it. We have guys doing art history - one guy's particularly interested in expressionism, so he's been using the library to do some research into that. It's all part of the learning process and the library supports us wherever possible. Through the librarian I've formed links with other county councils - so we get supplied with travelling exhibitions, which is wonderful. The new exhibitions officer has just been in touch with me, via the librarian, about a new exhibition which is going to be at the central library, and then somewhere in Bradford - can we contribute any paintings to show what inmates paint in prisons? Wonderful. What a super opportunity. That's a good relationship - a pro-active relationship between the two of us" (Tutor, Prison K).

#### 4.3 FACTORS DETERMINING INTEGRATION

Why should the relationship between the prison library and the Education departments show such variation? The following factors were found to be particularly significant:

1 In some prisons there are physical constraints which work against integration - for example, it may be a long way from the library to the Education department, and, on security grounds, many prisons do not issue keys to part-time teaching staff. An Education Co-ordinator considered this a significant determinant factor in staff use of the prison library:

"I don't think they will know what's in the library. One of the problems here is having a relatively small full-time group and a massive part-time group who don't carry keys. They obviously can't get around, so it's very much they come in, they do their job and go again. Full timers, I should imagine, well, most of them, know what's in the library and what's available" (Education Co-ordinator, Prison F).

In those establishments where there is physical separation of library and Education, inmates may be unable to use the library during class time:

"At my last prison, the library and the Education were totally separate, and not only that, there were so many gates and doors, you had to have a pet screw with you to get through. Anyway you couldn't get out of the Education block, it was sealed from 8.30 till 11 in the morning and from 2 till 4 - there was no movement on or off, unless of course they decided to take you for a spin. So the library wasn't open in the day, only in the evening, one wing each night" (Inmate, Prison D).

However, where education and library services are in close physical proximity they are much more likely to work together:

"I think the Education department see the library as another branch of their service - because of where the library is situated it's easy to work together and complement each other's services. I think the Education would be poorer if they didn't have the library. They rely on the library for reference books, dictionaries - they haven't got the resources otherwise. It's a good back-up. I hope the teachers would all agree that the library is an integral part of the Education department" (Librarian, Prison G).

2 There have been concerns that the increasing tendency toward employing part-time teaching staff is likely to have negative consequences for curriculum delivery. Part-time staff may have less professional confidence, they are less likely to receive specialist training in dealing with inmates, they have less chance to build up and maintain a stable relationship with prisoners, they are less likely to internalise the ethos and values of the institution and they are less likely to develop links with other departments in the prison (Williams, 1993, p50). Fears have also been expressed from senior managers within the Prison Service that

these factors could result in a progressive marginalisation and isolation of education services:

"The increasing dependency on part-time staff to deliver education means that there is a risk that education could become marginalised because there is a succession of relatively strange faces coming through the gate each day and they could become a sort of separate empire" (May, 1993, p34).

Furthermore, part-time teaching staff may simply never meet a part-time librarian:

"With a large part-time staff it's inevitable that there are going to be people who the librarian sees very rarely, if at all" (Education Co-ordinator, Prison G).

However, at those prisons where a pro-active and multi-disciplinary approach was favoured, a high degree of integration was evident, with the library receiving a high profile in the institution:

"If you look here, the library and the Education are one, there's no difference - sometimes the teacher's sitting in the library, sometimes the librarian's sitting there. It doesn't make much difference. That's what I see my role is - as facilitating the whole purpose of continual integration and development of the library, and maintaining it as a focal point of the institution" (Education Co-ordinator, Prison K).

3 This issue of integration between the prison library and the Education department highlights a recurring theme in the study - the determined reluctance of individual units in the prison to engage in co-operative working practices, and an insistence on preserving traditional roles. These attitudes show no sign of disappearing - particularly now as individual prison Governors have control over their own budget - and each department is keener than

ever to preserve their own particular specialisms, and their own jobs.

### Summary

Where there is poor integration between the Education department and the library, there is likely to be a negative impact upon users. Even when inmates are motivated to learn they may find few resources to encourage them:

"The problem is that there isn't much co-ordination between the Education department and the library, so for example, there's hardly any Spanish books. I've looked for Spanish books and never found any. Things like computer courses, there's no books which back up what you've learned in Education. Teachers won't refer people to the library. If they had those kind of books in the library that would be really helpful, because the teachers say like work in your cell if you can, but if you haven't got a book to work from, it's hard" (Inmate, Prison E).

Conversely, where there was evidence of good integration it was found that the particular interests of inmates could be catered for, prisoners became more motivated and resources were used more effectively:

"It certainly makes an enormous difference to us. Every teacher will tell you, the library is an extra thing to fall back on. If you were solely to rely on education stock you'd have to tot up an enormous sum every year just to top up the stock. You just couldn't do it, particularly as the cost of books is so astronomical. Education has gone beyond the world of the old 'O' level where if you could digest the one textbook you were home, as it were. You need far more, especially when you get on to 'A' levels or OU. And they're now going on to taking you in more or less where you've arrived anyway, with foundation courses taking the place of the old 'A' level. That again mitigates against the idea of one textbook. So the library will play an increasing role, as it always has done really, in the educational process. I'm not saying that liaison with the education department is necessarily a vital part of the library, but it all works

toward smoothness. It happens to be a fact of life that the library can support the Education department. There should be a catholic stock which can help us, help people studying with us and on top of that give extra reading, which may involve a use of special requests. There's a chap I know who attends my history class, and has an interest in Japanese history and the library has come up tremendous trumps in keeping him as it were supplied with his interest. Really, it's nothing to do with the Education department, because I certainly don't do the history of Japan in my history class. It's an interesting case you see, because what would he do otherwise if there wasn't a library? He would come to me, being the historian in the department, I could have given him some support, but I wouldn't have been able to get him the same books he's received from the library. Not only that, there's been other books in the bibliographies which have interested him and the library has obtained them for him. So the library helps education, and it would really be failing its job if it didn't have that ability to help us in that sense" (Tutor, Prison F).

#### 4.4 NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD PRISON EDUCATION

The attitudes of some staff and inmates toward prison education showed a considerable degree of negativity. Some inmates expressed a reluctance to use facilities provided in the Education department. Pam Williamson, the Education Co-ordinator at HM Prison Wandsworth, has argued that:

"90% of people in prison are unlikely to be easily motivated into attending education classes or offending behaviour programmes" (Williamson, 1993, p52).

Furthermore, negative attitudes on the part of officer staff toward the provision of education for inmates has been a factor in the past in deterring inmates from taking up classes or courses. A "folk saying" among older officers shows the distaste many staff felt for education - "There's only one thing worse than a black prisoner and that's a clever prisoner". However, the



stereotyping which characterised the staff-inmate divide has become eroded in recent years, with the introduction of initiatives such as shared working and the Personal Officer scheme. Williams though, has argued that many inmates view these developments with cynicism (Williams, 1991, p5), and it is perhaps inevitable there will always be some degree of tension between captor and captive.

The main arguments respondents advanced for unfavourable attitudes, held by inmates and staff, to prison education are summarised below.

1 Some inmates held very negative views toward formal education in general. This may stem from prior unfavourable experiences:

"People in custody do not take quickly or easily to remedial help and may have an antipathy toward the whole concept of education especially if it is rooted in earlier failure at school" (Home Office, 1985, p10).

2 Some inmates and staff, including teaching staff, argued resources were focused on providing teaching time to a section of the prison population that is least in need of such help, whereas those prisoners with more basic needs tended to receive much less attention. As this prison chaplain noted, there is more kudos to be gained from one prisoner obtaining an Open University degree than raising the reading age of half a dozen other inmates:

"I'd like to see an emphasis more on a bias to the poor - to those who find reading difficult as well as people doing OU. I think there's a danger, nationally, that need gets overlooked. That it gets user-driven by the people who are very capable and very able, and maybe they should spend a lot more time answering all the needs of the people here. But that might not necessarily be a policy that might find favour with some Education Officers" (Chaplain, Prison F).

An inmate made a similar point, arguing that the more able prisoners tended to receive proportionately more help:

"It's the same as being in a normal school. If you can't read and write you're put to the back of the class all the time - they've got no time for you. They won't help you, they want people who's good on computers, things like that - get them in front, get them degrees, so when they go out, they've got something. So them that's a bit slow and can't read and write, they go out with exactly the same as they came in with - nothing" (Inmate, Prison F).

Similarly, a member of the teaching staff at the same prison argued:

"The reality is that there are lots of people we can't reach, even though the theory is via things like distance learning we can reach them, but there are a lot of people who aren't really interested in the services we can offer and do want to be able to read and so on themselves" (Tutor, Prison F).

3 Some researchers have argued that the role of education in the prison regime is inherently ambivalent. Because taking part in education facilities is considered to reflect positively on the prisoner, motivation to attend classes may be only tangentially related to a desire for self-improvement:

"Classification personnel take pains to inform prisoners that participation in programmes such as education will have a favourable impact on classification status and, ultimately the likelihood of parole... Education is transformed into creative action in which the exercise of voluntary participation may become impossible. The emphasis of students is shifted from the experience of learning to the pursuit of good grades, credits and degrees into fulfilling requirements that will satisfy the classification process. The desire for learning or personal growth becomes subservient to a powerful unethical reward system. Many seats at all levels in prison education programmes are occupied by men who neither desire nor intend to learn" (Jones, 1992, p15).

Some inmates for example, considered that education was perceived as an opportunity to earn some money without the monotony of activity in the workshops, while at the same time earning some "brownie points" from the prison authorities by demonstrating that they were eager to voluntarily participate in constructive activities:

"Education is not really geared to what we want, it's geared to what they want. We're here like a chess piece to be moved about as it suits them. A lot of people use education here for a skive, they don't come here to work - it's a convenient way to get out of working in one of the other departments" (Inmate, Prison J)

4 Other writers have argued that the custodial environment contaminates the ideals of education:

"Entry into the prison system transforms the fundamental character of education. Its basic premises and values are undermined by the coercive environment in which it operates" (Jones, 1992, p17).

Some inmates expressed the view that they would be unwilling to use the Education department because it was considered as little more than a subliminal control agent:

"People are a bit wary about the Education department - that it's 100% establishment" (Inmate, Prison B).

5 Other inmates reported an unwillingness to take part in formal education classes for fear of exposing to others their own inadequacies:

"When I first got the interest you don't want to go into a classroom full of people and make yourself look like an idiot if you can't do it. I think that's why most people use books" (Inmate, Prison G).

Inmate attitudes like these can result in a significant under-reporting of educational difficulties:

"That's a real problem - I would say probably 70% of our men could do with at least some help in literacy and numeracy. Often not very many necessarily report themselves for that" (Education Co-ordinator, Prison E).

Whittington, in his study of lifers and long term prisoners, found that 49% were reluctant to attend formal education classes because of fears of personal inadequacy (Whittington, 1994, p11).

6 The size and range of prison Education departments and the provision of training courses "shows a discernible pattern of decreasing availability from training establishments down to local and remand establishments" (Tumim, 1993a, p45). Furthermore, some inmates may be deterred from participating in education if there is a waiting list. Whilst in custody, perceptions of time may undergo change and inmates often expect immediate responses to their demands - as Atherton has noted, "for them life is now, and the world is here" (Atherton, 1987, p50). In addition, the timetable of education may conflict with other activities on offer, which prisoners may find more enticing, as this library orderly commented:

"By the nature of the regime there are set times for classes, but the library is open every evening and weekends. They can do additional or alternative study here" (Library Orderly, Prison A).

7 For many inmates, to attend full time education would often mean a drop in wages. Typically, higher wages are paid in the

workshops or kitchens to encourage inmates to work in these areas. Although in many prisons education is the largest employer, and full-time education is considered to be a job, wages can sometimes be only a quarter of what is paid in the workshops (Williams, 1993, p53). The differential wage structure has long been criticised by education staff as acting as a deterrent, particularly to those inmates who stand to benefit most from education. Whereas some inmates may have access to private cash, those most isolated within prison are often the most disadvantaged, and they must rely wholly upon the money they earn from their prison work. In order to try and overcome this problem, some prisons have adopted a shift system of work and education, or have concentrated provision of education in the evening after a day's work. Nevertheless, this inmate's comments still hold true in many cases:

"The majority of people on education are in education because they don't want to go in the workshops, and it's a nice doss. They don't learn nothing, they don't do no homework, they're not interested, it's an easy little number and they're prepared to take the low wages that come with it" (Inmate, Prison C).

Some inmates had spent some time on full time education but argued they had become disillusioned by the basic skills oriented curriculum and the low pay:

"They've got an attitude over there though - you're supposed to be backwards, and if you're not backwards they can't help you, although there's people who need that help. So I came away, got another job in the prison. It's better pay in the kitchen. But if I stay in the tray wash, that's no good to me, because I'm not learning anything, not learning nothing, apart from what I'm reading out of the library" (Inmate, Prison H).

8 Although the Head of Inmate Activities at each prison can now specify, under the terms of the contract with the education provider, exactly what classes should be provided, it has been argued that the curriculum offered in some Education departments is inappropriate and based more on the interests of teachers than the needs of prisoners. The Chief Inspector of Prisons, Judge Tumim, provides the following example:

"I recently went around a Young Offenders Institution where a lot of 17 year old burglars were being taught management administration. Well, if they had been taught to be office boys it might have been some use, but this was just ridiculous and what they wanted was some elementary subjects. There is a danger that teachers teach the subjects which interest them rather than interests, or should interest the pupil" (Tumim, 1993b, p16).

Judge Tumim's observations were confirmed by many inmates who were interviewed in this study:

"In here, and in most prisons, everybody goes in for computers. The majority of people using computers won't touch a computer when they get out, unless it's for their own use in the house. They'll never get a job as a computer analyst or anything like that. You can tell they're just wasting lots of money on computers and neglecting the arts and other things that are more beneficial to prisoners. What I've noticed in prison, people who are well read in books are better, their personalities are better. And the people who get into the arts, it changes them, it gives them confidence in themselves" (Inmate, Prison C).

Given the range of abilities, experience and levels of motivation among inmates, inevitably there were complaints from prisoners that the curriculum was unsuitable for them. Inmates either argued that the Education department catered solely for the lowest common denominator of ability, or that it provided only esoteric

courses for an elite few and failed to address the real needs of the prison population:

"When I was on the out, I studied drama and music - there's no facilities to actually do that here. There was no courses in the Education department which I hadn't done. To me, there is nothing here that I can actually improve myself with. So I had to sit down and basically read. I'm always trying to learn, find something new, feeding one's mind. I go to the library to browse, to see if there's a subject there that might interest me. I want to take a degree in drama and the arts, but there's no facilities here for me to do that. I'd love to do that, I really would. It would take me away from a particular lifestyle, and change my course of action, my course of life" (Inmate, Prison F).

On the other hand, another inmate at the same prison argued that the education courses did not address the basic skills provision:

"Literacy isn't really something that's covered particularly well by education. They tend to get most help from other men on the landings" (Inmate, Prison F).

9 Both inmates and staff expressed concern about the limitations imposed on prison Education departments as a result of insufficient funding:

"I'm working on going to university when I leave here and obviously I need the use of a library to do as much work as I can before that. With everything being separately budgeted now, and the education budget is very tight as to what they spend their money on, so to a large extent we have to use the library to foster our educational needs. And it's happening in all prisons, people are doing more study from their cells, on their own bat, and so they will need greater access to books" (Inmate, Prison C).

10 An additional concern which has been raised is associated with the development of the core regime. Because prisoners have more flexibility in determining the pattern of their out of cell activities:

"Education officers are worried about drop-off in attendance at classes. One of the things that is happening at some jails is that as regimes and time out of cells expands, suddenly prisoners are being faced with genuine choices about how they choose to spend their time. We must offer them a service which is actually going to motivate them to attend, based upon not just an assessment of need on the part of prisoners but our knowledge of what they actually want" (Sampson, 1993, p43).

As a result of these negative perceptions, many inmates favoured the use of the library as their principal educational resource. There are three main areas in which the prison library can assist in the process of self-education - in improving literacy skills, in assisting open learning and encouraging unsupervised educational activity.

#### 4.5 THE PRISON LIBRARY AND LITERACY

Poor literacy skills are widespread in prison, and claims have been made that lack of these attributes are a significant predisposition toward offending (Brown, 1975, p159). For example, it has been argued that the illiterate offender may find greater problems in obtaining employment, which increases the risk of re-offending (Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, 1994, p16).

Improving the literacy of prisoners is also regarded as particularly important because these skills are regarded as durable, transferable and generalisable. Furthermore, Dalglish notes that the kind of material that most offenders are likely to read will tend to have a high degree of reading difficulty - such



as leaflets issued by government departments or job advertisements (Dalglish, 1982, p12).

Some writers have argued that prison provides an opportunity for inmates to address their literacy skills. For example, outside they may be unsure of where to go for help and too embarrassed to ask for any (Dalglish, 1982, p70). This inmate argued that whilst at liberty he had tried unsuccessfully to learn to read:

"I made up my mind I was going to read while I was doing my 5 years. Definitely learn to read. And I'm starting now - I can read a little book on my own now, so I'm getting there. Yet I used to go to college outside on a night and I never did pick it up. Strange. Perhaps it's cause then I didn't have the motivation. Here, I've got it" (Inmate, Prison H).

Many offenders also find it very difficult to think in abstract terms, have a closed view of the world, where their own fate is beyond their control and where they can perceive no alternative to their criminality (Williamson, 1993, p55). Reading, because it presents choices and alternatives, offers a broader perspective, which may be particularly helpful to some inmates, as this chaplain commented:

"A lot of the guys who come into prison lack the basic skills in life. But if we encourage them to do literacy and numeracy and things like that, we actually give them the tools to make life a bit better for themselves and broaden their horizons. Quite often there's a very narrow horizon, life is like this and there is no other, and actually through the pages of a book, you can open up all sorts of horizons for people" (Chaplain, Prison F).

However, as detailed above, some inmates are unlikely to seek help from the Education department to address their literacy problems. In addition, admitting personal problems, and overtly

seeking aid to redress them, are likely to reduce an inmate's influence within the institutional sub-culture. A preferable alternative is to seek help from a more private source. In common with many other aspects of institutional underlife, peer solidarity can be important in assisting prisoners in overcoming difficulties. In the example below, one prisoner acted as a tutor to his cellmate, using the prison library as a resource:

"I've got a lad who I've been with for 2 years - he came in when he was 15, he's a lifer. He used to go through six books a week. To me, it wasn't possible. I had a go at him about it. He was just reading the very small words. So I started getting him books he could read from the library. Proper words. It moved him up a bit. He's getting better at it now. He's on one book a week. It's better, because before he couldn't really read or write. His writing's still a bit shaky - it's like a spider's dropped on some ink and ran across the page, but it's getting better. His maths is shit but he's getting better at that. He's still got time enough to do. His education is getting better. They don't really help you in here. I've not seen anybody go to him and say "Listen, go down to education, cause we want you to do this", so when you get out you can understand the social services, the dole, stuff like that. But they don't. They don't really jump on your back a lot here" (Inmate, Prison F).

In addition to obtaining help from fellow inmates, the library itself can also act as a way of obtaining help without fear of embarrassment:

"You can't get on education without making an official application and showing yourself up. The library's nothing like that" (Inmate, Prison F).

This may be a factor of crucial importance for many inmates. This prison officer librarian explained the assistance that he regularly offered prisoners:

"There's many people who've never read a book until they've come into prison. We've had blokes come in to the library that's been very, very poor at reading and we start them off on easy reading books and get them through the basics. We did have one lad in here who said he couldn't read very well. I said "We'll get you some special books and when it's quiet you can come in here and read to me". And he's progressing very well. His ambition is to read a proper book off the shelves. It's not embarrassing for him, like going to education. All the lads who work here are sworn to secrecy, 'cause I've threatened to batter them if they say owt" (Prison Officer, Prison J).

Although most libraries do have some "easy readers" for inmates with poor literacy skills, or will obtain such materials on request, in most of the prisons surveyed for this research the provision of material for low literacy users was fairly poor, often little more than a shelf of old donations of children's books and discards from public library stock. One library orderly commented:

"A lot more could be done with basic education. The easy reading section is abysmal" (Library Orderly, Prison D).

Graphic novels, particularly Judge Dredd, and material such as books in the Asterix series are enormously popular in prison libraries, particularly with those inmates who may have literacy difficulties. However, some prison librarians, or in other cases the public library authority, had taken a decision not to stock such material as it was not considered to be sufficiently educational. This Education Co-ordinator expressed her views strongly on this issue:

"We had a discussion on things like Judge Dredd about a year ago and decided against them. What's the advantage of flipping off into Judge Dredd or something? Is that passing time constructively? There may be an occasional good one, but I think most of them are rubbish. I've never read one anyway. But then I don't watch things like "Neighbours" - I

tend to watch decent programmes, and I wouldn't say that me turning on "Neighbours" would have any beneficial effect for me or anyone. I'd like to think that they did something more constructive with their time than read Judge Dredd or Asterix" (Education Co-ordinator, Prison D).

Unfortunately in a prison environment, constructive activities are at a premium, and for many poor readers, Tin-Tin or Asterix may be the level of literature they can cope with unaided. At least they are reading, and visiting the prison library, where they may find other things of interest to them and come into contact with some of the other services the library provides. For example, many prison libraries have unique resources which are used by inmates who have literacy difficulties. These two inmates revealed how, although unable to read, they were nevertheless regular users of the prison library:

"I'm dyslexic, but I like doing a bit of calligraphy. If I get poems I can copy them out in calligraphy. It was the library that got me the addresses of different calligraphy agents, people who make pens and they wrote off for me and everything. If they happen to come across nice poems I can send out to the missus, they save them especially for me. They got me a book on butterflies the other week, because I like putting butterflies on envelopes for the wife and kids. I think they got it especially for me" (Inmate, Prison F).

"With me not being able to read, it's a good thing they've got some books on tape, which they never used to. I'm also learning blind signals at the moment and they've got books in for me on that as well. Sign language, you know what I mean? And there's puzzles, things like that for people who can't read very well, they can do puzzles of a night" (Inmate, Prison K).

However, cassettes were only readily available in only three of the prisons studied. One prison had in stock a sizeable amount of spoken word material, but this was not currently available to inmates, because it was considered the cases could pose a security

risk - it was argued that the cases could be used to store and transfer contraband. Three establishments had, at one time, quite sizeable collections, but these had diminished through theft and vandalism.

Many inmates are not totally illiterate, but their reading skills may be very poor. For these inmates, the library can be especially helpful:

"Because each person may have a slightly different level of literacy, I have contact with the special needs librarian and we will rely upon responding very quickly to poor readers" (Librarian, Prison H).

In some cases, inmates who have only an elementary reading ability will borrow books from the library and often in a solitary, but very highly motivated fashion, will improve not only their reading but many other skills too, as these inmates pointed out:

"In reading your vocabulary will improve, because you will come across words that you may not be familiar with. I'll look up words and next time I hear that word I'll understand it. You can self-educate yourself with books" (Inmate, Prison A).

"I find that when I read I come across a word, if it some way eludes me, I'll look it up in the dictionary. So what happens then, you start using them words, you pick up new words and new phrases in that way and along with that comes improvements in writing and spelling. That's how you learn" (Inmate, Prison D).

Malcolm X, in his autobiography, wrote of a similar experience:

"Every book I picked up had a few sentences which didn't contain anywhere from one to nearly all of the words that might as well have been in Chinese. When I just skipped these words, of course I really ended up with little idea of what the book said...I saw that the best thing I could do was

to get hold of a dictionary - to study, to learn some words...I suppose it was inevitable that as my word base broadened, I could for the first time pick up a book and read and now begin to understand what the book was saying. Anyone who has read a great deal can imagine the new world that opened. Let me tell you something: from then until I left that prison, in every free moment I had, if I was not reading in the library, I was reading on my bunk. You couldn't have got me out of books with a wedge...Up to then, I had never been so free in my life" (X Malcolm, 1968, p266).

Obviously therefore, to inmates with elementary literacy skills, dictionaries are very important. However, most of the prison librarians interviewed reported a shortage of loanable reference material, particularly dictionaries. This prison librarian regularly visited car boot sales to buy dictionaries for inmates out of her own money:

"The one thing I can never keep up with here is dictionaries - it's the most popular book in the prison. It has been suggested that inmates should be issued with dictionaries - it could almost be part of the prison pack. You could almost do that and know that it would be used. I get asked for them all the time, I can't keep up with them" (Librarian, Prison E).

However, there has been some debate as to how far the library staff should go in addressing inmate's reading difficulties. Koons has argued that prison libraries should intervene - principally because of the scale of the problem and also because libraries have tended to react to users needs, rather than being judgemental in the provision of their services (Koons, 1988, p53). On the other hand, some inmates and staff interviewed argued that it was not the responsibility of the library to become involved in directly addressing prisoners' literacy problems. For example, one Education Co-ordinator said:

"Obviously people who are poor readers we would like them to come in our direction, so we can do something about it" (Education Co-ordinator, Prison G).

Other inmates and staff argued that although help to address literacy problems should be the responsibility of the Education department, because most inmates will use the prison library at some point, some material should be available there too. Perhaps the best solution would be for the library and Education department to work together in identifying and assisting inmates with literacy difficulties. One prison had a literacy officer, and she explained her close working relationship with the librarian:

"I will pass any information regarding the students I work with to the librarian and she'll pick them up when they go in there. Also she'll pass things on if an inmate comes in and I've ordered books for him. Also I highlight people who are just beginning to read and she will get them material that is not threatening, and she will direct them to other books. I find it vitally important because a lot of people we get who say they cannot read or write, can read a little. If I can highlight these people she can take them to a section where there's material to help them without drawing attention to them" (Prison E).

Again considerations of security, and consequent regime differentials, exert a constraint on how far the prison library is able to offer support for literacy initiatives. In the local and remand prisons, where the rapid inmate turnover creates even more problems, obtaining help with literacy skills can be particularly difficult. Yet even in these establishments, some inmates argued that the prison library was seen as the only avenue available for assistance:

"They've literally bent over backwards to help me - they've wrote letters for me, they've found me books, they've found me passages in books, they've pointed out the phrases I want, they've underlined things, that's what you want to put in

your letter, that word means so and so, because big fancy words I'm not sure of. I could honestly say I've no complaints whatsoever about them. And I know several lads in the prison who's in my position, they can't read and write and they've all had the same amount of help. I know at least four on E wing alone and when they first came in they said "Because you can't read and write you get no help", which is a fact, because not reading and writing in a prison you can't get no help. So I says to them "Go up and see the officer in the library because you'll find he'll give you all the help you need". He knows people who can't read and write aren't just lazy, it's because they can't learn to read and write, or it's because they didn't get the schooling to learn. If I ask anybody to write a letter, except the librarian, the answer is "No, learn to fucking write". That's how it is, it's only the librarian that will help. If you can't read and write, you've got no chance, because no one is willing to help you" (Inmate, Prison F).

#### 4.6 THE PRISON LIBRARY AND OPEN LEARNING

Open learning has been defined as:

"Learner-centred study, possibly in pursuit of a recognised qualification, usually using materials which have been prepared so that they may be used without tutor support and without barriers of time, previous qualifications or classroom attendance" (Bamber, 1992, p2).

The resources of prison libraries and skills of the prison librarian can be used to provide significant support for inmates engaged in open learning, which is a rapidly growing area within prison education. It can cater for individuals who have a particular interest, or where class size would make it impractical to employ a paid tutor. For example, this inmate reported that the library's role was vital in supporting his own specialist study:

"I can work on my own fairly well down in the library. I'm on open learning - the resources are there, as in the programming languages, but the teaching isn't, because nobody knows about it. Then I've got my own software packages sent in, which we're allowed to have, so I can work



through on my own, so that's OK. They've got the books down there as well, actually in the library on the shelf. And the library's provided the computer and some of the software. They've done as much as they can" (Inmate, Prison K).

Inmates can also use open learning packages to work in their cells, which may be particularly important for inmates who may find it difficult to attend organised classes within the education department - for example, vulnerable prisoners, high security category prisoners or those in the prison hospital.

The role of the prison library in supporting open learning is therefore significant. Libraries can perform an enabling role, giving access to supply networks. They can act as an information provider by stocking prospectuses and maintaining a reference collection. They can also foster the development of study skills and information skills. Some Education departments have used the resources of the prison library to develop their own open learning packages, in order to avoid the prohibitive cost of purchasing ready-made courses, as this Open Learning Co-ordinator acknowledged:

"The open learning department is based in the library and we do use the library for resource material and to order any specialist books or get any specialist information. Some of the correspondence courses, although they are very, very good are really very extravagant, so it makes economic sense to use the facilities that the library service provides" (Tutor, Prison K).

Some librarians are now being specifically employed as Librarian-Tutors, in order that they can assist prisoners with open learning packages. Chughani has argued that librarians may be particularly well qualified for this type of work:

"One of the strengths librarians have to offer in this changing education is that they are used to dealing with individuals on a one to one basis, or small groups of students working together. Librarians also have a great deal of experience of helping students across a range of subject areas, of entering into dialogue with students in order to determine what their real needs as opposed to what they might originally ask for. Helping students interpret assignments, locate relevant and appropriate sources of information and helping them use these sources effectively all form part of the services we offer. Joint staff development of librarians and lecturers can help foster links and understanding of the contribution of each to tutoring in open and flexible learning" (Chughani, 1993, p24).

However, considerations of security and access exert a constraining influence upon the relationship between open learning and the library. In establishments with more liberal regimes it is possible for this association to flourish - for example, in the Vulnerable Prisoner Unit examined in this research, the library shared its space with the open learning centre. Either a tutor or librarian was present during the day and at weekends, which meant inmates had access to the library, and a member of staff, at all times when they were unlocked. Prisoners reported positively on this arrangement:

"Yes, I think you can use the library for self-education. Definitely here. Because you do have the open learning classes in the library and so they can point you in different directions, and so you're using both facilities at the same time" (Inmate, Prison K).

Chughani has argued that locating open learning centres within prison libraries engenders a more effective use of resources and also helps improve access (Chughani, 1993, p24).

However, in other prisons where the regimes are tighter, there is a very different relationship between the library and open learning. In many local prisons for example, where prisoners are allowed a twenty minute escorted visit once a week, using the library as a study centre is impossible. But demands to increase time out of cell, and perhaps more importantly, to provide constructive activities during this time, may result in a new importance being ascribed to the library, as this Education Co-ordinator at a local prison pointed out:

"As regards open learning, there's probably about 50 or 60 here. The whole thing needs reviewing - in a sense upgraded as an activity, and I think the library is a key resource to be developed. Open learning, if we are serious, would mean a student having access to the library all day, because that would be the main venue, but it doesn't happen like that. I'm not sure why. I think it so easily could, with almost open access. A lot of guys who are up here for classes would be much happier being in the library" (Education Co-ordinator, Prison F).

#### 4.7 THE IMPORTANCE OF INDEPENDENCE IN SELF-DIRECTED STUDY

As noted above, many inmates have an antipathy toward organised prison education. To recap, this may reflect a negative view toward education in general, often amplified by a lack of confidence in their own abilities and a fear of failure. Some inmates pointed to inadequacies in Education departments themselves - for example, inadequate resourcing and an inappropriate curriculum. Others said that the objectives of many prisoners in attending classes were unrelated to any desire for learning, and this distorted the work of the Education department. Finally, it was argued that the rationale of the Education department was

undermined by the prison environment itself. As a result of these factors, some inmates will avoid the Education department and prefer to use the stock of the prison library as a resource for self-education.

There is a fundamental reason for the attractiveness of the library to many prisoners - choice. In an institutional environment, control of information is paramount, while conformity and acceptance on the prisoner's part that he is a prisoner, are considered to be valid indicators of institutional adjustment (Goffman, 1971, p169). Libraries however offer an antithesis to this basic denial of self, for they present the individual an opportunity for free and unrestricted enquiry, by offering "a complete panorama of human ideas, not just those acceptable to the herd" (Simpson, 1958, quoted in Murison, 1988, p328). Some writers have even proposed that there is a basic conflict between libraries and formal education. For example, Thompson has argued that whereas education may be considered as equivalent to some form of social adjustment, libraries do not promote any particular pattern of conformity and allow individuals to arrive at a personal view (Thompson, 1974, 59). Importantly, from a prisoner's point of view, libraries offer the same service to every individual, whoever and wherever they may be. Thompson concludes that libraries are an antidote to the strictures and conditioning of the education process: "they are a constant subversion, a perpetual guerilla movement for freedom. They must strongly resist being absorbed into the formal educational system" (Thompson, 1974, p62). Similarly, Jast has pointed out an essential difference,

especially pertinent in this context, between formal educational bodies and libraries:

"The aim of the library as an educational institution is best expressed in the formula 'Self-development in an atmosphere of freedom', as contrasted with the aim of the school which is 'Training in an atmosphere of discipline' " (Jast, 1918, p8).

Prisoners were often fiercely self-determined about controlling and maintaining and their own course of intellectual development, and using the resources of the prison library was considered an integral part of this process. Some inmates for instance, argued that they felt unable to enrol for a structured course but preferred to study in their own time in their own way and at their own speed:

"I wouldn't want to do anything like OU because I know my own limitations. I haven't really got the patience to do anything like that. I like to do things bit by bit. My pleasure is Germany in World War Two, but if I was to study a course on it - I can't be bothered to set targets, I would feel under pressure all the time. I like to work at my own pace, basically do what I want to do. I've learnt a lot from my studies. I wouldn't go to the extent of trying to get a degree or whatever, I just want to learn about it at my own pace" (Inmate, Prison J).

Often inmates with low standards of formal educational attainment may have a strong fear of failure and are unwilling to risk potential humiliation in front of their fellow inmates. But once inmates have begun an interest they may develop more confidence and enrol on formal education classes. This ex-offender gave an account of the library as a stimulating force in self-education:

"The library was free and easy, you could just come in. Say if a person was interested in computers, there were computers there he could use, so it sort of grabbed their interest, and suddenly they're learning without really realising it.

Then they could branch out and learn a bit more, in which case they would go on to education classes, and a lot of them did. The library got people going".

Murison has argued that independent study also inspires self-confidence and self-discipline (Murison, 1988, p159). Thus, for some inmates, controlling their own reading patterns and developing a strategy for self education was particularly important, both as a coping mechanism within the institution and also in providing tangible benefits to assist re-integration in the post-release environment. For example, this library orderly observed that:

"Some people come in here and ask for books they wouldn't even bother asking about outside. They educate themselves while they're in here. Then when they go out, they've got knowledge haven't they? It gives everybody a different outlook" (Library Orderly, Prison B).

In a highly controlled and conditioned environment some inmates will not willingly tolerate any more control over their daily life:

"Yeah, I feel a better person because I've done my own reading, in my own time. Nobody has pressured me into doing it. If someone told me to do something I just won't do it. I'd do totally the opposite. I'll do what I want to do on my own terms, when I want to do it" (Inmate, Prison E).

An Education Co-ordinator confirmed this view:

"You can't impose what an adult learns - they will learn what they will learn and when they will learn it. I think the library is probably a better learning environment than the education department. It's more purposeful. It's very cost-effective" (Education Co-ordinator, Prison F).

Similarly, in his autobiography, Malcolm X recalls how reading to satisfy an internal craving for knowledge was inherently more valuable than studying for a paper qualification:

"I have often reflected upon the new vistas that reading opened to me. I knew right there in prison that reading had changed forever the course of my life. As I see it today, the ability to read awoke inside me some long dormant craving to be mentally alive. I certainly wasn't seeking any degree, the way a college confers a status symbol upon its students. I could spend the rest of my life reading just to satisfy my curiosity - because you can hardly mention anything I'm not curious about. I don't think anybody ever got more out of going to prison than I did. In fact, it helped me to study far more intensively than I would have if my life had gone differently and I had attended some college. Where else but in prison could I have attacked my ignorance by being able to study intensely as much as 15 hours a day? My reading had my mind like steam under pressure" (Malcolm X, 1968, p274).

#### 4.8 THE LIBRARY AS A NEUTRAL SPACE

The perceived neutrality of the library within the institution was a crucial factor in reinforcing inmate's beliefs about their intellectual independence. Almost all inmates and staff interviewed believed that the atmosphere and environment of the library was different from the rest of the prison. In fact, in some establishments, conscious efforts had been made to make it so:

"We would like it to be a place where the men felt reasonably free to come and relax, I wouldn't say put their feet up, but feel in a way they were almost away from the pressures of prison life. One of them once said to me "I thought this was neutral ground" and that is very much how we'd like to see ourselves" (Librarian, Prison E).

Similarly, an inmate argued:

"I wouldn't say you're treated more humanely in here than the rest of the nick, but you're given a little bit more respect. You're communicating with a librarian and she understands what you want. It helps develop your communication skills" (Inmate, Prison G).

Other prisoners even argued that the presence of officers within the library was felt to be a violation of private prisoner space:

"If I'm sitting in there reading a paper, you know if an officer walks in cause you hear his radio going. You feel like it's an intrusion. Also you suddenly feel you're being watched. As soon as they walk in, you feel you're being checked on" (Inmate, Prison C).

#### 4.9 THE LIBRARY AS A UNIQUE RESOURCE

For some prisoners, there may be other more practical reasons why the use of the library may be particularly important for their studies - for example, if a certain course or subject is not taught, or if teacher contact time is insufficient. This inmate, a Koestler Prizewinner, argued that access to library facilities had been vital:

"In a way, you've got to teach yourself a lot of the time in prison. Sometimes they might not have the resources to learn what you want to learn. I'm interested in art, and I've had to learn by myself. I've been in other prisons where the art teacher may only come in once or twice a week, so everything you've got to do, you've got to do it yourself. I use the library to look up things for visual aids - like if I'm doing a painting, I'll have to look in books, because I haven't got access to - for example, gannets in front of the sea or something. I couldn't do that, so I'll have to look through a book to get a picture of what I was after. I'd rather take things from life, but you're limited in here. I could get books sent in for me I suppose, but it's faster to use the library here. If I go there I can usually find out what I want. So it's good" (Inmate, Prison G).



Some prisoners with particularly specialised needs may find it difficult to obtain the level or range of support from the Education department they would like. Consequently, the library often becomes the principal source of educational material, as this prisoner reported:

"I'm very pleased with it, because the books that I've needed, I'm studying de Bono, lateral thinking, mind mapping, and they've been able to get me several books on it, and any other books I've needed. I'm studying French and they've got me books on France, and language tapes. Subjects I've been interested in, but haven't had time to study, like poetry, they've helped me there. I'm also interested in doing a bit of artwork and they've got me books on that" (Inmate, Prison H).

The prison librarians in this study showed varied attitudes to obtaining inter-library loans for inmates. Some would only borrow from other libraries within their area, while others would obtain material from the British Library for particularly trusted or favoured inmates. One prisoner who was studying comparative religion said:

"The library has been a good source of information - especially for special orders. Like I recently obtained a copy of Taylor's Diegesis, a very valuable book, published in 1829. Without the library I wouldn't have had access to it, and am very grateful for that. Plus, I've had some other quite valuable books from the British Library" (Inmate, Prison A).

A Senior Librarian from a supplying public library authority concluded that the library had an important role in supplying an individual service to inmates and fostering their educational development:

"Within reason, depending on what inmates are asking for, we do try and get what they are interested in. If they don't actually want to go through the formal education service in the prison, that doesn't mean they might not want to read round a subject. Also there are a lot of subjects not covered by the Education department at all. So we get a lot of very varied requests. Some inmates will educate themselves without going through the Education department" (Senior Librarian, Public Library Authority, Prison A).

#### 4.10 POLITICAL AND ETHNIC CONSCIOUSNESS

As noted above, education may be considered to be rehabilitative if it raises levels of political or ethnic consciousness (Williams, 1993, p41). Some former prisoners have written that their use of the prison library was instrumental in helping to develop their knowledge in these areas:

"I had never forgotten how when my class had studied 7th grade U.S. history, the history of the negro had been covered in one paragraph...I took special pains to hunt in the library for books that would inform me on details about black history...I never will forget how shocked I was when I began reading about slavery's total horror. The world's most monstrous crime, the sin and the blood on the white man's hands are almost impossible to believe...Ten guards and the warden could not have torn me out of those books. They provided indisputable proof that the collective white man had acted like a devil in virtually every contact with the world's collective non-white man...My homemade education gave me, with every additional book that I read, a little bit more sensitivity to the deafness, dumbness and blindness that was afflicting the black race in America" (X Malcolm, 1968, pp269-270).

Several black prisoners interviewed also commented that black history had not been covered whilst they were at school and they too were using the resources of the prison library to read in this area:

"Reading about black history hasn't really changed my outlook, but what it has done has made me more interested in learning about issues like that - it's important for everyone to know their history. It's made me a lot stronger in some ways because you've got to know yourself, otherwise there's some elements missing - you've got to know where your culture has come from. I would not say people really hide things - if you go to an English school you must be expected to learn English history, although that's changed a bit now in school - now different people can learn about their own history. But it wasn't like that when I was at school. It doesn't really help you in your day to day life, but more psychologically, how you're thinking about yourself, you know who you are, you can identify with yourself. It's not really a thing that should be kept away from people. But saying that, there's not everybody that will be interested in their black history - if I was out on the street now, I don't think I'd wake up and think "I must go down the library and read up on black history", because I'd have other things to do. But now that I'm here, obviously I have the opportunity. And it was something that was missed at school - if it was done at school, I would not need to be studying black history now. But now I may as well, because I've got the time" (Inmate, Prison H).

"The reason I'm reading so much now is the information what I'm reading - I need it, to make myself more aware of what's going off, because I didn't know. What they taught me at school - no black faces. I can remember I once saw a picture of Marcus Garvey, this is when I was training to be an electrician, but I didn't know about him. Big dreadlocks down my back as well, you know what I mean? Disgusting. Disgusting. Really bad. Come to prison, and start reading this, reading that. Wonderful, showed me knowledge. I had to come to prison to find out. I know where I'm coming from now and some of the attitudes out there. So I've got this time, I'm going to do something with it" (Inmate, Prison B).

This prisoner said that reading had broadened his understanding of African culture and politics. He notes that whilst at liberty these issues would not have had the same impact, because this information would have been received via the television and its influence reduced by the pressure of other activities:

"Some books, yeah, they have made me think different actually. This guy when I was in the last jail gave me a book and I found it very interesting. I found it very interesting - a book called "Kaffir Boy". I didn't really read before, and it took off from there really. Now I get

two or three books a week. "Kaffir Boy", for instance, that was like all about apartheid, and it went into details all about that. The book was interesting. What I used to think about Africa has changed a lot. Just the way people are treated over there. When I was outside, I didn't really take no interest in that thing, you know what I mean? When I seen it on the telly, next day I'd forgotten all about it. Stuff like that when I was on the out didn't really like interest me if you know what I mean, cause I was too busy doing other things really" (Inmate, Prison J).

Another prisoner offered an example of how reading can affect political awareness, develop insight and increase confidence and self esteem :

"I'm finding I'm getting to a position where I can formulate opinions, whereas before I couldn't really, because I didn't have any information. I was like a recluse, so I couldn't make a qualified comment about anything. When people asked me 'What do you think of that?', apartheid for instance, I wasn't in a position to say anything, because I didn't know too much about it. I know about it now. I know the Dutch invaded in 1656. I can give you chapter and verse about it now. And the black population live in 13% of the country, which is theirs. I think it's disgusting. I didn't have an opinion before, because I didn't know much about it. I think the white western people have got a lot to answer for on what's gone on over there" (Inmate, Prison K).

These four themes illustrated above - the concept of prison as opportunity, the authority of the written word, the supportive nature of the inmate sub-culture and the time prisoners have to reflect and become absorbed in particular subjects - will be referred to many times in this study.

#### 4.11 THE PRISON LIBRARY AND OFFENDING BEHAVIOUR

Prison can be a very isolating environment, both physically and intellectually. Some inmates may have had a long history of

denial in regard to their offending, and the shock of being in custody can force some to look closely at their behaviour. Prison can also be a very confusing place and many inmates will turn to books to try and make sense of themselves and their situation:

"I've noticed some prisoners reading quasi-political books. When people are in prison one of the first things they look at is books containing messages where they can see themselves. It's strange to find someone with no education reading some philosophical dissertation on Peruvian refugees, yet they seem to understand it. Novels can be whipped through, but non-fiction books can take a longer time and have to be worked through a bit more. Incidentally, they find them interesting" (Senior Probation Officer, Prison J).

Novels, and also social sciences texts, which can offer insight into the particular experience of imprisonment and place it in a particular context, have been found to be extremely popular among inmates. For example, in their study of long term prisoners, Cohen and Taylor reported that some prisoners said that their reading had helped them understand their own motivations and actions, by providing an interpretative framework (Cohen and Taylor, 1981, p185). Books dealing with psychology and self-analysis are also in heavy demand in many prison libraries:

"I think it all adds to their life experience, broadens their horizons, as well as being a pastime. We have such great demand for things like Freud and Castaneda - and they all seem to take so much heed of it" (Librarian, Prison E).

However, it has to be said that for some prisoners, the temptation to use such ideologies to rationalise and externalise their own behaviour, in order to absolve themselves of blame, is a very real attraction. In some prisons there are restrictions on inmate access to psychology books, and this issue is addressed in

Chapter 6. The wider issue of reading and its impact upon offending behaviour is addressed in Chapter 7.

#### 4.12 LONG TERM PRISONERS

The number of long term and life sentenced prisoners has shown a dramatic increase over recent years. In 1977 there were 1309 life sentenced prisoners, while in 1991 there were 2795. In 1981 21% of prisoners were serving sentence of four years or over, by 1991 this proportion had increased to 42% (Whittington, 1994, p2). The average sentence length imposed by Crown Courts in 1982 was 16.6 months, but by 1992 it had risen to 21.1 months (Home Office, 1994a, p4).

Prisoners with indeterminate sentences are often remarkably resilient in dealing with their time in custody. While increasing passivity and dependence are characteristics commonly associated with long term imprisonment, many researchers have found that deterioration over time is by no means inevitable (see Gray, 1978; Sapsford, 1978; Zamble and Porporino, 1988). Such determination to avoid institutionalisation is often assisted by a conscious will on the prisoner's part to develop adaptive and coping strategies. For example, in a study of the reasons why long term prisoners attended education classes, 47% said they attended to keep their mind alert, 38% said it would help in their preparation for release, while only 15% said they attended simply to passively pass time (Whittington, 1994, p4).

Rubin has argued that particularly for the long term prisoner:

"The institution becomes the only sphere of reality for the inmate; his entire term transpires in a closed microcosm. Because he cannot physically leave the institution, his only alternative to its daily structure is vicarious experiences such as those provided in library materials" (Rubin, 1974b, p438).

In their study of the experience of long-term imprisonment, Cohen and Taylor found many prisoners used the library as a resource for self-education:

"such intellectual work undoubtedly allows the men a chance to realise certain goals in an otherwise undifferentiated future...This work is far from being a mere endurance exercise or shallow ritual. The men refer to the dramatic changes that this or that book has produced in their view of life. They talk of their personality as changing as a result of what they have read, and they recognise the cumulative value of these changes" (Cohen and Taylor, 1981, p74).

Some lifers interviewed for this research argued that long termers were more likely to be motivated into using their time in custody constructively than short term prisoners:

"Some of the long term prisoners, because they've got such a long time to do, look to improve themselves. They're thinking about what to do with their time, and making the most of it, before they do get out. People on a short sentence, 3 months, 6 months, often just want to bide their time and get it over with. They wouldn't consider a change in their lifestyle or whatever" (Inmate, Prison H).

Long-term prisoners did report that their use of the library as an educational resource was an important coping mechanism for them, to avoid institutionalisation and to help them prepare for the future. Some prisoners argued that education enlarged their world view and helped compensate for the narrowness of prison life,

while one lifer interviewed had used the library's resources as a means of keeping contact with his children:

"As a long term prisoner that's been separated from his children, I would like to see more on the relationships between children and their parents - if there were more books concerning the family I would have used them. I have used certain books I've found in there, like child development, children and drugs, children and bullying, children and school. Yes, I'd like that. When I started reading developmental psychology I found a way of keeping in touch with my children that was on a developmental, age related basis, so although I wasn't in contact with them everyday, at least I knew where they were mentally. That helped me in conversing with them and knowing what to expect - so I learnt that from reading. Those books are on the shelf, you don't need a formal course to pick up that sort of thing" (Inmate, Prison D).

However, some long termers did say that their use of the library as an educational resource declined over time. Inmates will frequently accumulate many possessions over a long sentence, particularly books, not least because they are often one of the easier items to be sent in from outside. Thus toward the end of a long sentence, a visit to the library simply in order to get something to read, becomes less important. However, as this particular use of the library declines, it may be replaced by other demands, as this prisoner, who had served 17 years of a life sentence, commented:

"To be honest, I use the library very little. I've got my own books now. I've got about 5 or 600 books in my cell. At the moment, I'm specialising in Japan - I'm learning the language, Japanese philosophy, Japanese history. If I do go to the library it's usually to inquire whether they can get me some particular material to get addresses to write to. Information - that's what libraries are about" (Inmate, Prison H).



Other long termers reported that they tended to use the library as a means of keeping contact with the community outside:

"I would say the library was important in general, because I've used it as a stepping stone to higher education. But I'm so far into my sentence now, 12 years, that I've become almost self-supportive - I've got my own supply of Open University books, stuff like that. So the importance of the library to me has decreased, other than for the magazines, like New Scientist, which is the main reason why I use the library at the moment. Whereas in the early sentence, you're just consuming one book after another just to take your mind away from where you are, but at this stage of my sentence, I suppose my choice of reading material is more selective" (Inmate, Prison J).

These changes in use have important implications for the kind of library service that long term prisoners require. Long term prisoners do need information, resources and support to continue with their studies, to help them maintain contact with the community and to prepare for their eventual release.

#### 4.13 EVALUATION

Overall, some respondents disagreed that use of the library could be educative. Their principal reasons for this belief were:

1 The resources of the library itself were inadequate:

"Prison libraries in general might, but this one doesn't, because there's nowhere to sit down and read, no facilities to sit down and study. You get three people in there, you turn around and you think you're having your pocket picked or whatever. It's just not conducive to self-education" (Inmate, Prison F).

2 Self-education in some subject areas was not really possible without feedback from others:

"Simply having books is not necessarily helpful, particularly in a discipline like philosophy, because you need to be questioned. You can read a book without necessarily knowing what's in it, and your knowledge of that particular subject once you've read the book needs to be tested by people who are familiar with the subject. You can educate yourself in certain areas, of course you can, but it depends what area you're looking at. Some things like DIY books, something like that I'm sure you could educate yourself, other areas you can't. An educational textbook is nothing more than a reference point for you. It's very difficult to do OU, or any kind of university course in prison, because you really need to be surrounded by like minds, whatever the subject is you're doing. It can be a very isolating, frustrating experience being given textbooks and then exercises to do. You do need contact with others, you need to be able to be questioned" (Inmate, Prison D).

3 The stock and request service of the prison library was inadequate to support private study:

"I wanted to teach myself Afrikaans, because I'm emigrating in September, so I applied through the library for a book, to teach myself. Well, I've been waiting now two and a half months. There was one ordered while I was at another prison, then I came here and it was to be diverted to here, but it never got here, so for me it hasn't been any good. But if there was a speedier way of doing it, it would be very helpful for self-education" (Inmate, Prison J).

4 Some inmates said that for the library to be effective in supporting inmates, inmates must know how to use its resources. Poor user education, low levels of promotion and a reactive service were characteristics of most of the libraries reviewed in this study:

"It's a bit like dealing with the taxman, you've got to know what to ask for to be able to do it. The choices on the shelves I find very limited and limiting. So I don't think it helps you - unless you want to do GCSE Sociology from about

1970, or something like that. Some of the books are actually a history lesson in themselves" (Inmate, Prison G).

5 The generally low levels of literacy tend to limit the number of inmates who are potentially able to benefit from self-education. Some inmates said they were unable to learn from the written word, and needed human interaction:

"Talking to people, you learn better that way. Books are just pieces of paper with squiggles on. They're immaterial man. You just can't educate yourself by the library, you can't" (Inmate, Prison H).

6 Finally, some inmates had highly negative attitudes which worked against any educative or beneficial influence which the library could help develop:

"No. How is it? I've read hundreds of books and I ain't learned nish. It's just a pastime, that's all. I've read hundreds of books. They don't learn you how to spell better, they don't learn you how to read better. I've read hundreds of books, and I can honestly say hundreds, it might even be thousands, and my spelling hasn't improved, I still don't know how to spell some words. Reading don't learn you nothing" (Inmate, Prison J).

The constraints on aspects of library operations will be fully examined in Chapter 9.

However, despite these perceived and real difficulties faced by some inmates, for others, the library helped fulfil a vital role in their educational development. Its importance lies in three main areas:

1 Whereas the curriculum of the Education department is confined to a limited number of subjects, the prison library suffers no such

limitations. In this respect, the library is a unique source of information to many inmates, and one which often provides them with some element of continuity with their previous life outside, as these inmates reported:

"Things that I want to learn, things that I'm interested in, no teachers can come in here and teach me it, so I have to pick up a book and read it. So I write little essays on what I've read, you know what I mean? So I do that myself, because it all goes to the good when I start my degree, so I know a little bit about what I'm talking about, or who I'm listening to. So the library is important to me. If it wasn't there, I'd have to be sending out for books wouldn't I, and I couldn't afford that" (Inmate, Prison B).

"I've got six months left to do of my H.N.D. in Book Design and Restoration. I know what I'm doing, so I'm just continuing reading around the subject. I've asked the librarian for addresses of Florence libraries so I can write to them and see what systems they use for conservation, so it'll help me when I start my work to keep in touch with modern systems of restoration. In my case, the use of the library will be to bring me more up to date with the actual procedures used" (Inmate, Prison C).

2 The perceived impartiality of the library was important to many inmates, providing an environment where prisoners felt easier about asking for help and information than in many other areas of the establishment. The library staff, usually civilian, often female, were considered to be important factors by inmates in maintaining this neutral environment. The significance of these perceptions held by inmates will be discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

3 The prison library was essential in helping sustain the high motivation of inmates, and helping provide them with constructive activities during the times they are locked in their cells. Especially important in this respect is the expanding role of many

prison libraries in developing and supporting open learning. Finally, as noted above, the library has a particularly important role to play in the lives of long term prisoners.

However, although providing prisoners with education may be an important, and sometimes a necessary, component of rehabilitation, it is unlikely of itself, however, to be a sufficient guarantee of pro-social behaviour:

"I don't think any one thing on its own is good enough. A man might be getting university education in a prison but he might still be an evil, selfish swine mightn't he?"  
(Education Co-ordinator, Prison E).

In the following chapters, the role of the prison library in relation to other areas of the rehabilitative process will be discussed. The first theme to be examined concerns the role of the library as a provider of information.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# THE PRISON LIBRARY AND THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION: THE ISSUES

Information is important in all our lives, by it we can interpret the past, make reasoned choices in the present and plan for the future. In prison, information is even more important, because prisoners tend to be more disadvantaged, and are generally less well equipped to deal with their problems.

The Woolf Report argued that the establishment of a more effective network of information provision within prisons was essential to the development of regimes based on humanity and justice (Woolf and Tumim, 1991, para10.20). However, the provision of information is also a prerequisite of any successful programme of rehabilitation, in order to assist prisoners to confront their own offending, and to be made aware of the implications of their behaviour. Information can help develop cognitive skills, it is empowering and motivating in the sense that it can assist inmates themselves to develop alternative problem solving techniques (Home Office, 1992c, para6.2), an enlarged information base provides a broader perspective for reasoned decision making, and it also

enables prisoners to learn from the experiences of others (Albert, 1989, p126). Information is also essential for inmates to be properly prepared for their release.

The role of the prison library in the provision of accessible information resources to inmates forms the substance of this chapter. Three principal issues are addressed - the nature of inmates' information needs, whether the prison library should have any part in addressing these needs, and the likelihood of whether inmates would actually use such material. In addition, the questions of whether prison libraries have an advocacy role and whether they should provide an information service to other departments within the prison are also examined. Firstly, however, the general provision of information within a custodial environment is analysed.

### **5.1 THE PRISON: AN INFORMATION-POOR ENVIRONMENT**

Although prisons have been described as an "information vacuum" (Vogel, 1989a, p35), this is not strictly true. There is in fact, a large amount of information provided to prisoners. The Prison Service itself supplies information and disseminates it through individual departments or members of staff. Civilian staffed departments such as probation, together with the contracted education provider can also help satisfy the information needs of the inmate. Furthermore, many establishments call upon a variety of external agencies or groups to provide supplementary information or advice services. Nevertheless, the effective

provision and presentation of the appropriate levels of information, and ensuring that inmates are equipped with the necessary skills to use such resources are, in practice, objectives which are often very difficult to fully realise.

## 5.2 OBJECTIVE 1: PROVIDING THE APPROPRIATE LEVELS OF INFORMATION

Constraints which specifically affect library operations are fully examined in Chapter 8. However, a number of factors which limit the extent and nature of information provision in the prison as a whole are briefly examined below.

### Under resourcing

Many officers who were interviewed argued that inadequate staffing levels, exacerbated by a greater amount of paperwork and an extension of their job profile, meant they were frequently unable to perform their duties satisfactorily, in some cases, even those directly affecting prison security. Judge Tumim has stated that staff morale is at such a low ebb that there exists a "crisis of confidence" in the Prison Service (Independent, 5/1/1995, p1). Inevitably, understaffing can exert a major constraint on the effective provision of information within a prison establishment. At one of the C category prisons studied, it was reported that there had been no pre-release course for the last 2 years:

"A pre-release course is supposed to be on the way, but it's been on the way since I came. It's an absolute disgrace that there isn't one" (Education Co-ordinator, Prison C).



Furthermore, other research has indicated that lack of material resources may hamper officers from answering even the most basic of prisoners' requests (see Stevens, 1992, p59).

### Staff expertise

Plotnikoff and Woolfson have argued that there is a direct relationship between provision of, and access to, information and the quality of management (Plotnikoff and Woolfson, 1992, p20). The Woolf Report highlighted the problem of different departments failing to co-operate with each other, or even to recognise their contribution (Woolf and Tumim, 1991, para10.31). Staff in the present study reported poor levels of departmental integration, a hierarchical organisation of jobs, rigidly defined duties and inadequate communications resulting in the haphazard dissemination of information, the duplication of effort and poor awareness of resources.

Furthermore, for information provision to inmates to be effective, the staff involved in its provision must be well trained and familiar with the material they are dealing with, and with what other departments are able to offer. In many establishments, this is clearly not the case, as previous research has indicated (Stern, 1989, p77; Stevens, 1992, p91). When interviewed as part of this study, a pre-release officer pointed out that lack of training reduces both the quality and quantity of course delivery:

"It's not an ideal situation at the moment because we can't take every inmate who's shortly to be released. There's only

two of us trained working on the pre-release unit, so we tend to end up working with people who are not trained pre-release officers. And because of rest days, leave, we're not both going to be here all the time, so at the moment it's less than satisfactory the way that the courses are being run" (Prison Officer, Prison B).

Some inmates argued that officers displayed little tact when dealing with their information request. Concerns of lack of confidentiality, particularly with regard to a personal problem, often deterred inmates from using formal information providers:

"Sometimes you don't want to approach you personal officer, because on a wing with 50 people listening, you don't want to go and ask an officer about clothing grants, because you like them all to think that you have whatever - you've got a Rolls Royce, but really it's a push-bike" (Inmate, Prison H).

#### Inmate awareness

Research has indicated that awareness of information resources among inmates is lower than among staff. In addition, prisoners tend to consider more non-uniformed or civilian staffed departments as information sources than do prison staff (Stevens, 1992, p35). This is the result of two principal factors. Firstly, civilian departments have traditionally been linked with a welfare role in their work with prisoners, rather than one of tackling offending behaviour, or being involved in any way with discipline. For example, a recent Home Office review examining the training of probation officers found an inappropriate emphasis on "social work values" (Guardian, 15/2/1995, p22). Second, there is a common perception held by prisoners, often quite incorrectly, that civilians will give them more favourable treatment. The result is that inmates may miss, or avoid, information that is disseminated

through uniformed staff. This is particularly important as prison officers have become increasingly involved in setting up and leading initiatives such as inmate development programmes and pre-release courses. Furthermore, uniformed staff are also adopting responsibility for welfare work previously done by seconded probation officers. This is in addition to their duties in leading offending behaviour programmes where prison officers are recognised as the "key workers" (Williamson, 1993, p56). One researcher has argued that these developments have had negative overall consequences, diminishing the perceived status of probation officers and failing to enhance the role of prison officers:

"Probation officers in prisons spend less time in routine contacts with prisoners which might reveal needs deeper than the presenting problem (the "welfare" request): if the prisoners never meet probation officers, they are unlikely to think of them as a source of help. Many prisoners are extremely sceptical about the motives and qualifications of uniformed staff engaged in welfare work, and a significant minority refuse to use such a service, cutting themselves off from the welfare service" (Williams, 1991, p10).

This view was confirmed by many inmates:

"I haven't really found probation that useful as it happens, they always seem too busy. We've got personal officers that deal with your case, but they're limited to what they can do, and there's only a certain amount you can say to them, yeah?" (Inmate, Prison A).

### 5.3 OBJECTIVE 2: PRESENTING INFORMATION EFFECTIVELY

Irrespective of actual content, the perceived value of information is defined by the way in which it is presented, and by the amount

of confidence the audience has in the presenter. A characteristic of all total institutions is that staff and inmates tend to conceive of each other in antagonistic stereotypes, with occasional formal contact but little genuine interaction (Goffman, 1971, p18). Unless a positive relationship exists between jailer and jailed, prisoners may believe they are being doubly punished in prison, and this may reinforce their already hostile attitude to society, precipitating further crimes upon release (see Longford, 1991). At all prisons in this study, prisoners expressed hostility, though in varying degrees, to members of staff. The persistence of this kind of negative stereotyping tended to adversely affect inmate's opinions of the quality of advice or information being offered:

"From my personal experience on the pre-release course, it was "My name's Chris. Forget you're in prison, we're all going to be on a personal level". But it's all a load of bollocks, you soon get shouted out and you get back to the same old patronising attitude. I think some of the officers are keen, but at the end of the day, the cynicism is there from the inmates. They might go on the course but they don't want to know. Their attitude is "You can't believe anything what a screw says to you", and they're full of shit and all the rest of it, because of all the time they've been treated badly before" (Inmate, Prison C).

However, in those establishments with more relaxed regimes, for example the Vulnerable Prisoner Unit, and in those establishments with a greater proportion of younger staff, the inmate-staff divide seemed less pronounced, and the resolution of information requests consequently more effective:

"They must believe in the place. Presumably a lot of them are married and have got kids themselves, so it must be difficult for them. The majority of them are genuine like and want to help you out. They'll stop in the corridors and talk to you, and try to sort any problem out, I suppose 24

hours a day. If you ring your bell at night time, say if you've got somebody ill in your family, for argument's sake, and you were worried about them, they'll come in and sit with you, for however long it takes, that sort of thing. You couldn't ask for any more than that could you really?" (Inmate, Prison K).

Nevertheless, earlier research has indicated that in such prisons, many inmates may exhibit only a superficial adjustment to staff values, in order to avail themselves of particular regime benefits, while suppressing their hostile attitudes to authority, and retaining and concealing their distorted values and beliefs (Stevens, 1992, p88).

#### 5.4 OBJECTIVE 3: ENSURING INMATES ARE EQUIPPED WITH THE NECESSARY INFORMATION SKILLS

The competency of the individual to use given information acts as a significant determinant of its effectiveness. For example, as Albert has noted:

"An inmate population consisting largely of the urban disadvantaged often lacks formal information-seeking behaviour. Indeed, many inmates may simply not understand that information can help solve problems. They do not value information as a way to deal with a life situation or a crisis" (Albert, 1984, p48).

##### Cognitive deficits

Many inmates have impaired cognitive skills which inhibits both the recognition of their information needs and their utilisation of information in the most effective way. For example, because many offenders tend to lack self-control and act impulsively, and are

very unwilling to delay gratification, they find it extremely difficult to plan for the future. In addition, because they tend to externalise events, believing they can exert little or no influence upon their own destiny, and have an egocentric perspective, inmates are often unused to making reasoned choices (Williamson, 1993, p54).

Although cognitive skills programmes are now being run in eight prisons, the nature of many prison regimes have in the past tended to reinforce the inmate's learned helplessness and dependency, or at best, substituted the casual inactivity of life outside with regimented monotony and boredom inside:

"Having failed or unable to structure in our lives any ideals, we become trapped, possessing no rationale for personal judgement on how to think or what to do. Left on our own, our lives become hopelessly disorganised, and we live from moment to moment with nothing tying the moments together in a purposeful unity. We remain stuck in indifference, neither loving nor hating the world around us and the lives within us, but dead to all" (Inmate, Prison E).

Plotnikoff and Woolfson have argued that restricted access to information tends to reinforce and accelerate this institutionalisation process (Plotnikoff and Woolfson. 1992, p17).

### Expectations

Because of their unfamiliarity in dealing with information, some inmates may hold unrealistic expectations concerning the solutions to their information needs. When these expectations are unfulfilled, prisoners may tend to develop negative attitudes

towards the information providers and become reluctant to use them at all:

"I've asked about loads of things and you get nowhere. The screws aren't interested really, or if they are, they want to do it their way and if you disagree with that, then tough. It's very, very hard" (Inmate, Prison F).

#### Articulation of needs

It may be unreasonable to expect inmates to articulate their information requirements, when in many cases, their needs have already been constrained by a lifetime of underachievement and negative expectations:

"I don't expect anything from prison. Why should I?"  
(Inmate, Prison J).

Furthermore, the prison environment may be wholly uncondusive to any kind of articulation process. For example, Campbell has argued that prisoners may be unable to express their information needs in the form that the prison demands:

"The welfare and medical services are able to tackle prisoners' problems only if they are presented with them in a definite shape...Unfortunately, most problems affecting people in or out of prison are not capable of tidy definition; they are too nebulous, too complex for simple sentences or else deeper than language" (quoted in Stevens, 1992, p22).

In addition, the benefits to be gained from formally asking for help may be outweighed, from the inmate's point of view, by a variety of other factors. For example, the opportunity to attend drugs courses may be perceived by the prisoner not as an opportunity for a problem to be challenged, but simply another

negative factor to go on their record. Furthermore, if a prisoner does attend a drugs course, this may mean some extra unwelcome attention from officers, in regard to increased levels of observation or more intensive cell searches.

The prison sub-culture also requires adherence to certain behavioural norms, and for inmates to be seen to be asking for help, implies a weakening of character by resorting to collaboration or submission, while also legitimising the values of the institution by recognising and acceding to its authority (Blomberg, 1967, p162). This prisoner argued that an atmosphere of distrust pervades all relationships within prison, limiting information seeking activity:

"Officers will say "Have you got any problems?" "No, boss", 'cause I don't like talking to a screw about a personal problem. It's a funny sort of world inside, and though you've got your friends, you've got your mates, you always hold back because you don't know if you can trust them or not" (Inmate, Prison H).

## 5.5 THE GRAPEVINE

Despite the fact that a great deal of information is currently presented to prisoners by the various personnel responsible for prisoner welfare services, and in the form of pre-release courses, therapy programmes or specific modules designed to address particular aspects of offending behaviour, prisoners commonly find it difficult to relate this information to their own lifestyle or behaviours outside. For many inmates the motivation to



participate in such courses may be little more than a chance to get out of the workshops for a few days:

"You have a chance of going on a release course - most people just use it for a week off work. They're not really bothered what goes off in there anyway. The only thing that interests them is whether they're going to watch a video or not. It's just a chance to get a week off work, and an extra two pounds in their wages I think" (Inmate, Prison J).

Of particular concern, this study revealed that younger prisoners, and thus typically serving relatively short sentences, argued they would not attend courses, although it is this group who would probably have most to gain, if their cycle of offending could be interrupted at an early stage:

"We're short termers, we know we're getting out anyway, so we've got an attitude. We're not bothered. I've got my date, I'm off. Got my date, got my date. So we won't go on these courses" (Inmate, Prison J).

"It doesn't matter what they do, you become immune to prison. You just let it float all above your head. You become apathetic, smoke gear all the time, muck around. It doesn't matter, because we're getting out" (Inmate, Prison J).

Furthermore, the way information is delivered to inmates is unlikely to result in any internalisation of new attitudes, or adoption of any new behaviours, because it is typically transmitted without reinforcement. Neither is it self-directed, for inmates' attendance on courses is in many cases conditioned by a desire to portray the most positive, yet in many cases, superficial, image of conformity to the appropriate authority figures. As a result of these two factors, resultant changes are contingent upon the prison environment, and thus represent

temporary adjustments, with low potential for generalisability or transferability of those changes to the outside environment (Zamble and Porporino, 1988, p151).

Partly in an attempt to overcome these difficulties, many inmates turn to each other for advice and information. The development of a 'grapevine' among inmates is further accentuated by the staff-inmate split which, in varying degrees, is found in all total institutions (Goffman, 1971, p20). A mass of information accumulates within the prison from the complex matrix of social networks and voluntary associations which develop between prisoners themselves. These networks facilitate the communication of very basic information through to the distribution of quite complex material. Unfortunately the pattern of information seeking behaviour which tends to evolve usually results in the obviously unsatisfactory situation of shorter sentenced inmates seeking information and advice from those prisoners who have been away from the outside community for the longest time and who tend to be the most deviant leaders. In addition, the decision to approach another longer term inmate for information may not be based upon their perceived ability to provide a satisfactory response, but more a concern to ingratiate oneself with a particular prisoner. Longer term inmates themselves however, as they become more familiar with exploiting information resources, will tend to rely less on information from other prisoners (Stevens, 1992, p26). Nevertheless, this informal information network which exists among prisoners is often the most preferred source - on the grounds of easier access, shared interests, friendliness and affective support, assured confidentiality, exclusivity of certain

information, perceived greater reliability and a desire by the inmate to have some element of independence of the formal system. However, information passed between prisoners may not necessarily be either accurate or reliable, and is often based on inadequate recollections of limited personal experience. And as information needs increase in scale, diversity and complexity, reliance on other inmates becomes progressively more unsatisfactory:

"Say people are coming out and they don't know where to live. If they go to see probation, they will probably tell them to see their personal officer. And then you might have to wait a week before you can see them, or they're too busy. People who should advise them haven't got the time to advise them, so prisoners talk to other prisoners - that's the way it works. A lot of people in here haven't got it to like think for themselves - other prisoners have got to advise them. And when you've got other prisoners advising other prisoners, no wonder you have them coming back, you know? Half the prisoners giving advice don't know what they're talking about anyway" (Inmate, Prison F).

In conclusion, it can be argued that the way information is provided and presented in many areas of the prison is inadequate and is compounded by the inability of many inmates to make effective use of it.

## **5.6 THE ROLE OF THE PRISON LIBRARY AS AN INFORMATION PROVIDER TO INMATES**

The prison library occupies a unique position in the eyes of many inmates. The library environment was recognised by the vast majority of all respondents interviewed as one which was different from that which generally pertained in the rest of the prison. The library was generally perceived by prisoners as an independent

body within the institution, and indeed many library staff will consciously work toward cultivating that image. As a result of these factors, many inmates felt that the library had different objectives from the rest of the prison:

"The librarian who runs it is far more helpful, that's not decrying other members of staff, but I think he feels he's got a role to fulfil and he's trying his best to help. The rest of the prison is just about containment, but the library has something to offer inmates, and the librarian will go out of his way, whether it's this librarian, or librarians in prison in general, I don't know - he will certainly go out of his way to help and that's not something you get in any other part of the prison. If the library was run on the same lines as the rest of the prison service, you'd have to queue up at the library doors, you'd have to put in an application saying what books you want and then you'd have to justify why you'd like to read them" (Inmate, Prison F).

Rubin has argued that whereas "the institutional environment tends to convert all programmes into one of coercion", the goal of prison libraries is essentially the promotion of self-understanding (Rubin, 1974b, p442). This study revealed that inmates will often go to the library to ask for help but will assiduously avoid any other departments, because they felt that the library was one place in the prison where their information needs would be treated seriously, where they would be treated with respect and receive assistance if they required it:

"The library is detached from the main prison. In the library people are actually looking after your interests - like if you go to the doctor, a doctor is there to look after what is wrong with you. Normal day to day routine on the landing is hurry up to go slow. In the library it's a more relaxed attitude - you're going there to be looked after, so people are listening to what you actually want. And where officers are working alongside civilians they are more relaxed, they have less aggressive attitudes, so that reflects their treatment of inmates. The officers in the library, because they are looking at your specific needs tend to be more accommodating" (Inmate, Prison F).

Furthermore, in the library it is possible to do something which is impossible anywhere else in the prison - access information confidentially and independently. In this context, one researcher has argued that the prison library has an important function:

"to provide the means by which a change in inmate thinking can occur, a change that can affect the way that problems are approached and solved by inmates themselves" (Albert, 1989, p126).

Some education staff argued that there was a relationship between seeking information independently and raising levels of self esteem:

"Information should be available because institutions take away so much from an inmate in terms of self determination, decision making, that the library could be one place at least within the institution where they can make their own choices and get information. That might help restore some of their self respect" (Tutor, Prison A).

By accessing information this way, prisoners can avoid the perceived negative effects of involving the formal providers, and also their fellow inmates:

"Not everybody sees that kind of information on the wings. They're very intimidated by officers some of them - a uniform spells something entirely different than the librarian. Some won't ask officers, some won't bother going on courses and if they do, they switch off. So I think the library should provide information like that. If they've never tasted it before, it's worth it" (Tutor, Prison B).

Trust was a word which came up frequently when respondents were talking about this particular topic - library staff tended to trust inmates more and inmates trusted library staff more:

"I get the feeling that in the library, inmates are trusted until they've proved untrustworthy, whereas in the rest of the prison they're not trustworthy until they've proved otherwise" (Chaplain, Prison F).

However, while providing an appropriate environment is important, providing the most apposite information which addresses prisoners' needs is essential. The type and range of information the library should hold is central to the debate concerning the role and purpose of prison libraries. Three principal issues need to be addressed:

- (i) What information is required?
- (ii) Should libraries be involved in this area of provision?
- (iii) Would prisoners use this material?

## 5.7 THE NATURE OF INFORMATION NEEDS

In Holborn's study of 120 prisoners released after short term sentences, it was found that the problems they reported were "overwhelming practical in nature", being concerned principally with money, employment and accommodation (Holborn, 1975, p80).

In a study of 119 homeless probation clients, McWilliams found the problems reported were accommodation (cited by 43% of clients), money (34%), employment (28%), clothing (25%) and other (13%). McWilliams noted that there was "virtually no evidence in the

records to suggest that any approached the Unit with long term support or help in mind" (McWilliams, 1975, p26). McGuire and Priestley (McGuire and Priestley, 1985, p52), asked 250 prisoners to list problems they were most likely to face upon release. The five most common identified were "everyday practical problems", concerned with employment (identified by 82.8% of respondents), family (45%), accommodation (44.4%), inter-personal skills (37.2%) and money (37.2%).

The proponents of a situation centred theory of criminality would argue that if offenders can learn to solve these essentially practical problems, then their reasons for subsequent offending will consequently be reduced. Not surprisingly, most inmates interviewed for this study supported the theory that crime was environmentally determined, for such a view permits them to rationalise their own crimes and externalise their culpability. Furthermore, such an argument is one which favours their early release, for if crime is not the result of any individual pathology, then holding an offender in custody can have little effect on their, or indeed anyone else's, behaviour:

"I don't think there's anything you can do because it's their circumstances. If you're at home and you get your thirty quid giro and they see all the adverts on the telly - have a Caribbean holiday, buy this pair of trainers, I can't say they're entitled to commit crimes, but I can see how easy it could become for them to commit crimes. When you get out of here, if people can see an easy way to make a few bob, they think why not? If I get caught, I'm only in for a year or two. If I get away with it, fair enough. If I get caught, what have I lost, I've only lost a giro. Some of them aren't bothered about getting out. Some of them have never had nothing and so they never miss nowt. How can you rehabilitate them? That's their lifestyle" (Inmate, Prison J).

However, accepting the idea that crime is determined environmentally, and thence the argument that providing inmates with information and practical assistance to overcome these difficulties, still offers no guarantee that re-offending will not occur (McGuire and Priestley, 1985, p18). Furthermore, a situation centred model of criminality cannot account for different individual responses within the same environment - although many unemployed people living in poor housing have been sent to prison, many have not. Also, relatively little is still known of the aetiology of criminal behaviour (Middendorff, 1967, p195), that to give undue weight to one particular theory may be unsound:

"An infinite number of factors could be related to crime, and numerous inferences could be used to account for the specific nature of the relation between each factor and crime" (Lillyquist, 1980, p3).

Finally, the argument that rehabilitating an individual offender is of little or no value, or virtually impossible, unless drastic, structural changes occur in the social and economic environment (Prins, 1982, p50) is not one which is particularly practical, at least in the short term.

The research studies reported above focused on the self reporting of information needs. However, aside from the fact that inmates may be unused to dealing with information, or unaware of its value in decision making and problem solving, it is not feasible to rely on inmates to identify their own information needs because, as the research clearly indicates, they will tend to be preoccupied with issues relating to their own immediate well being, and ignore deeper seated issues relating to their pattern of offending



behaviour. Furthermore, these studies, relating to the causes of expected difficulties upon release, can be contrasted with other research findings which have examined the a priori causes of offending. For example, increased heroin use has been identified as the determinant factor associated with a rise in property crime in Merseyside (see Parker et al, 1986), while Cambridgeshire Probation Service examined a sample of 354 men and found alcohol abuse was a significant causal factor in 36% of offences (cited in Plumb, 1992a, p17). Farrington's longitudinal study of 400 London men, born in 1953, found that of those with a long criminal record 66.7% were heavy drinkers, while only 10.1% of men who were unconvicted were considered heavy drinkers. Similarly, 44.4% of those with a long criminal record had a history of hard drug use, compared with only 4.6% of men in the unconvicted group (see Farrington, 1990). Finally, research by Nottinghamshire Probation Service indicated that "30% of problems relating to misbehaviour among its clients were directly linked to alcohol" (Nottingham Herald, 23/6/1994, p1).

Different conclusions may be drawn from these two sets of research reports - one interpretation could be that prisoners were so successfully rehabilitated by their stay in custody that their original reasons for offending were no longer seen as causes for future offending. The other, much more likely explanation, is that prisoners, because of their egocentricity and selfish value system (see Williamson, 1993), will tend only to identify problems from their own short term, narrow perspective. The nature and implications of their offending, and its likely continuance, will tend to be perceived as less of a problem than ensuring that, for

example, they are provided with suitable accommodation upon their release. Obviously, prisoners must be provided with assistance to help themselves become re-integrated back into the community, and the prison library has an important role in this respect. However, simply providing inmates with information to address their everyday problems may just be facilitating their re-entry into a criminal sub-culture and doing nothing to address the precipitative cause of their offending. Of course, other prison departments, such as pre-release and inmate development units, run a range of courses which attempt to challenge offenders' attitudes and behaviours. But as indicated above, these initiatives may only result in transitory and specious behavioural adjustments, for those inmates who attend the programmes. The prison library may have an important role therefore in developing initiatives to address these issues, in addition to supporting similar work in other departments and maintaining a generic base of social work and prisoner welfare oriented information.

#### **5.8 THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE PRISON LIBRARY**

As noted earlier, many inmates had the perception of civilians working within prisons as being primarily responsible for their welfare, rather than security or control, or having a role in addressing their behaviour. In addition, some staff held the view that civilians working in institutions tended to be naive and unwilling to ally themselves too closely with the institutional perspective:

"There are lots of areas staffed by middle class professional people, usually quite liberal in outlook and attitude, who distance themselves from the main aims of the institution, because it is difficult to reconcile one's working practices with the ethos and ethics of that institution. They see their role as a very gentle one of being nice to people and understanding, they don't actually want to be associated with the harsh side" (Education Co-ordinator, Prison F).

Garland has argued that these "penal professionals" may tend to "neutralise the effect of the penal process" (Garland, 1991, p184). Librarians themselves were deeply split over how far the library should absorb the institutional perspective, and in what ways its information services should reflect the objectives of the establishment. In Chapter 3 the views of Coyle were examined, whose central argument is that the prison library must not adopt the public library as a model, because this ignores the social, moral and legal aspects of imprisonment and is therefore "not likely to result in meaningful programmes of positive and constructive change" (Coyle, 1987, p86). Some prison library staff favoured this view:

"This is a jail, it's not a library with a jail round it, it's a jail with a library in it and what we do in here has to come within the bounds of what the rest of the prison is doing. We can't make them move round us. That's sometimes a bit frustrating - you have to say no, it's a prison, we've got other things to do" (Library Officer, Prison J).

Other librarians saw no distinction between the objectives and working practices of the institution and the aims of the prison library:

"We should reflect the aims of the Prison Service - one is to keep the guys in and stop them escaping, and the other is to rehabilitate whilst they're in. We've got to pick up those aims" (Librarian, Prison C).

However, other librarians argued that their personal objectives were not necessarily congruent with those held by the rest of the prison staff:

"Libraries are looked upon in prison as part of officer control areas, and part of the discipline and activity process, rather than the philosophical, personal, developmental, educational process" (Librarian, Prison K).

"Prisons are not about rehabilitating people. There never has been a mandate to rehabilitate people, but to keep them out of harm's way. Prison libraries look at things in different ways - we do try and change people" (Librarian, Prison G).

In some cases, librarians saw themselves as almost an antidote to the strictures of prison, rather than carrying out any mandate to work with the institution:

"I always say we're the mental escape committee and you can't be on the escape committee if you're an officer, can you? I suppose I really fight against being absorbed by the institution" (Librarian, Prison F).

Librarians in several of the prisons studied considered that their philosophy underpinning the kind of service they were providing had created an ambivalent position for the library within the institution and had alienated some prison staff:

"If we just became part of the prison system, I think part of what we do would be destroyed. It does create friction - part of the problem of being a prison librarian is to work with the rest of the prison staff. We're not run by prison officers, but it's prison officers who run the institution" (Librarian, Prison E).

Other librarians tacitly ignored the institution, and operated almost as a separate agency:

"I originally wanted to put a sign up saying we're open all the time, but that wasn't allowed, because I was told I'd get inmates who want to dodge off work coming and sitting in the library. So I do it unofficially. Officially, the library is only open 4 hours a week, unofficially it's open all day" (Librarian, Prison H).

A more pragmatic approach was adopted by other librarians who argued that if they could provide information which was in any way useful in changing patterns of criminal behaviour, then they should supply it:

"They're certainly very interested in self-help and I think people can get things out of reading that. I can see from the requests and the sort of things people are asking for, there is a lot of interest in themselves, in their own sort of self-development and their own way of thinking. Maybe a lot of them are confused, or just not sure of where they're going a lot of the time. I think there is a searching in there that most people go through at a certain time, or at a certain age, particularly with the younger ones, and I think a wide variety of self-development material can help, and also help give them something to do with their time when they're outside - so it should be widely available" (Librarian, Prison E).

Some officers too, argued that providing inmates with information which directly related to their offending, was an important rehabilitative task:

"The library's an area that most inmates come into contact with, and it's an area that they're using for their own leisure, they're going there because they want to, so yes, I think it's good they have lots of information in there, on matters like drug abuse, alcohol misuse and things like that. They're in there because they want to be in there, and to actually have something that's key to being in prison actually presented to them, so they can have a look, has got to be positive" (Prison Officer, Prison J).

In one prison, pre-release officers were about to set up an information point in the library. Some careful thought had been taken when selecting the library as the location for this service:

"We really wanted to have somewhere to pull inmates out of the main prison, the officer-inmate environment, to somewhere hopefully a bit more neutral. I mean, I don't know how different inmates see the library - we tend to think of it as sort of neutral. In that way you could have it as something that was a bit more positive, rather than seeing information being just provided by the prison" (Prison Officer, Prison B).

The relationship between independent information seeking behaviour, empowerment and subsequent control of offending patterns were clearly drawn by this Education Co-Ordinator:

"I would see part of the function of the library as empowering people to take responsibility for their own life - if many of these men had been doing that, they would not have been here in the first place. So part of addressing offending behaviour is helping people take responsibility. So if a man who's only 1 month into a 2 year sentence wants to find out about accommodation, we as professionals might say "Oh, it's far too early to be thinking about that". But if that's what he wants to do, I would like him to gain access to that information. My impression of many of them is that they have times when it's appropriate to ask that question, and times when that issue may be addressed and I'd rather hand the power back to the inmate. And in that I'm also hoping he's learning a life skill, because out there, there isn't the nice welfare officer who comes round to see you in your bedroom. You've actually got to go and face it yourself. Actually being able to deal with those questions themselves is one of the ways in which people become able to function when they get outside. The more library staff can do to normalise a man the better - so they should stock everything they can" (Education Co-Ordinator, Prison B).

Other prison officers adopted a different view, arguing that the prison library was primarily a place to facilitate institutional adjustment, particularly for longer term prisoners, rather than self examination:

"Inmates often want to get away from prison life, and if the library is going to be an extension of the prison, if they were to see it that way, it wouldn't be half as popular as it is. They do often want little snatches in the day where they can get away from prison routine, away from the feeling that they're in prison. If somebody is going to spend 5, 8, 10 years in a place like this, obviously you want moments when you wish you weren't here, and a library is one of those places they can go. There's other places inmates can go for their problems, they can go to their own officers, personal officers and so on" (Prison Officer, Prison H).

### 5.9 THE ATTITUDES OF PRISONERS TOWARD INFORMATION PROVISION

As noted in Chapter 4, many prisoners may be unwilling to get involved in formal programmes or courses designed to address particular behavioural problems (Williamson, 1993, p52). It is also important to be aware that neither are inmates, generally speaking, self motivated library users (Albert, 1989, p126). However, the neutral, independent role which the prison library is often perceived by inmates to have, can be exploited to provide prisoners with information in a way that encourages self-examination:

"I've been on drugs courses in prisons before and they don't do anything for me at all. I've tried, but I don't know whether it's the way I am or what but I don't like people telling me about what to do with my life. When I came here, the probation enrolled me for all these drug courses and stuff - every day I was getting people coming up to my cell "Are you coming on this course?" They're like trying to force it on you all the time, and that turned me off it totally altogether. So maybe if I could read things myself it might be better. If the library advertised the fact that they had things, rather than shoving it down your neck, I'd have no objections" (Inmate, Prison J).

This prisoner argued that it was essential for the individual inmate to access information independently:

"The library should have everything surrounding your return into society and the problems you might have - if that person has NFA [no fixed abode], if that person has got no work, if that person has got no income. These are the main factors in a person coming back to prison. So yeah, they should have them things in every library for prisoners because then people have got the opportunity to pick up them things, to read about them, to gain more knowledge about their situation. A probation officer can tell you these things, but they don't talk in your terms, they tend to exaggerate their words, things like that. Some people don't correspond with them, so they go back to their cell and they're confused still. They ain't got no clearer in their thoughts about what's really going to happen out there. So to leave it down to the probation officer in the prison is really no way to do it. You're better off getting your own knowledge on them problems, your own awareness of them problems, and then you can develop a positive attitude" (Inmate, Prison B).

In fact, many inmates thought that libraries had a clear responsibility to address these issues:

"I think the library should be involved. At a place like this if you come here and you're determined to change, determined to address your offending behaviour, sort yourself out so you don't re-offend and have a reasonable life, you're doing it 24 hours a day. Some guys who might just want to get away from it all might feel they want a library which doesn't have anything on people's problems, but I see a lot of benefits from having information like that in a central place where everybody knows where it is, where everybody knows where it is, where everybody can go for it. And if somebody doesn't want to look at the leaflets or whatever, then fine, but what's the problem having them there? Nobody's forcing you to read them" (Inmate, Prison D).

Other inmates argued that the library had an important role in providing information, which was an essential part of the educative process through which prisoners could then begin to address their offending behaviour:

"If you're just going to put somebody in a cell, and don't offer them things like this, they become lethargic, they



won't be motivated, self esteem, everything goes down, and that's when you start getting real problems in re-offending, because you're not really giving them a chance. Then one day you're going to have to release them - so things like the library, it offers them a new opportunity. Some things in there aren't just like novels and stuff - you've got things on stress management, anger management, things like that, which are quite useful for people to read. If they don't have access to that kind of thing, they're not going to learn. And it's meant to be a learning process in here. If you don't do any of that, you're just going to go out and be more dangerous than when you came in" (Inmate, Prison K).

Nuttall has argued that the most urgent aspects of offenders' behaviour which need addressing include "social cognitive skills, relationships with others, alcohol, drug abuse and employment" (Nuttall, 1992, p41). These prisoners considered that the provision of such information in the library would be viewed positively by other inmates:

"It would be useful, because I've never seen it in other libraries. I've seen it in one other jail I've been in, and it is good to have it there, because a lot of the lads do read it, whether it's drug info, beer info, stuff like that. I've read that kind of stuff and found it useful" (Inmate, Prison B).

"Yeah, they should have books on things like people's problems and their offending behaviour - because that's what I'm in here for - drug abuse. There's nothing here at the moment, I was having a look the other day. I wouldn't ask anyone for help, 'cause you feel stupid sometimes, when there's a load of people. But the more information we get, it's better, isn't it - the more we can take in. Even on a pre-release course they don't tell you very much, I've been on it twice. I've had a bloke from the Addiction Unit outside come in and write reports on me, but it'd be nice if we could just nip down the library and see some books on drugs and pick them out, so we don't have to tell anybody what we are. I don't like telling everybody I'm in here for drugs to dry me out - I'd just like to get into a book and see where I've been going wrong. Like when I came in I needed probation to find out an address for me, but it's a well known address. I could've popped along to the library and got it myself - it was Drug Dependents Anonymous. They should have addresses, stuff like that, so people can get in contact with them any time they want to" (Inmate, Prison G).

Some inmates argued that providing such information through the library was an important part of the rehabilitative process:

"They should have books on say, alcohol or drug abuse - if people want stuff like that, then the library should be able to supply it. That's part of rehabilitation - if people want to make an effort to stop themselves from re-offending, then the library should go out of their way to help them. If somebody has got a need, the library should have the facilities to get this stuff in for them" (Inmate, Prison F).

"I think that would draw a great deal of attention. Me myself personally I was abusing alcohol on the outside and there's a lot of people in the same boat. And drugs, anything like that, if there was information about it, how you can help yourself, people can use it, but there's just not that about. There's people in here screaming out for information really, but they're just not able to get hold of it. Any info you can get like that is directly beneficial to somebody, even if it's only one person in prison, it's doing it's job" (Inmate, Prison E).

Finally, this inmate compared the role of a public library in disseminating information relevant to that community, with the special information needs of the prison community:

"In normal libraries they'll run miniature campaigns, even if it's local planning schemes - the library's a centre of information. If alcohol abuse is one of the things that people get into trouble over and it's relevant to them, why not? For the people who might want to look at it, it's an ideal opportunity" (Inmate, Prison J).

Other inmates however, were more cautious about the library becoming increasingly involved in the provision of information or working with other departments, because they thought the independence of the library would be eroded by increased absorption and adoption of institutional objectives:

"The library should be an outside body and aim to help the prisoner as much as possible. Once they take on the aims of the actual prison, it's no longer justifiable, because then

it's run by prison governors, the officers and staff, dictating what's going on. It wants to stay as a separate identity within the system" (Inmate, Prison C).

"I think it should stay being just a library. Because prisoners aren't suspicious of the library. They are of the system" (Inmate, Prison A).

Other inmates argued that although there was an information gap, it was not the responsibility of the librarian to fill it:

"When it turns out that a librarian has to take a course in welfare rights, it's taking the emphasis away from what they should be doing. We've got probation here which I find totally useless. And the Board of Visitors, totally useless again. So there's something missing. Definitely a gap there to be filled" (Inmate, Prison F).

Others considered the library to be the only reliable information source within the prison - a situation which would be unlikely to persist if a policy of integration was followed:

"On the wing two or three weeks ago, I asked the S.O. for dietary scales for a vegan diet. I'm still waiting for it. I went to the library and within five minutes they gave it me. This is why I'm saying the system should not have anything to do with the library" (Inmate, Prison J).

Some inmates thought while providing self-help information within the library was useful, it should not overshadow the recreational function of the library:

"I think that information would help. But not just you come into the library and it's all books telling you about alcohol or drugs. There must be spicy enough variety, yes?" (Inmate, Prison E).

An ex-offender interviewed summarised the views of many prisoners, arguing that it was pointless for the library to stock this kind of

information, on the grounds that inmates simply would not use it, either because they would refuse to admit they had a problem, because it was too late to do anything about it, or because they had no expectation that the library would be able to help:

"A lot of people, especially with drink and drugs, are blind to the fact, and some of them don't want to face up to it. So I don't think they'd want to read about it anyway. Prison's obviously full of wrongdoers, and I wouldn't say they're in a position to rehabilitate themselves, because they're there already and I would say it was too late for it. I don't know whether those sort of things need to be in the library anyway, because if they need addressing, obviously probation officers sort that out for you. So I don't know if there was any books and I'm not sure if there was any real need for them. Not really. I don't know whether it's I prefer probation to look at those areas, but they just do, don't they? It's just something that happens naturally that they sort those problems out for you, if they think there is a problem".

This above response contains some revealing insights into how problems are perceived by offenders and how they consider they may be solved. From the outset, there is a fatalistic approach, once in prison it's "too late" to do anything about it, and probably nothing that can be done at all. Both the problem and the solution are externalised, with recognition and attempts at resolution, deriving not from the individual but from another. The offender is not a participant but an observer, whose own problems become the responsibility of someone else. There is an absence of self control, insight or decision making - probation will "sort those problems out for you, if they think there is a problem". This kind of approach, where information is passively received, is unlikely to result in a successful internalisation of values, whereas:

"The offender who makes real efforts to help himself will make more rapid and effective progress than he who is merely helped" (Martin and Webster, 1977, p211).

Similarly, Howard has argued that despite the increasing number of services for offenders, many offenders are still ill-equipped to return to society, and need to learn the skills to be independent (Howard, 1985, p45).

#### 5.10 THE PRISON LIBRARY AND ADVICE

Obtaining reliable advice in prison can be a problem for many inmates. Some prisoners may be unwilling, or unable, to take their difficulties to formal sources of assistance within the prison. For example, there may be limited facilities for access to information resources or personnel. Pressure on resources may mean that staff do not always have the opportunity or the time to address prisoners' needs effectively. There may be a lack of trust between staff and inmates, or a failure to believe in the confidentiality of the relationship. Finally, prisoners may have negative perceptions and expectations of the effectiveness of the services:

"There's a lot of people need advice. There is an official prison system to try and get advice, which sometimes works very well, but if it's not within their fairly narrow remit and responsibility, then obviously that doesn't work. So we take advice from each other by and large" (Inmate, Prison G).

Other prisoners argued that because they were unable to obtain any kind of advice or interpretation from the library, they did not perceive the library as an effective information resource:

"As far as information is concerned, I don't think anybody goes to the library for that sort of thing. Instead you ask around generally and if you've got a problem, ask one of the kangas. I wouldn't consider coming to the library, because how you read things is not necessarily what is meant and so it's better to get it from the horse's mouth kind of thing, rather than read it, misinterpret it and get whatever consequences from that" (Inmate, Prison B).

Currently, there is a trend for the information requirements of all individuals, including both prisoners and those in society outside the institution, to show an increase in both scale and diversity, emphasising the need for trained information specialists. Simply providing inmates with information therefore, may be a necessary, but insufficient response. Staff must also be willing to take on a more pro-active, and where necessary, an advisory role. Kochen and Donohue have argued that:

"Information counsellors who want to deal solely with information may have a difficult task ahead of them. Such "objective information" may not be possible in the arena of the average citizen's information environment; advocacy may be a necessary component of an information programme" (quoted in Stevens, 1992, p84).

Particularly for those in prison, whose familiarity in dealing with information resources is limited, the provision of advice may be a necessary part of satisfying the information request. For example, Alex Gormlie, the co-ordinator of the Linwood Information Centre, whose clients are also "information poor", being principally drawn from the urban disadvantaged, has said:

"It is no good just supplying them with an address to write to...Our experience is that the problem is not a lack of information, but that ordinary people have difficulty in finding their way through the maze created by the mass of information issued by the wide range of voluntary and

statutory bodies involved in its provision" (Glasgow Herald, 25/7/1991, p4).

Similarly, Allred has argued that librarians should develop a service beyond merely provision of information, but one which permits understanding and application (Allred, 1995, p15). In the present study, inmates agreed that prisoners needed some help in accessing and utilising information effectively:

"A lot of people come into prison from deprived backgrounds and are not aware of a lot of things, so their needs should be looked at. But I would hate to think what would happen to some of the younger, uneducated chaps, who had to find their own way through the information maze. So the library also needs aids to help you pin-point the information you require, so you don't spend hours wading through piles of books to find what you want" (Inmate, Prison G).

However, the degree to which the library is able to adopt an advisory function depends to a great extent on the context of the prison regime it operates within. At establishments where prisoners receive a short weekly visit to the library under officer escort, it is very difficult for staff or inmates to have an impression, let alone an understanding, of the library as anything other than a book exchange. But in prisons which do not have such a tight regime, permitting inmates greater freedom to visit the library and spend longer amounts of time there, it becomes easier to develop wider objectives for the service. For example, at the Vulnerable Prisoner Unit, where the prison operated a very relaxed regime, the Education Co-ordinator argued:

"The library's not just for information - it's for advice, counselling and a thousand other things" (Education Co-ordinator, Prison K).

Some librarians, however, adopted a completely different perspective, arguing that advice and counselling were services which the prison library should definitely not be offering:

"We're not welfare officers, we're librarians. I think we can provide the information, but if you start getting into the advice and counselling role, we're changing our position" (Librarian, Prison G).

Other librarians, while not regarding such work as strictly part of their job, did in fact provide such a service, largely because they felt that it was difficult for prisoners to obtain confidential advice from any other department:

"I think it probably isn't the librarian's role to provide advice and interpretation, but I do try and help them through any problems, because they will only come to someone who they feel isn't going to take it any further, isn't going to make them feel a fool" (Librarian, Prison E).

In general, the majority of inmates favoured an expansion of the librarian's role as adviser. This inmate orderly argued that providing information alone was insufficient:

"A lot of people come over and ask the library officer advice. They've been in the library trying to find out something - they're not really sure what it says and they ask us. And if I've come and wanted some information, I've asked the officer and he's put me right. I think sometimes you go to the library for information about something and if you can't really make up your own mind from what you've read, because like some of these reports are a bit ambiguous, you need to ask somebody that does know something about it, some expert. From books you can read how to do something, but there's certain things you need someone to show you the right way to go about using what you have learned" (Inmate, Prison J).



Furthermore, simply providing information, offers no guarantee that the information will be correctly understood or used in the correct way:

"A lot of them would say "yes, I understand it", and haven't got a clue what it's about. So to be taught to understand is important, because a lot of people are egotistical - they wouldn't admit they don't understand" (Inmate, Prison J).

Lack of experience in articulating information needs, poor literacy levels which may limit comprehension and a lack of familiarity in dealing with information services may make an advisory service particularly important:

"I think libraries should be able to advise as well. Because so many inmates will come and ask you questions. It's all very well giving them a leaflet, but they may not be able to read it properly, they certainly may not be able to understand it. Some of them will, of course, but if you provide information you should be able to advise on it as well, particularly for people who can't extract the relevant bits themselves" (Tutor, Prison A).

Many inmates argued that librarians should be able to give advice, but would need additional training to do so. For example, many prison libraries will stock a Citizen's Advice Bureau Information Pack, but often staff had no training at all in how to use this resource, as this library orderly pointed out:

"On the out, a library, especially a main library, would probably have a department for advice within the building, a Citizen's Advice Bureau for instance, you would find that near or in the same building. We've got the CAB pack in the library, but we don't have the advisory skills and at the end of the day when somebody comes in with a problem, they want somebody to talk to, they don't want to just sit and look at the pack - there's got to be interpretation with it. That's not really a library job, because the librarian would have to be further trained" (Inmate, Prison C).

Some inmates argued that they thought giving advice was outside the librarian's remit, and that they did not consider them competent enough to perform such a task:

"It's not part of their job. At the end of the day, some of the problems are a bit specialised, whereas the librarian is just like you and me, they've got a job looking after books and stuff like that" (Inmate, Prison B).

Staff however, tended to be cautious about an advocacy role for the library, with a range of arguments being put forward. This probation officer felt that such work did not essentially form part of the library's principal functions:

"Libraries should probably just stick to providing information, otherwise I think they may get in to areas which may be very time consuming and detract from their primary role. Once you get into that area, you're actually moving away from what I see libraries are set up for" (Probation Officer, Prison G).

Other staff, like this officer, argued that giving inmates advice was tantamount to spoonfeeding and a removal of individual responsibility:

"I think if you start giving them advice, the sort of thing they get from a CAB, I think it's a very grey area. Obviously one would like to help as much as one could, but having said that, when they go out they have to lead their own lives and make their own decisions, and one thing I feel prison is very bad for, is that it takes away all a man's responsibility for a very large number of things. When you have people who have failed to fit into society to such an extent that they have been sent to prison, then I feel that taking away even more responsibility is going to make them even less able to cope with life outside when they are released" (Prison Officer, Prison A).

These attitudes, however well meaning in the short term, are unlikely to effect any increase in individual responsibility or

coping skills upon release. In truth, they are more likely to deprive the inmate of the very guidance they require. Advice therefore, should not simply be presented as an inflexible blueprint, but be directed toward increasing awareness of alternatives and should begin to equip inmates with the necessary skills to discriminate between different options. This prisoner argued that the library's role in this process was important:

"Libraries can offer many roads to information, yet when you talk to prisoners on the landing, their scope is much narrower, there's maybe one or two channels they know about, but have no inkling of all the alternatives. And I think the library should present those alternatives and help the guys who haven't really got the wherewithal of being able to see that" (Inmate, Prison H).

In addition, it is vital that librarians should intervene in the life of the institution and its residents, and that advice should be provided pro-actively. For example, offenders may have been immersed for long period in a criminal sub-culture, which tends to reward anti-social conduct. To suddenly expect inmates to recognise their own problems and behavioural inadequacies, and then to seek help in addressing them, may simply be a pious hope. As a Probation Officer interviewed in earlier research, which examined the information needs of prisoners, said:

"We are still only scratching the surface because we are relying on them to identify their own problems" (quoted in Stevens, 1992, p30).

Other prisoners reported that they would isolate themselves because there were no other facilities to help solve problems:

"All you can really do is talk to a member of staff - they might sympathise with you or whatever, but he hasn't got the

power to do anything about it, unless it's a minor sort of thing. So you tend, well I did myself in the end, I just tried to keep myself to myself, and just get on with things. But it's harder that way, because then, instead of getting things out, it's getting deeper into you and just making things harder. A problem only builds up unless you clear it. So you're building problem onto problem, and a lot of people then just tend to have some sort of nervous breakdown, or they're smashing up, or slitting their wrists or whatever like that" (Inmate, Prison H).

#### 5.11 THE ROLE OF THE PRISON LIBRARY AS AN INFORMATION RESOURCE FOR OTHER DEPARTMENTS

Information contained within the prison library may be useful to other departments within the prison, to assist in particular rehabilitative programmes they may be delivering. However, the ability of the prison library to expand its breadth of information provision and begin to act as an information focus for the whole prison was, in many cases, severely limited by the very low level of departmental integration and lack of internal communications. Often staff assumed that another department was providing particular information, but were never completely certain. For example, these librarians said:

"People will say "Oh, you don't need that, they keep all that on the wings" or "Probation have got all that". I'm not totally convinced, but since no one has introduced me to probation, or given me keys so I can go to the wings to find out, how do I know?" (Librarian, Prison F).

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

Some staff reported that co-operation was low because individual departments were concerned to maintain their own resources and safeguard their workload, and ultimately their own jobs, from encroachment by others. Other staff, with a low awareness of the library's information resources considered that the potential benefits accruing from any integration were limited, as this governor argued:

"There isn't a lot going on that they could feed into" (Governor, Prison A).

Similarly, a Pre-release officer remarked:

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

Some librarians shared this fairly rigid view of their role, and many were reluctant to extend their areas of information provision for fear they were thought to be poaching from other departments:

"We could get involved with the Pre-release course - if we say started to provide community information. But we'd just be taking people away from other areas if we provided this sort of thing" (Librarian, Prison E).

Even when librarians did make an effort to contact other departments, this approach was in some cases rebuffed:

"No one has ever suggested to me that I should get involved in the work of other departments like pre-release. I'm not familiar enough with what goes on. There's no input for me on the induction programme. I had to go and send messages 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, this 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).

Consequently, many librarians reported that they felt undervalued, or even ignored, by the rest of the establishment:

"I'm always the last to know. People forget I'm here" (Librarian, Prison C).

"Librarians just aren't thought of as people with information. I suppose that's why I go for things which are outside my parameters in a way. It's the only way you get yourself involved isn't it?" (Librarian, Prison H)

However, librarians themselves must also share part of the blame for this failure to become integrated with other activities and initiatives. Unfortunately, a common reaction from librarians was that they had never even considered inquiring what other departments were doing, and whether resources could be shared:

"It's not something we've particularly mentioned, but it's probably something we could do. It's not that we've turned it down, I just don't remember it being raised" (Librarian, Prison A).

"It all depends a lot on personalities. I don't have a lot of contact with anyone really" (Librarian, Prison C).

The qualities required to carry out this networking and develop an interactive relationship with other departments in the prison may not necessarily be those ordinarily required to manage a branch library:

"I think a stand alone librarian who just comes in there to give a degree of information, do book exchanges, be pleasant, isn't the central purpose. I think it's very important for the librarian to be far more professional and to be involved with the work of supporting, and leading all the other types of professions and occupations within the

institution. So I think a librarian's role isn't defined by the traditional parameters of it. He or she has got a lot more to offer. In my case, I've encouraged the librarian to do all sorts of things - teaching, research, to do the offender treatment programmes, to be multi-faceted" (Education Co-ordinator, Prison K).

A number of other staff said they also favoured a multi-disciplinary approach in order that information requests are answered in the most appropriate way. For example, this pre-release officer said:

"I don't see why there shouldn't be stuff in the library as well - an inmate might be browsing away and suddenly think "Oh, I'll have a look at that", whereas he might not always come to us. I'm not saying uniform versus civilian, but for some reason or another, they may not want to come to the officer. I mean, we haven't always got the time the civilian departments have got. Sometimes it's easier for the library to say "It's on that shelf there, help yourself", whereas we would say "Yeah", sort of rushing through it, that sort of thing, "Right, next". It's a little bit different. It's a bit more relaxed at the library, I would think" (Prison Officer, Prison B).

Some pre-release tutors argued that it was an important part of the change process that the library was able to provide additional support for the issues addressed on modular courses, and to encourage inmates to adopt an active rather than passive approach:

"At the moment, they're impact courses, so they tend to be visual, role play, question and answer at the time, not to take away and think about or study because what you're trying to do is generate, stimulate a thought process, so that they can then say "Right, I know that now. I'm aware of that, so I can work on that myself". So if I had a guy on the alcohol course who I see has responded quite well, I would say "Go to the library, see if they've got any books on alcohol education". 'Cause what I want them to do, is do something themselves as well. I don't want to do everything for them, because that's defeating the object. They're the blokes who've got to do the changing, to do the work" (Prison Officer, Prison H).

## 5.12 SUMMARY

There are problems at a variety of levels in attempting to provide information services within prisons. At an individual level, inmates may find it difficult to articulate their information needs, and may be unused to dealing with information when it is presented to them. They may also fail to make effective use of the information provided by many of the formal providers. For librarians themselves, the priority they ascribe to information provision is always a function of regime constraints. However, they are also negatively influenced by their own narrow perceptions of their role, their purpose and their place in the regime. Finally, the views of Prison Service staff will determine how well, or how poorly, the library is integrated with other departments, its relative importance and its place within the hierarchy at particular establishments.

In the absence of any real understanding or consensus as to what information should be supplied, what the extent of the prison library's involvement in any such provision should be and a lack of awareness of what inmates themselves require, inevitably information services provided within institutional libraries showed great variation, in both range and depth. Furthermore, any initiatives tended to be transient and personality driven. The next chapter will examine in more detail how, in practice, information services are designed, used and evaluated within the particular prisons studied.



## CHAPTER SIX

# THE PRISON LIBRARY AND THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION: THE EVIDENCE

In the previous chapter, the role of the prison library as an information resource was reviewed. Three principal issues were studied - the nature of inmates' information requirements, whether, and if so, how, the library should become involved in this area of provision and lastly, the attitudes of prisoners to such involvement. This chapter will examine how, in practice, prison librarians have interpreted and integrated these concerns in shaping the service they deliver. It will show that a wide range of information from several different sources, is potentially available for prison libraries to stock, if they so wish. Such information, addressing issues which may be important in the rehabilitative process, includes self-help material, community information, current affairs, re-integration information including employment and training, welfare rights and accommodation. The effectiveness of these

resources in meeting the information needs of prisoners is also assessed.

### 6.1 SELF-HELP MATERIAL

Self help material can be particularly important in helping inmates address their offending behaviour. This type of material is available from a number of different suppliers.

1 At a local level, one prison library had produced a small leaflet entitled "Help! Books For Living", explaining what self-help information was available in the library. This leaflet, excellently produced and sensitively written, listed some sample titles covering 7 different sections - Looking after number one, What about a job?, Brushing up, Cash crisis, The home front, Couples in crisis and Coping with kids. Some of the brief introductions to each section give an indication of the style of the leaflet:

"Looking after Number 1  
This is the most important priority in life! Get yourself in order and certain problems reduce dramatically! Here are some books to give you a helping hand:

Brushing up  
Libraries contain literally hundreds of books for 'do-it-yourself' improvement of various skills, either educational (better reading, easier use of maths in everyday life), or general (car

maintenance, plumbing, gardening etc.). You don't necessarily have to go 'back to school' to brush up on subjects such as these - just go to the library and borrow a book!

#### Couples in crisis

Relationships come under a severe strain when one party ends up in prison. The major testing-time, though, comes when it's time to go home again, when both parties have the task of learning to live together once more. Sometimes things do work out but, inevitably, there are times when they don't. At a time like this, the adjustment to a new life can, for some people, be extremely difficult. Impartial advice from a book can in many cases be of great value in providing 'food for thought' and an objective viewpoint".

2 Psychologists employed by the Prison Service have produced a range of self-help material. The following titles have been developed as self-help manuals, designed to encourage offenders to develop coping, adaptive and avoidance strategies in order to control aspects of their behaviour:

- 1 Bet you can't win - some ideas on controlling your gambling
- 2 Cutting out drugs - a guide for all drug users
- 3 Drinking less - There's no booze behind prison bars
- 4 Driven to crime (car theft)
- 5 Giving up smoking
- 6 Having problems sleeping? A self-help guide to help you get a better nights sleep
- 7 Offending - taking control: a self-assessment manual to enable you to gain more control over your offending behaviour
- 8 Stress and you
- 9 Temper control
- 10 Women and alcohol

The manuals are in the form of small booklets and relatively inexpensive to produce, as they are printed by Prison Service Industries and Farms (PSIF).

Alcoholics Anonymous have argued that these booklets are "excellent" and:

"not only have they got very good information about problem drinking, but they start where alcoholics start - by helping people to recognise if they have a problem. Please encourage people to have a look at them and get enough copies for them to keep if they want to. Your encouragement and interest will be the first vital step" (Home Office, 1991c, p3).

Most of the manuals, if used correctly, require the reader to thoroughly analyse his motives, behaviours and the implications of his actions. For example, in the booklet "Cutting out drugs", readers are asked to record the effect of drug-taking on their health, to look at the financial cost, to examine associated negative behaviours and the effect of their actions on their relationships. They are asked to monitor their drug use and develop strategies to avoid places, people and situations where the risk of drug-taking is high. Coping strategies are analysed - such as being prepared for strong urges to take drugs, relaxation techniques and developing positive distractions. A short list of further contacts is also included. The manuals were designed not only as a resource to back up other forms of treatment, but also as a treatment option in themselves. Because, many offenders may be unwilling to see a psychologist, particularly in a prison environment, or reluctant to participate in group work, self-help material can be of importance in raising awareness of the problem area and in formulating strategies to address

that problem. The psychologist who oversaw design of the manuals has argued:

"Counselling with a professional is not the only option for dealing with one's problems. Many people are perfectly able to work through their own difficulties, but sometimes some guidance can aid this process, hence the self-help manuals" (Dr. Sue Evershed, personal letter, 10/2/1995).

Although other departments in the prison, for example, probation or pre-release units, may have had copies of these self-help guides, these booklets were not seen in any of the prison libraries in this study. This is an unfortunate omission. The importance of the library as an information focus and its perceived neutrality among inmates have already been discussed (see Chapter 5). These two factors may mean that the placement of this type of self-help material within the prison library could be one of the most suitable locations for it within the whole prison. However, librarians were generally unaware of this self-help material which was available through the Prison Service:

"I think these sort of things, I don't think you could get too many of them. My question is, why aren't they made more widely available?" (Senior Librarian, Public Library Authority, Prison B).

Other material produced by the Prison Service, includes the "Directory of Help Agencies" (Home Office, 1992a), first published in 1992, which is a list of outside agencies which provide specialist help to inmates whilst they are in custody. Copies of the Directory were found

in only two of the prison libraries studied for this research, although the Directory may have been available in other departments within a particular establishment.

3 Some probation services have published material to assist prisoners. For example, Northumbria Probation Services have published 'The Handbook of Welfare Benefits for Prisoners' (Lingard, Mulrenan and White, 1994). Although designed primarily for use by probation officers and others in an advisory capacity, it is available in some prison libraries for inmate use. A number of prisoner welfare and prison reform organisations also produce material which could loosely be termed "self-help" (see Howard, 1985, p45). The Prison Reform Trust, in conjunction with the Prison Service, produces the Prisoners' Information Pack, which principally addresses information needs pertaining to life within the institution.

4 Self-help material is also available from organisations and publishers outside the Prison Service. Most prison libraries will carry copies of the Alcoholics Anonymous handbook and the Narcotics Anonymous handbook. The suppliers of these texts clearly believe that reading them can have an important part in solving that individual's behavioural problems. For example, on the dust-jacket of the Alcoholics Anonymous handbook is the following:

"This edition has been sponsored by the General Service Conference of AA, in the hope that many more may be led towards recovery by reading its explanation of the AA programme and its personal evidence that the AA programme works" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1994).

Another private supplier of literature in this area is Hazelden Educational Services International, who declare in their publicity material that they are a world wide supplier of self-help material to "hundreds of prisons, jails and community corrections programmes". Hazelden consider that their publications can "overcome treatment and education obstacles" and are important as "therapeutic tools in maintaining and enhancing the recovery process". In 1954, they first published "24 Hours A Day", designed to provide assistance to those attempting to overcome addictions. According to Hazelden:

"Few books touch - and help to change - as many lives as this one. Each day it provides a brief thought, meditation and prayer for living well and staying sober the next 24 hours".

Hazelden also argue that:

"Our books serve the needs of recovering people as they become aware of the problems addictions present in their lives, discover healthier ways to live and move towards wholeness in their lives, and are transformed by long-term sobriety...As long as people look to books to help them heal and improve the quality of their lives, Hazelden will be there every step of the way".

5 Finally, various information is also available from government departments - for example, the Employment

Service produce a range of literature, some of which is specifically targeted at prisoners.

## 6.2 COMMUNITY INFORMATION

The Woolf Report argued it is important that the experience of imprisonment mirrors, as far as possible, the demands of life outside. Furthermore, the report noted the existence of a strong link between loss of community contact through imprisonment and the likelihood of future offending (Woolf and Tumim, 1991, para10.29). While serving their sentences therefore, it is essential that inmates are encouraged to maintain such connections. Howard has argued that the prison library may have an important role to play in this respect:

"The independence sapping nature of the prison experience and the location of prisons which minimise the opportunities for maintaining community links have long been recognised... because of this the support that prison library services makes become significant" (Howard, 1985, p46).

Some library authorities provide the prison libraries they serve with a variety of community information which is obtained, collated or produced at a local level. This information may be in a variety of formats - some of which may be borrowed by inmates. A filtering process is employed by staff, in order to ensure information provided is appropriate and does not breach security



considerations. In some cases library authorities have produced community information files, which prisoners may access in order to obtain information to assist in their re-integration. A small number of prison libraries have begun to use their computer links to provide community information:

"The library will be going on-line shortly, and I hope that line will go as far as community information, because to transfer any training they may have done to the outside is absolutely imperative. And if our aim is to get the guy back integrated into his local area, then he needs to know what is happening in that area. Without a doubt" (Education Co-ordinator, Prison A).

However, as at August 1994, only 6 prisons, from the total of 23 establishments which have automated systems, were providing community information.

Half of the prisons co-operating in this study had made attempts, with varying degrees of success, to provide community information. An inmate at a prison which did not provide any community information argued:

"I would expect the library to have that, because that would be a direct benefit to you if you wanted to make a new start, because a lot of people, especially those with really bad drugs problems go out to the same area and end up in the same predicament they were in before, so it would be good to give them that kind of information. The library should be an opportunity for people to find out more information to help them" (Inmate, Prison F).

### 6.3 CURRENT AFFAIRS

Inmates, as part of their coping strategies, may deliberately isolate themselves, and for the duration of their sentence the environment of the jail takes precedence over the environment outside:

"The world of being in prison is completely unconnected to the world of being outside prison and so when you're outside prison you don't really think prison exists, and when you're in prison, the outside world doesn't exist" (Inmate, Prison J).

Furthermore, time distortion is also a problem for many prisoners. They may find it particularly hard to visualise or plan for the future. The inactivity, boredom and monotony of the regime may make the end of the sentence seem too far away either to comprehend or contemplate. Accordingly, for many prisoners, the daily life of the prison assumes dominance over any events outside. Life outside the prison becomes increasingly meaningless in comparison with the more pressing strictures imposed by the unvarying routines of the prison environment. For example, Zamble and Porporino, in their 16 month study of 133 Canadian prisoners, argued:

"Most of the inmates in this study followed a path of least resistance, and they focused on the fine line of present time passing. They found it easier to serve time, as they were sentenced to do, by passing through it, rather than using it" (Zamble and Porporino, 1988, p150).

Many inmates agreed with this definition of the prison experience as a "deep freeze":

"It's called time, isn't it? We're just suspended. Everything else on the outside stops until we get out. Me personally I just isolate myself. Don't think of no one. I didn't even know Israel and the PLO made up until a week ago - all come as a surprise to me. I don't want to think about things out there - makes it go longer. If I can become a bit of a vegetable, like a little robot in jail, just don't think of nothing, just plod on. As far as I'm concerned, out of sight, out of mind. That's just my way of doing it. Takes a bit of adjusting to when you're released though. I used to write letters regular, I can't be bothered now. It's not that I ain't got enough time, it's just that I haven't got the inclination. We've got a phone here - mind you, I can't even be bothered to use that" (Inmate, Prison C).

In this context, keeping up with the news is not seen as a priority:

"News is funny in here. It's like the weather, I don't really notice the weather. It doesn't really affect me, it it's rainy or sunny - it doesn't matter whether it's rainy or it's sunny. I'm not really involved with the outside world. You look at a paper and think "So what?" and throw it in the corner. It's of no interest to you" (Inmate, Prison K).

Inmates often perceive themselves as being denuded of both power and responsibility. They exist in a cushioned environment, unmoved and unaffected by any changes in society. Major events on the outside are insignificant in comparison to small changes in the inmates' daily routine, which because they occur so infrequently, assume a massive degree of importance. Inmates may be more concerned about why their midday meal

was several minutes late, than in events which others would deem to be of international importance. However, even those inmates who are interested in current affairs may find it difficult to keep themselves adequately informed. Documentaries are usually broadcast after 8 pm when many inmates are locked up, or the television room is often used solely as a place to show films recorded from satellite. However, at Prison K, the library did have a video player and inmates were able to watch selected programmes, either individually, using headphones, or in a small group.

Attempting to keep up with current affairs is particularly important for those serving long sentences. This group of inmates are even more susceptible to the shrinking frame of reference to which the prison experience often leads, and where information needs become increasingly conditioned by the immediate environment:

"Let's be honest, who really needs to keep up with a lot of the news? The only politics that bothers me at the moment is who's the Home Secretary and what's he likely to do with lifers. I'll be a bit more worried about politics when I get out" (Inmate, Prison J).

Other long termers however, were more concerned about remaining in touch with developments in outside society:

"I think it's important to keep up - you can easily get lost in the system. I've always said that prison can be the loneliest place in the world - even though you appear to be surrounded by a lot of

people you can get cut off. You need contact with the outside, otherwise it's like being in a totally alien world. There are guys who've been in here for 15 years - they'd be totally lost if they weren't in contact with what was going on" (Inmate, Prison H).

Inmates also said that the prison library was particularly valued because it was one of the few resources in the prison which facilitated direct access to the community outside:

"The library's here for us to find anything out on our own, as opposed to going through the official channels. It does provide us with a link to the outside world, something we've got direct access to, as opposed to anything else in prison. The library is readily available" (Inmate, Prison K).

Others found the library served as a means of keeping contact with the outside community:

"I think prisoners need very much to keep in contact with what's happening outside, otherwise, particularly people doing long sentences - I've been in prison now for eleven years, on a life sentence. When I first came into prison on remand, a newspaper is a very precious thing, it's handed around, even if it's two or three weeks old. If you're banged up 23 hours a day with two other guys, you're sort of eager waiting for the newspaper and you spend hours reading even the most trivial point. Just for something to read. Then if you've got any specific interests books can help you there. If people have no greater horizon in life on leaving prison than they've had when they get in, then obviously they're going to perform the same mistakes. They can learn a lot about different potentials, they can develop. Obviously, books enlighten the inmates' world" (Inmate, Prison A).

This prisoner had found the library helpful in providing a common link with which to maintain contact with his family:

"The librarian got me some sign language books sent in. The only reason why I've learnt it is because my little brother and little sister did it - she's only 11 and the other's 9. They got a certificate and a medal. They showed me up so I thought I'd have a go" (Inmate, Prison F).

Within a prison, newspapers are one of the most important ways in which inmates are able to absorb information about current affairs:

"We've got small radios and so on, but most people listen to pop tapes, that sort of thing, so current information comes through the papers, local and national, and that's very important. It relieves the sense of isolation - you get the paper in the morning and you're back in the outside world, catching up" (Inmate, Prison B).

Burt has argued that access to newspapers can help reduce institutionalisation and facilitate re-integration (Burt, 1977, p30). Although newspapers are distributed to prisoners on a rota basis within the living accommodation, this practice relies on individuals passing on the paper when they have read it, and access to a "quality" daily may not be possible. Inmates, if they have enough private cash, may buy their own daily paper or magazine, but many inmates reported they came to the library in order to gain access to a daily newspaper. However, five of the ten prison libraries studied for this research did not take daily newspapers, although at two of these establishments, a newspaper was, however, provided for the library orderly, which he was permitted to keep as a perk of the job. Absence

of newspapers from prison libraries provoked a sustained level of criticism from inmates:

"I do believe newspapers should be in libraries in prisons, so's you can keep up with the times, it's hard to keep up with the news in here. People need to be informed, because when you come out of here, things have happened and you don't know they've happened. Most people have got radios, but I know some people in here that can't afford a radio, and a lot of people don't have them when they first arrive for instance, and in them 2 weeks or a month, things happen, wars start, you know what I'm saying? On the wing, they give one cell on each spur a paper, but you don't always get them. So why not have them in the library for viewing, you don't have to have too many. I'm convinced that everything in libraries should be for educational purposes, and not pleasure, and papers are educational. On the wing, they do pass the papers on, if you're popular, but those that are a bit slow, a bit backward, you get them in here, they haven't got a chance, have they? They ain't in front of me, that's for sure. They've got to have another chance of looking at them" (Inmate, Prison B).

One librarian at a local prison made an effort (which involved going in her own time and at her own expense to the publishers), to gather all the local free papers, and these proved extremely popular with inmates. Once inmates are visiting the library for one purpose, they may then start to utilise some of the other services provided: an experiment at one American correctional institution whereby 75 different local newspapers were provided resulted in a doubling of library attendance (Cosio, 1969, p22).

However, other inmates argued that while they would like to have used the library to extend their knowledge of

current affairs, the limited resourcing prevented this kind of usage:

"I don't find the library particularly helpful in the way I'd expected it to be - I'd like to see a range of weekly news magazines, even if they were a couple of weeks old. It's a pity from our point of view. So I end up reading fairly useless fiction most of the time, which I think there is a big demand for, but it's playing too big a part in my reading" (Inmate, Prison K).

Some inmates, however, reported a greater interest in current affairs since they had been imprisoned:

"Personally, I became more interested in what was going on. It was broadening my horizons if you like. I became more interested in politics, economics, more interested in the sociological basis of issues. I began devouring newspapers, not just reading the funnies, but getting into some of the more upmarket papers, the Guardian, stuff like that. So the library came in handy like" (Inmate, Prison G).

#### 6.4 RE-INTEGRATION INFORMATION

As discussed above, in order for the prison library to adopt a rehabilitative perspective, it must provide highly specific information in a way that sets it apart from any branch library in any other part of the public library authority. Providing information to assist re-integration is also a necessary part of that provision and "plays a very important part in preventing prisoners from re-offending" (Home Office, 1992c, p1). The Standing Committee on Prison Libraries has also



recognised the importance of the provision of information in this area, arguing that the prison library should provide:

"help to prisoners on their return to the community by encouraging them to use libraries and teaching them how to derive the maximum benefit from the resources, eg. information on training for employment, job hunting, accommodation lists etc." (Home Office, 1993a, p7).

However, some prison governors considered the ability of the prison library, and indeed the Prison Service generally, to provide these resources to be closely defined and clearly limited:

"Because this is generally a resettlement prison, I want no more and no less from the library than what I would expect to find on the high street. To actually push things down people's throats is nonsense, because they'll only go out and do what they want to do anyway" (Governor, Prison G).

#### Employment and training information

Albert has argued that dissemination of up to date information on career training, skill development and job opportunities is particularly important for successful re-integration, and since such material requires constant updating, "a network of library resources is indicated as the most opportune provider" (Albert, 1989, p126).

In some prisons studied for this research, librarians, together with other staff in the prison, were beginning

to appreciate the potential importance of the library as a resource for this type of information. In one establishment, several initiatives targeting employment were focused on the library, as this teacher reported:

"They are proposing to start up a Job Club, in which the library will be heavily involved. Also the computerised link will mean the men could get access to local community information and TAPS. I think it's a very good thing for the library to have, and will have a great deal of effect" (Tutor, Prison A).

In another establishment, the library itself was used as the location for employment courses, and as a resource base to provide information:

"We're running a combined 6 week course with the local Job Centre, my own Education staff and probably APEX, and we use the library to provide not just national and ethnic newspapers, but area newspapers. So if we've got guys going out in a particular place they can be reading ahead as to what the job situation is, whether there's a shortage of lorry drivers, that sort of thing. I see in the future a much wider role for it, particularly if we move toward the out placement of inmates when they're getting a job" (Education Co-ordinator, Prison G).

This librarian had just begun collecting employment information, and argued that the library had an important role in this area, because not all inmates had the opportunity to receive careers guidance, which was available only on a limited scale elsewhere in the prison:

"I've got the local Careers Service to give me a copy of "Opportunities", and I would like to build up an area of the library which was much more

obviously job related, and course related and training related, so that people could actually perhaps take a different direction when they go out, to understand what opportunities are available. There is a careers man attached to education - but if you are not on education, they will not be going there for advice. I think there are a lot of people in here because they haven't been aware of opportunities, or haven't had the confidence to take them. A lot of adults don't realise you can change course completely, and even go into higher education if you want to, but lower down the scale, there are lots of other things you can do. So that's the area I've started amassing a bit of information. I just feel it might encourage people to look and see new opportunities" (Librarian, Prison F).

One library authority has recently developed Business Boxes, which contain information on starting or running a business. It has been argued that "their value to prisoners where self-employment is an obvious choice has been recognised" (Green, 1994, p23).

Inmates too, tended to favour a much greater provision of careers and training information, arguing there was a strong link between rehabilitation and employment:

"The only way you can better somebody is by offering them employment. If you've got a job you don't need to go out and steal. If I had a job the day I left school, then I wouldn't have been in here" (Inmate, Prison J).

Inmates themselves described a wide variation in the provision of employment information in their own prison library. Some inmates argued that the library did not offer any material to back up vocational training courses offered in the prison. The comments of this prisoner also illustrate the importance of training for library

orderlies to respond to information requests, and the failure, in his own case, of the orderly to deliver a more positive reply:

"They could possibly do with a few more books on certain trades, bricklaying, DIY stuff. They've got a bricklaying course here, but don't seem to have many books on it. I would have liked to learn more about roofing, because that's what I'm going to be doing, and there's nothing really in here. I've asked the orderly about it and he says there's only a few books, nothing very much. It's mainly novels, things like that" (Inmate, Prison J).

Other prisoners were able to offer a more positive report. These inmates argued that their utilisation of prison library resources would increase their chance of obtaining employment upon release. In addition, their comments also emphasise the significance of promotional work, both within the library and to other departments:

"I've just brought a book back, on applying for a job, how to write a CV out. Yeah, I found it useful, just reading it. It was more or less self explanatory, page for page, good layout in it. So I'll be able to put a CV together more or less on my own, whereas before I couldn't. It was a new book and it had been put on display and caught my eye straightaway and I thought, well, I'll have a look at that" (Inmate, Prison E).

"At the moment, I'm reading cookery books, because I've just passed my St. Ivel certificates in it, in cookery and health and hygiene, and I'm going to college when I get out to do a cookery course. So the books in the library have helped me considerably. On the course they gave me a list of what books to read. They've got some of their own in the cookery department, but they've got quite a few in the library as well, what the department hasn't got. I've put my mind to it that I'm not coming back. I've got a lot going for me outside - college and that. In 5 years time I want to see myself in a restaurant as head chef" (Inmate, Prison C).

Finally, this library orderly argued that the library was able to provide a good resource base for employment and training courses run within the prison:

"The education department run a careers class, a self employment class, and there's lots of back up in the library. Like there's lots of information on the catering industry - it's low paid, it's labour intensive and therefore it's more likely they could find work there. Also the transport industry, so we have transport manager's manuals. There's also things like woodworking manuals, which guys from the woodworking shops come and take. They might have some ideas - wooden toys, things they could go into self employment with. There's quite a good range of careers stuff" (Library Orderly, Prison E).

#### Welfare rights information

The findings of the National Prison Survey indicated that immediately prior to their imprisonment, only half of the men were legitimately employed, a third were registered unemployed, while the rest were working in the black economy or living off crime. About 6% of prisoners reported they had never been in paid employment (Walmsley et al, 1993, pviii).

With the additional handicap of a custodial sentence, it is even less likely that offenders leaving prison will be immediately employed, or commence courses. Most inmates will, therefore, seek to claim some kind of state benefit. The benefits system however, seems to work against the prisoner. Although they are eligible

for income support from the first day of release, this is paid a fortnight in arrears, while the prisoner's discharge grant is normally equivalent to only one week's benefit. Hence there is usually a week without any income, and a consequent temptation to resort to crime:

"If you don't have a clue when you get out there, it's a hell of a demotivator. If you just go out there knowing nothing, and you don't know what you're entitled to, you're out there with your poxy thirty five pounds and what does he do, rob another house. So that kind of info, it's very important" (Inmate, Prison H).

It is vital therefore, that offenders are accurately informed of their full benefit entitlement. In fact, prisoners displayed a wide variation in the extent of their knowledge regarding eligibility and availability of benefits. Some inmates who had served several sentences had:

"No worries. I've been on the social that long, I know more about it than they do" (Inmate, Prison J).

However, for many other inmates, their awareness of the benefits system was limited, which was further accentuated by rumours circulating among other prisoners:

"I don't know anything about benefits, I haven't got a clue. I've been on a pre release course, but they seemed to concentrate a lot on going for job interviews, managing your anger, presenting yourself properly - sort of trying to con people you haven't been in prison. But benefits and stuff, that's what you need, because when a bloke gets out of jail he isn't going to go and look for a job the next day is he? I've heard you can get grants, I don't really know, this is just rumour and hearsay. There's nothing really clear what you can look at.

There's nothing what tells you positive - everything is so vague. There's a couple of bits and pieces in the library about benefits, but people I've seen pick them up, look a bit confused and go. You don't know where you stand" (Inmate, Prison A).

Furthermore, for many inmates, their lack of awareness was further constrained by their poor literacy and comprehension skills:

"A large proportion of the inmates are not illiterate, but not easily able to understand some of the welfare benefit jargon, and let's face it, most of us are in the same boat on that one" (Inmate, Prison K).

Some inmates argued that these factors constituted an argument for assisting inmates not only with information, but advice as well. This inmate expressed some dissatisfaction with DSS input into pre-release courses and concluded that the library should have a greater role in disseminating this kind of material:

"There are courses run here by pre-release, with somebody from the DSS coming in and giving inmates a talk on what they can expect in a fortnight's time. But an officer of the DSS is not a welfare rights adviser who will tell you what you are entitled to, and not everybody goes on a pre-release course. What I'd like to see is, not a full scale welfare benefits scheme in the library, but just something a little bit better than what we've got now" (Inmate, Prison G).

One inmate argued that care should be taken in presenting this information to prisoners, in order to avoid hostile public opinion:

"Can you imagine how The Sun or The People would react if they found that we'd got somebody here who

was telling people what they could and couldn't claim, and how to go about it - they'd make a field day out of it. You've got two lots in here, you've got the old whip 'em, flog 'em, lynch 'em brigade, lock them up, keep them there and punish them, and you've got the others saying if that's all we do and turf them out at the end, then they'll reoffend, so we should be advising them on what they need. But in the present political climate, I think if too much was made of that, if that was done too efficiently, there'd be hell to pay" (Inmate, Prison E).

Officer staff also expressed dissatisfaction with the availability of benefits information generally within the prison environment, arguing that even if such information was stocked in other departments, the library, on grounds of inmate accessibility, should be seen as the central resource. However, it is significant to note that this officer viewed provision of such information not as a valid part of the library's remit, but as "treading on other people's toes":

"I think they should stock in the library a full range of leaflets of what help is available outside. I know that the probation department can get them in, but I think it would be much easier for inmates to go up to the library and have a rack where they can pick up these different things. It's probably treading on other people's toes, but if you can get a man motivated and prepared for release and not thinking "Oh, I've got to go down the dole office, then I've got to go there", and it's a hassle. I've been down and tried to get information and they say all these leaflets are available and you can get them, but usually they haven't got them. And it's very frustrating. Even more so when you're locked up in here and you can't do anything about it. And when you do go down to the DSS for anything they are not allowed to tell you what you are entitled to, they can only say yes and no. Although we do give them a Prisoners' Information Pack which is great, I think it would be more beneficial to them to pick up a current leaflet and not one that's out of date, because the benefits are changing all the time, so they know exactly and can plan" (Prison Officer, Prison H).



## Accommodation

In 1988 the Prison Service commenced the funding of the NACRO Prison Link Unit to train officers to assist inmates with any accommodation or employment problems they may face upon release. The Unit recommends that upon completion of training, officers would impart information or advice through "induction courses, pre release and inmate development courses or by setting up advice surgeries" (Home Office, 1992b, para5.2). The prison library is not mentioned. Many inmates interviewed in this study did not consider that the prison library would carry any information about accommodation on the outside:

"I wouldn't expect the library to have information on accommodation or DSS benefits or things like that, although it would be a plus if it did. But you'd really go to another department for it - most likely the welfare or probationary services would be able to sort those things out" (Inmate, Prison F).

Even officers from pre-release units were unaware that the library would be able to provide information in this area at all:

"I didn't know that, and it's one of the things that concerns me which we need to get involved in, is that different services in the prison colonise certain areas, a lot of which have been seen to be the territory of probation, but I think the library, and other agencies probably, have quite an important role to play in that whole area" (Prison Officer, Prison A).

Some inmates however did report that they had used the library for housing information:

"I've already written to a lot of housing associations. I got their addresses through Yellow Pages in the library" (Inmate, Prison K).

The particular problems concerning accommodation faced by vulnerable prisoners are discussed below.

#### **6.5 FACTORS CONSTRAINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INFORMATION PROVISION**

A number of factors determine how effective the provision of particular information is in addressing prisoner's needs. These include the manner in which that information is stored or transmitted and how it may be accessed, the aptitude of the inquirer in interacting with the mechanisms of retrieval and the attitude of the individual to the receipt of the information. These are discussed below.

##### **Resource availability and organisation**

The question of inmate access to information is a primary factor constraining information effectiveness. For inmates who only visit the library under officer escort, staff reported this constituted a major problem:

"In the amount of time we're looking at, 20 minutes, it's very limited what we can do. It wouldn't be a bad idea if you had things to point them in the general direction, but I don't think the library could handle anything else" (Prison Officer, Prison E).

However, other librarians where inmates also visited under escort, argued that prisoners had access to the library's information resources at least once a week, whereas they may not have had access to any other sources of information at all during that time:

"Any opportunity we get of being able to increase awareness, increase knowledge of things that may have caused criminal behaviour, that's always got to be our goal. So any opportunity at all - we know that men do use the library, they do go in there, and they may pick up something on drugs far more readily than they do in the Prisoner Support Unit, that's out of the way and only get access to when they're on a course. So the library's probably the only focal point in the prison where you know the majority of inmates will go at some point, where these things are on offer for people to look at and read. Inmates may say they get it rammed down their throats and they would love to get away from that, but when they're on the landings with people using drugs, what they're faced with every day is irresponsible behaviour, or lack of knowledge. And when it comes to being taught and having the opportunity to get important knowledge, there's not that much opportunity in a prison" (Librarian, Prison H).

There may, however, be problems in locating self help material within the prison library. Part of the problem may be that self-help resources tend to straddle many Dewey class numbers - health and medical material is located at 616, legal material at 340, education at

374, general business information at 658, directories of self help material at 016, stress management at 613, careers and employment information at 331, psychology and therapy based material in the 150's, alcohol dependency at 362 and so on. Many librarians interviewed were very unwilling to abandon a conventional classification system in favour of a more thematic approach:

"I think you can start slicing things up too much. I think self-help is a very broad area, I don't know whether you could narrow it down because it seems it would be an individual's interpretation of what that means" (Senior Librarian, Public Library Authority, Prison B).

Although none of the prison libraries in this study had a specific section devoted to self-help material, some librarians had made efforts to address this issue by grouping some broad subject areas together. However, little thought seemed to have been given to these collections, resulting in bizarre juxtapositions of titles. If inmates seeking information on a particular problem were to have found it in these sections, then they could have counted themselves extremely fortunate. In one library the collection was entitled 'Sociology, Society, Family and Crime'. On the uppermost shelf, the following odd grouping of books were found, reading from left to right:

JONES F. Murderous Women  
 SPOCK B. and ROTHENBERG M.B. Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care  
 HEATHER N and ROBERTSON I. Problem Drinking

St. AUBYN G. Infamous Victorians  
 OBSERVER Tearing Down the Curtain: The People's  
 Revolution in Eastern Europe  
 WHICH BOOKS Divorce: Legal Procedures and  
 Financial Facts  
 ARDEN A. Public Tenants Handbook  
 CALLAGHAN J. Socialism in Britain  
 LUBA J. and McCONNELL D. Rights Guide for Home  
 Owners  
 MOLYNEUX J. What's the Real Marxist Tradition?  
 LEIGH V. Addiction in the News  
 POMEROY W.J. Guerilla Warfare and Marxism  
 KEMP F., BUTTLE B. and KEMP D. Focus on Redundancy  
 BRIDGE F. and BULLEN R. The Great Powers and the  
 European States System  
 BROWN M. Models in Political Economy  
 VAULKHARD S. Legal Aid  
 KATANKA M. Radical Reformers and Socialists  
 MIDDLETON J. Your Rights at Work  
 HOOPER A. Divorce and Your Children  
 WILLIAMS S. Politics is for People  
 ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS Alcoholics Anonymous Handbook  
 KEEN M. The Outlaws of Medieval Legend

In another library, a collection had been drawn together  
 entitled 'Living and Learning'. Again, the books from  
 a sample shelf are listed below:

BEER S. Modern British Politics  
 DAVIS D. The BBC Viewers Guide to Parliament  
 LEVIN J. The Divorce Handbook  
 McGRATH S. The Tied Accommodation Handbook  
 ARDEN A. Public Tenants Handbook  
 FARRELL M. The Facts of Death-Coping When Someone  
 Dies  
 GREENWOOD J. and WILSON D. Public Administration in  
 Britain  
 WHICH BOOKS Divorce: Legal Procedures and  
 Financial Facts  
 CHAPMAN L. Your Disobedient Servant  
 SEYMOUR J. and GIRARDET H. Far From Paradise-Human  
 Impact on the Environment  
 COLEMAN V. How to Stop Feeling Guilty  
 ROWE D. Living With The Bomb  
 LEE C. The Growth and Development of Children

Clearly, some wise decisions had been made in regard to  
 stock acquisition by targeting areas that would be likely  
 to be of interest to inmates - for example, divorce.

The National Prison Survey found that fifty one percent of prisoners who had served between 5 and 10 years of their sentence reported a change in their marital status (Walmsley et al., 1993, pviii). However, the potential value of this material was almost completely destroyed by its seemingly haphazard location adjacent to other unrelated literature.

In another instance, poor organisation of information resources resulted in a negative response being given to an inmate's query, as this library assistant reported:

"The 'Directory of Help Agencies', I didn't even know we had it, until I came across it by chance the other day. For accommodation and housing - a guy came in for it last week - I didn't know it was there" (Library Assistant, Prison C).

Another library assistant, who worked on an opposing shift system with a professional librarian, and was therefore in sole charge of the prison library for half its opening hours, argued that information provision was limited by three principal factors: it was not considered to be an important objective of the library, training of library staff was non-existent and no attempt was made to deliver any kind of pro-active service:

"Well for the past little while, the community information has been covered by that old noticeboard. I think we could do more with those leaflets - when you think about it, they're just clutter really. It's all kept in a locked filing cabinet, because if we left it out, it'd probably go. But I think we could be a bit more effective with them. Quite honestly, I wouldn't know what should be in there and what shouldn't. When people

ask for something, it's a voyage of discovery for me as well, "If you say we've got it, I'll have a look", you know? But I've no background in libraries. I don't know what's in my local library and I'm not much better here" (Library Assistant, Prison E).

Inmates too complained that while prison libraries may hold good information resources, without access to them prisoners could not benefit:

"Prison libraries are renowned for having information, but I'm afraid to say most prison libraries are also renowned for having it in the bottom drawer, locked away where no-one can see it. Crazy. If you've got information, have it on show, where people can see it and read it - leaflets, people's addresses, information for addressing drug rehab and therapy, housing trusts, all sorts of things. I remember walking into my local library at home and there was always a counter that had loads of public information leaflets. In prison, there's not an awful lot of that about. You might have a noticeboard with half a dozen things on, but in most prisons it's all shut away which seems sad" (Inmate, Prison B).

Even in lower security category establishments, where inmate access to the library was much greater, library orderlies were concerned that information provision was inadequate:

"We could do with more pamphlets, a lot of them are out of date. We could do with a lot more information - everyone can get here at most times in the day or evening, therefore it should be a place for information. It's an information desk, but with not enough information" (Library Orderly, Prison G).

### Negative attitudes

Inmates may hold negative beliefs that the library will stock self-help material, and thus may tend to seek help elsewhere, or perhaps not bother at all:

"Well, a library is a library isn't it? It's not a welfare service. I don't expect to see things like that in a library to be honest with you"  
(Inmate, Prison C).

Stock promotion is therefore vital in raising inmates' awareness of information resources:

"It's like going into a supermarket, if you're going in for a bottle of Coca Cola, you're not going to pick up the bottle of Pepsi next to it, you don't even see it. But if there's a big notice stuck in front of you, "Oh, what's that?" "  
(Inmate, Prison J).

Other inmates said that even if prisoners did read this kind of material, the resultant effect on their behaviours would be minimal:

"If a person is going to drink or take drugs, reading a pamphlet is going to be neither here nor there. I've always thought that if a person wants to do a thing, they'll do it" (Inmate, Prison E).

It has also been asserted that the intrinsic nature of the prison environment results in the demotivation of inmates, making it unlikely they will engage in independent information seeking behaviour:

"The prisoner is mortified, desocialised and subjected to personal contamination in a moral



atmosphere which is authoritarian and dehumanising. The prison teaches the offender that he or she is incompetent, irresponsible, and without worth. These systematic features of incarceration are maintained through the routine behaviour of lower level line officers. The good prisoner, in the ideology of the line staff officer, "knows his place". He does not seek meaningful change in his life" (Jones, 1992, p16).

Others interviewed argued that the value of self-help material is limited because its use implicitly requires the individual to recognise he has a problem and must also have the motivation to want to change. However, people may construct complex rationalisations, they may have long-term denial mechanisms or they may simply be unaware that their behaviour is harmful or anti-social:

"You go out and tell somebody they've got a problem, he's going to tell you, no he ain't. A person with a problem out there ain't going to recognise he's got a problem, so a person with a problem ain't going to be reading those books. So it's a total waste of time" (Inmate, Prison E).

The effectiveness of this material may also be limited, because some inmates may feel that simply reading about a particular difficulty is sufficient, in itself, to resolve that problem. This is usually not the case. Howie has argued that changes in behaviour also require the development of adaptive and coping strategies (Howie, 1988, p 31). Furthermore, reading may seem to present people an opportunity to rationalise and intellectualise their problems without necessarily doing anything concrete to change their behavioural patterns. There may be the danger that unguided reading may result in a

reinforcement of fears and anxieties, particularly in areas like mental health (Howie, 1988, p31).

An argument was advanced by some officers that even if prisoners were motivated to look for information which to sought to address particular problems, inmates would be unwilling to draw attention to their problem by borrowing material about it from the library:

"You've got to remember that if you put books on shelves about drug abuse or HIV, there's very few people would want to be standing looking at those particular shelves" (Prison Officer, Prison F).

Finally, some inmates, and some staff, reported there was no need for the library to carry any self help material, because the prison had a structured formal system to deal with any problems:

"Things are very clearly defined here. If you've got a personal problem, you've got your Personal Officers to go to, if it's outside personal problems, it's probation, if you've got an educational problem, it's education. So things are fairly well defined here. Most people would only use the library if they needed a reference or to check for their own peace of mind, to check what they've been told by one source" (Inmate, Prison F).

#### Low inmate literacy

Low literacy levels may act as a major constraint on the effectiveness of self help material:

"It's fair enough having a shelf of material giving you information, but I question the value of something you're going to have to pick out of a

book, particularly that the educational levels are not going to be particularly high to begin with. You're always going to have that problem with the written word. I think it's valuable that it's available, it's important that it should be available, but I question the value of it" (Inmate, Prison D).

For example, the self-help manuals produced and distributed by the Prison Service which were referred to above, were promoted in a Pre-release Tutors Newsletter, but this strict instruction was also added:

"These booklets should be given to LITERATE [original emphasis] inmates who want advice on the specific subject" (Home Office, 1991c, p4).

Given that in a recent survey by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, 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), a substantial number of prisoners are being omitted from this important area of information provision. Some individual prisons in this study had produced, as an independent initiative, cassette tapes to address stress management and to help inmates develop relaxation techniques. Although at least one librarian in a Special Hospital (Rampton), regularly obtains self-help material on cassette or compact disc from the local public library authority, none of the prisons in the present study had any stocks of such material.

## 6.6 FACTORS PROMOTING LIBRARY EFFECTIVENESS AS AN INFORMATION PROVIDER

Nevertheless, despite the existence of these many negative factors constraining information effectiveness, other factors exist which tend to enhance the library's role in this area, and these are summarised below.

### Independence

As previously indicated, inmates consider the library a neutral space within the prison environment. They are able to use its resources to help resolve their problems without having to deal with staff who may be perceived as unhelpful, or as part of the "system":

"They do have a hell of a lot of stuff in the library that deals with probation work - all kinds of leaflets, books and packages. It can play a good role because you do get lads who don't like talking to probation officers - they have their own views of the system. Yet you can go over there and see all this stuff. You feel easier asking a librarian. They're a bit wary about asking members of staff or probation. I work for probation myself, I'm their orderly, but I don't really get on with them. A lot of inmates won't have much to do with them. So I think the library can play a big part in it" (Inmate, Prison A).

In addition, the library's resources can be used by prisoners without necessarily being identified by other inmates as a weak individual in need of help:

"I would think it should play a part in libraries, drug awareness, alcohol awareness, that sort of thing - it's the only real place in prison where it

does play a part. On the wings it's a waste of time displaying things like that, because people think they've got to put on an image on the wing. They'd lose their credibility, their street credibility, if they're standing there looking at an AA poster or a drugs poster. They wouldn't want to be seen by the other convicts, whereas it's an acceptable thing to be perusing anything in the library - magazines, posters, whatever. Something like that would get vandalised on the wing, but it wouldn't get touched in the library" (Inmate, Prison H).

Other inmates argued that offenders could only change if they came to appreciate their own motives and actions, and that the library could play an important part in developing this self awareness:

"If people need some kind of help, and the library can provide it, it should. Unless people can understand it themselves, you can't expect anyone else to help them really. If they don't know what they're doing and why they're doing it, there's no point in anyone else telling them why, because that's just like putting words into their mouth" (Inmate, Prison J).

Some officers said that the library was one of the few places in the prison where inmates could obtain reliable information:

"We're here to help inmates, not just lock them up. With the information the library provides it's helping them and easing their mind. Getting information is important - they can't be fobbed off all the time" (Prison Officer, Prison B).

#### Development of information skills

One Education Co-ordinator argued that because libraries tend to encourage a spirit of inquiry, this can exert a

positive influence, in addition to any benefit which inmates may obtain from the stock itself:

"There's material on the shelves to provide individuals with knowledge and information about potential problems, with the intention that knowledge removes all the unknown areas. Also there are support materials and information for all the courses that we run in the prison. But the library also encourages people to ask questions, and that itself is going to improve skills. It isn't a place where people are told to keep quiet" (Education Co-ordinator, Prison K).

Other inmates argued that being able to use the library to access information independently helped prisoners take more responsibility for themselves:

"Yes, most definitely, all that information should be in the prison library. It's good to have something like that, because you can actually start to write to those people yourself. It just helps you be a bit more independent and take control of yourself" (Inmate, Prison B).

#### Inmate receptivity

Because of the non-threatening way in which the library is perceived by many inmates, they may be particularly responsive to material which is obtained from it:

"The majority of prisoners in my experience are very gullible, very susceptible to pressure to change, and therefore I think that the material in the library and what is read is very influential with them. And that's why I think we need professional staff who are going to guide people to try other things, rather than the constant demand for whatever is the current popular interest" (Education Co-ordinator, Prison B).

Although there may be formal courses and classes run by various departments within the establishment, these may be insufficient to deal with prisoner's needs. For example, at one prison, the availability of places on a drugs awareness course was limited:

"If I saw leaflets about drugs I would take one like and have a read through it - see what it's about. I don't know about drugs, so if I saw stuff I would take it and read it, so I would know for the future. It would be good for me. The drugs courses here are not aimed for everyone - only certain people can go on. I asked for one and they said no" (Inmate, Prison J).

Furthermore, many courses tend to rely on the spoken word, with little follow up, and this limits their effectiveness, as this pre-release tutor realised:

"Once they get off the course and they go back to the normal routine, then perhaps go another course, they've forgotten most of it" (Prison Officer, Prison K).

Providing extra, written material to back up courses can therefore be a useful tool to assist reinforcement, as another tutor commented:

"The amount that we actually take in from what is said to us is limited, so having something written down may arouse questions. Even people who haven't signed in for a particular course, they may read a bit and think "Hey, that does make sense, that is a problem I've got, I could do to talk to somebody about this", and from that enrol in a face to face. If it starts discussion on the wings, they don't necessarily need professional face to face. Passing things around and discussing it, is surely the way a lot of us function" (Prison Officer, Prison B).

Inmates did report positive benefits from reading self-help material:

"I got this from the library, but you can send off for it from Narcotics Anonymous - you get it free if you are a prisoner. They call it "The Blue Book". I found it useful, because of the identification with it. It ain't so much about drug taking, it's being self-centred through drug use, it's being highly motivated to take drugs, just to do what I want to do. It mentions a lot how to fill voids - because drug taking is a 24 hour a day job, and then to be clean and start to live again. It mentions the steps, and some stories of people who've made it, who've stayed clean, they've put on paper their experiences of drug use. I've got another book, "Reflections", it's Alcoholics Anonymous, it's the same as N.A., the Minnesota programme. It's quite a good book actually, I was leafing through it last night. If you read it, you can gain strength from it. It's all to do with the person that we was and how to change" (Inmate, Prison B).

## 6.7 OTHER RESEARCH FINDINGS

Very little research had been conducted to determine the effectiveness of self-help material. Of the small number of studies which have taken place, very few have been carried out with the necessary level of methodological rigour (Coyle, 1987, p44). Although the self-help manuals produced by the Prison Service have not yet been evaluated, Dr. Evershed has argued that they cannot be considered as "active alternative" to treatment:

"For the vast majority of inmates the self help manuals will not be enough to effectively change because there is a problem with the degree of



motivation, the degree of support and the degree of resources available" (personal letter, 10/2/1995).

However, one study where the validity of conclusions drawn can be considered reliable, was concerned with moderating the alcohol intake of problem drinkers (Miller and Taylor, 1980). The focus of the study was to investigate how successfully participants could learn to apply Behavioural Self-Control Training (BSCT) techniques from reading a self-help manual. The manual included information about alcohol consumption, education regarding abuse, analysis of drinking behaviour and training in self-reinforcement and coping skills. Participants were randomly allocated to four groups - one group received the manual only, while other groups in turn each had, additionally, individual therapy, group therapy and relaxation training. Overall, after 12 months 69% of all clients were rated as 'improved', that is, exhibiting a clinically and statistically significant decrease in alcohol consumption. No differences were found between the four groups "supporting the cost-effectiveness of a bibliotherapy approach, consistent with prior research" (Miller and Taylor, 1980, p13). A two year follow up study found these gains had been largely sustained. The follow up study also noted that:

"More recent research at our clinic employing appropriate control groups suggests that improvement in bibliotherapy clients cannot be attributed to nonspecific population effects or to self-monitoring alone. Whatever the mechanism, it is of interest that minimal interventions should yield such

encouraging long-term effects" (Miller and Baca, 1983, p447).

The results of this study have important implications for the kind of information that the prison library should hold, and the way that this information should be presented. However, more research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of self-help manuals, and information generally, within a specifically custodial setting. For example, no studies have yet addressed the effectiveness of self-help material on cassette or compact disc as a method of addressing behavioural problems.

#### 6.8 INFORMATION PROVISION TO PARTICULAR INMATE GROUPS

Certain groups of inmates have particular information needs, and these were satisfied with varying degrees of effectiveness by the prison libraries concerned. Some of these groups are examined below.

##### Long termers

Long termers will have very different needs than those serving very short sentences. One inmate, for example, argued that information was more useful to short termers, because career criminals and those serving longer sentences obtained all the information they needed either

from their fellow prisoners or from their prior experience of being released from custody:

"In lower security prisons you've got people who haven't been through the prison system all their life, they've got caught frauding their VAT or whatever, and all of a sudden "Oh my god, I'm in prison", and they're the kind of people all this information would be useful to. But this kind of establishment is a criminal's establishment, where people aren't frightened of what's going to happen to them, because they know already" (Inmate, Prison F).

Other prisoners argued that long termers needed more information, in order to maintain their links with the outside. Some prisoners said that library newspapers were particularly important:

"In our situation with being lifers, you can just not afford to cut yourself off - it's the worst thing you can possibly do. You do need that contact with the outside, that is one of the most important things. The more you keep contact with the outside, the easier it is when you do eventually go out. Reading the papers, getting the news, so basically you know what's happening" (Inmate, Prison H).

The importance of providing inmates with accurate information regarding state benefits was referred to earlier. Long termers may have particular needs in this area. For example, it is likely that the long term prisoner will have very few suitable clothes, their body weight may have changed over a long period in custody so clothes no longer fit, or they may have become lost or damaged. The availability of appropriate clothing can be an important element of the re-integration process,

especially when applying for jobs (Lingard et al, 1994, p43). Thus, information on clothing grants may be required. Released long term prisoners may also require a community care grant to cover the cost of purchasing furniture and household items. Even if returning to their own accommodation, such a grant may be needed, as prisoners' empty homes are often ransacked.

### Remand prisoners

Prisoners held on remand, although they now comprise nearly a quarter of the total prison population, are outside the scope of this study, because as they are unconvicted they cannot, by definition, be rehabilitated. However, the increasing number of remand prisoners and the fact that the average time that untried prisoners spend in custody is now 49 days (an increase of 90% since 1977), makes the conditions under which these individuals are held a matter of some concern. In some serious or complex cases, a prisoner can remain remanded in custody over a year before their trial. Remand prisoners may need a large amount of information covering a wide variety of issues, ranging from complex benefit and employment questions, to simply who is feeding the cat. However, because of the nature of the regime and considerations of security, access to the library in local and remand prisons typically tends to be limited, and geared to recreational rather than

information needs, as this life sentenced prisoner pointed out:

"When I was on remand, the library was open during lunchtimes, and wing by wing we'd have about ten minutes there and I think we all looked upon it as providing something to read when you were locked behind the door. I say the reason why inmates looked on it like that was because that's how it was presented to the inmates. That's it, we've got books for you - you can take them out or you needn't bother. It was very limited. I was conditioned, as were the rest of the inmates, that all it was there for was to take out books" (Inmate, Prison F).

#### Older prisoners

Although prisoners aged 60 or over, constitute only 1% of the prison population, compared with 26% in the general population (Walmsley et al, 1993, pvii), the particular needs these prisoners have, appear to be largely ignored:

"I'm 64 next month, so I'm one year away from retirement - so even apart from being not able to get a job, from the age point of view a lot of doors are closed for an older person, and I think that's an area where the dissemination of information is not looked at. I find that inmates are bundled together, "inmates", and not divided up into any other groups" (Inmate, Prison G).

Information about housing was commonly cited as an area of concern by many older inmates, tending to confirm the results of prior research (McWilliams, 1975, p26; McGuire and Priestley, 1985, p52).

Furthermore, older prisoners are also more likely to be serving sentences imposed for sexual offences (see population data below). When these prisoners are released they are often required to move to a new area, away from where the original offence was committed. They may therefore require much more information to facilitate their successful resettlement. The particular information needs of older sex offenders are discussed below.

#### Vulnerable prisoners

A large number of prisoners have to be segregated from the rest of the prison population under Rule 43 of the Prison Rules, which provides that:

##### "Removal from association

43 (1) Where it appears desirable, for the maintenance of good order and discipline or in his own interests, that a prisoner should not associate with other prisoners, either generally or for particular purposes, the governor may arrange for the prisoner's removal from association accordingly.

(2) A prisoner shall not be removed under this Rule for a period of more than 24 hours without the authority of a member of the Board of Visitors, or of the Secretary of State. An authority given under this paragraph shall be for a period not exceeding one month, but may be renewed from month to month.

(3) The governor may arrange, at his discretion, for such a prisoner as aforesaid, to resume association with other prisoners, and shall do so if in any case the medical officer so advises on medical grounds" (quoted in Plotnikoff, 1988, p81).

Inmates who have committed offences of a sexual nature comprise the majority of inmates who either voluntarily

seek protection under Rule 43 or who are placed "on the numbers" or "on the rule" by the prison authorities. The number of sex offenders is increasing sharply - in 1979, there were 1500 sex offenders in custody, in 1990, there were 3166. Of this figure, 2006 of those were serving sentences of four years and over and 170 were serving life sentences (Guy, 1992, p1). In addition, it must be remembered that there may be large numbers of other prisoners not specifically classified as sex offenders but whose crimes were nevertheless sexually motivated. This is important. These prisoners may not be receiving any specific treatment or therapy to address the underlying causes of their offending behaviour, but may nevertheless have some degree of curiosity in analysing their motivations and distorted thinking.

Prisoners held under Rule 43, because of the nature of their offence, rather than because they pose a threat to good order and discipline, will either be accommodated in a segregation unit or separate wing securely isolated within a normal prison establishment, or they may be housed within a special prison specifically for this type of inmate (Vulnerable Prisoner Units - VPU's). At a small number of prisons there have been some successful, but limited, attempts to integrate vulnerable prisoners into the mainstream prison population (see Twinn, 1992). Sex offenders in segregation units are often at risk from other inmates:

"It's like them 43's - sex offenders, nonces, call them what you like. They're protected, they should be taught a lesson. It's like me when I do cars, I only do nice cars, because I know they're insured. I know there's going to be an insurance company that's going to cough up for something I did, but with them kind of things they should be put in with the general population - then they'd be taught a lesson, because they'd never do it again" (Inmate, Prison F).

Inmates within the segregated units soon become resigned to their poor living conditions:

"Library depends upon the availability of staff and the mood the officer staff are in - whether or not you actually get a library visit. But that's because I suppose we're Rule 43 prisoners in a segregated wing" (Inmate, Prison F).

In these conditions the role of the library often becomes limited to little more than a place where books are hurriedly stamped in and out:

"We go to the library once a week usually, but for the last two weeks we haven't been, owing to staff shortages. It's happening more and more often I'm afraid that we're missing the library. And it is a bind, because I use that library regularly. I take six books a week, biographies, classic books and escapism books - I like those as well. I get a great deal of pleasure and knowledge from that library. We go from 12.30 to 1pm and they've got to do 30 people in that time. I mean, I usually know what I'm going to get when I go, but some people just like looking round, they want a cowboy, they want a detective and they like a bit of time in the library" (Inmate, Prison F).

In segregation units within these establishments, a visit to the library can have enormous significance:

"Because my offences were Rule 43, and that was 24 hour bang up, books in the library were your saviour then. You could very easily go into your



cell and never come out again - you only have contact with people for an hour a day and that's horrendous. It really is. As a 43, we had to go to the library separate and if something happened, we couldn't go - once we never got to go for two months. And that was really difficult, because you're not allowed to swap books, but everybody had to and you just hope the guy's not going to damage it and he's going to give it you back and all the rest of it, and then the librarian goes apeshit when he finds you've been swapping books and threatens to stop you using the library. But in that sort of situation, in a local prison especially, I think libraries are essential. Long term prisons, places like this where there's a lot of other things going on, it's not so important" (Inmate, Prison D).

Conditions in VPU's tend to be much better, and often for the first time inmates can move about without the threat of verbal or physical assault. However, as noted above, the more positive regime is seen by some prisoners as a control mechanism, to ensure inmate co-operation - otherwise the inmate will be transferred back to normal location. In some instances, inmates will tend to suppress their information needs rather than fear being shipped out as too troublesome. For example, in previous research this prisoner, from a VPU, although he said he suffered from acute claustrophobia, had not sought help from the prison medical services:

"You're just as likely to be sent back to a closed nick if they think you're too much trouble - so you don't report things even when you're really ill. The best bet for me would be to get some books out of the library and try to cure myself" (Stevens, 1992, p89).

Providing a library and information service to Rule 43 prisoners, even those in separate VPU's, can be a

challenging undertaking, but one which should have a high priority. This is because these prisoners have a range of additional needs not faced by prisoners on normal location or in ordinary prison establishments. These needs fall into three main areas - assisting with the treatment programmes, reducing stress levels and providing re-integration information.

#### SPECIAL NEEDS 1: PROGRAMME SUPPORT

In 1992, in order to try and ensure sex offenders were not kept in a regime which fostered idleness, reinforced deviant attitudes and deprived inmates of positive role models, a Sex Offenders Treatment Programme (SOTP) was developed consisting of a core programme to tackle such issues as distorted beliefs, victim empathy, the acceptance of the consequences of deviant behaviour, and the development of offence avoidance mechanisms and relapse prevention strategies. In addition, an extended programme was available for high risk offenders requiring specialist attention.

The library's resources can also be used to supply inmates with information they may need to help them address aspects of their offending behaviour. The vast majority of inmates interviewed felt that the library should have material which directly addressed issues of sexual offending and should be able to provide material which would assist with the therapy programme:

"It's giving access to information that many guys have never had before. If you live in the back streets of a town, you've been brought up the hard way, you've fought your battles and all the rest of it, the last thing you do on a Saturday morning is toddle off to the library to change your books. You don't read. You don't learn about things. It can open up a whole new perspective on things - depends what sort of books you read. You might read an autobiography about someone that inspires you, or you might be reading about politics, or anything, social science sort of stuff, psychology. I tended to use libraries in the first three or four years just to get out of my cell, just to get away from what was going on, because once that door is banged shut, you can basically please yourself. But now I read a lot more things. I've read some stuff on therapy, some stuff on abusers. I've read all sorts of stuff going on with my therapy that seemed important to look at and then sort of look what's said in the book and see how that relates to me, if it makes any sense, see if it fits, and if it does, why does it" (Inmate, Prison D).

One prisoner recalled how important the role of the library can be in supporting components of the SOTP:

"Before coming here, I hardly ever read serious books before - I mean, I haven't read that many, but what I have read, I wouldn't say I've understood everything, 'cause I'm no genius, but it's helped me and there's people about that you're able to talk to. I was abused as a child and I read a story written by two girls who'd been abused by their father and that was quite harrowing and it brought up a lot of feeling in about my dad, so it was something I could deal with on the group. There was also Jill Seward's book about the rape - I read that because I'm a sex offender, I read that to get more of an idea what my victim might have felt like and that was horrendous and got to me and all the rest of it. There's some books down in the education tutors office and they're sort of therapy type books, stuff that might be useful, but the Jill Seward one I got from the library. And it was just something I felt I should do. Something we talk a lot about - victim empathy and understanding the victim's point of view and what they went through, and because I indecently assault women, I thought that's not all that far away from rape, and if I hadn't been arrested I'd probably have got that

far, so I'll read it. I vaguely knew a woman had been raped in a vicarage, because I remembered that from the news at the time, But I didn't know anything else about the story and what she went through and I found that really terrifying and it made me look at myself and with a lot more harshness, blowing a bit of the cloud away, because you always like to take the good bits of ourselves and cover up the nasty bits, and it just blew it all away and I had to see myself really as I was, what I was capable of and what I might have done, and if I had, what effect that would have had" (Inmate, Prison D).

Many offenders have poor social and reasoning skills, and are unable to perceive any perspective other than their own (Nuttall, 1992, p41). Reading, however, implicitly requires that the reader must identify, order and combine the viewpoints of others (Iser, 1974, p114). This inmate for example, was given books by the prison psychologist in a successful attempt to try and challenge negative attitudes and to explain the implications of a clinical diagnosis. Significantly, the prisoner had no expectation of finding such material in the prison library:

"I've read a book called 'The Female Eunuch' - it's about women, about the build-up, the make-up of a woman, things like that. It changed my views about women. Because of the offence I'm in for, that book helped me change on my views towards women. I got the book from a psychologist. I also read one called 'The Mask of Sanity', not that I'm insane or anything like that. It was a very hard reading book, but I forced myself to read it from cover to cover. It was about psychopaths and gives you all different views of what a psychopath really is - it's not the beady eyes staring at you, it's you sitting there, or me sitting here or whatever. Yes, they should have books like that in the library. 'The Mask of Sanity' made me look at myself - you see I was branded as, not a psychopath, they brand you something else to make it easier on the person. Instead of saying 'you're a psychopath', they say 'you have a personality

complex', which is the same thing. I thought 'well, if I've got a personality complex, I'd like to know more about it, what the different personality complexes are', so that's why I got the book. I also got that from a psychologist, because you probably wouldn't find it in the library. It helped me, because it made me realise I'm not alone, there's other people and they've got the same thing wrong with them. I would never have known that if I hadn't picked up that particular book. It helped change me" (Inmate, Prison D).

For some prisoners, their offending is closely related to low self esteem, often coupled with a poor understanding of how incidents in their early upbringing have conditioned their subsequent behaviour (McGuire and Priestley, 1985, p20). This prisoner gave an account of how, through reading about the background and effects of sexual abuse, both the understanding of his own behaviour and his level of self-esteem had increased:

"Because I'm reading about the effects of abuse, I've been abused and I've committed a crime, the effect that that's having on me is my self worth is building up, because I had a very low self esteem of myself before, and I felt totally isolated and separate from everything. There wasn't anything I felt a part of. I was just on my own, isolated. I couldn't relate to anything. And now, I've got a logical explanation as to some of that, why I'm like that. I've been driven to that by a sequence of circumstances that have not abated at all, and that still carry on, but at least having the knowledge of why I think, or don't think, or feel and don't feel in certain ways. At least I know why, I can cope with it and tackle it a bit better now. It's completely changed me. I didn't understand my behaviour you see. I just thought I was a freak or something, but I'm not a freak, I'm a normal person that's been affected by things that have happened to me in the past. So now I can stand outside of myself, look in and deal with it objectively and get things sorted out, which is great, I've never been able to do that before. So I'm very optimistic towards my future" (Inmate, Prison J).

Another inmate, who did not use the prison library and was not aware of the range of stock available, nevertheless considered that therapeutic material would be beneficial not only to inmates but also to staff:

"If there were those kind of things in the library that's where I'd go. Definitely, yes. I think if you had a wider variety of things to do with social problems, especially in this institution which has its roots in trying to understand the past and how you came to be the person you are - I think if you had books that went into that sort of thing, it would be definitely advantageous to this institution. In fact, if the library did have more books based on social problems there's even more reason for staff to be going in there, so they can relate to us more" (Inmate, Prison D).

Librarians who were interviewed also recognised the importance, in terms of rehabilitation, of providing back-up material in the prison library for the therapy programme:

"I think the library can give inmates power to cope with situations - I would hope so. I would hope that we can get him books that help him overcome problems - as with drug addiction or alcoholism. I would have thought that most books have to be used in conjunction with other help - psychological or therapeutic. I would think then the best way would be book used with other people to help them in improving their own degrees of self control, of controlling aggression, of controlling obsessions - all the things that bring people into prison, and particularly the sex offenders. I don't know how far books on their own could go, whether they'd touch people or whether people just read to reinforce convictions they've already got, but I would have hoped that some of the lay type, simple books that we do have would help in making them a more rounded person and able to take their place in the community" (Librarian, Prison D).

However, some inmates however expressed reservations about the dangers of prisoners reading therapeutically oriented texts uncritically:

"I think that if you have a librarian that it is committed and active in those areas, then it would be enormously helpful to people in the jail. But there is a danger that if the librarian is not particularly committed and that the library is full of books on different sociological thought and psychoanalysis, then people tend to pick up a book and think they're going to do the job themselves, simply by reading a book. That's not always helpful for them, even though they feel that perhaps it is. It's not always terribly helpful without some kind of input from someone who knows the subject and what they're talking about. Otherwise it could be a very dangerous and volatile thing" (Inmate, Prison K).

Furthermore, the account given above by the prisoner who argued that reading Seward's account of her rape enabled him to develop a sense of victim empathy, might not in fact be true. There is the possibility that this prisoner may, in fact, have been using Seward's account of her experiences as an arousal mechanism. Sex offenders will typically fantasize about a situation, and then may commit an offence based around that fantasy. The offence itself then becomes an opportunity for further fantasy. The prisoner notes for example, that rape was "not very far away" from his own particular offence.

There is also some debate as to whether prison libraries should hold material which sex offenders may obtain but

which it is considered may prove to be detrimental to their rehabilitation:

"No one can study either psychology or Portuguese. Psychology can be a very dangerous weapon with some of these men who are very bright and manipulative already. Remember our first priority is to protect women and children in the future" (Governor, Prison K).

Thus no psychology books or resources for learning the Portuguese language were available on the shelf in the library at Prison K, and requests for any such material were monitored and vetted by the librarian and governors. Portugal is one of the largest centres in Europe of paedophile activity, so the exclusion of Portuguese language material seems perfectly reasonable. However, the grounds for the restrictive control of psychology texts are somewhat less obvious or clearly defined. The inmate library orderly offered some insight into the way this process operated:

"When inmates do order books, the order forms are checked by the librarian before any books are ordered. The main purpose of this is to ensure that inmates are not reading anything that may be inappropriate, books on particular medical or psychological issues. In a way, it's a form of censorship, but it's not suppressing information, it's safeguarding the inmate from himself if you like. And most inmates are unaware of this 'censorship' as such, and it very rarely applies. Although sometimes probation officers suggest to people books to read and it may be that the core programme is based on the texts of these books, so there the librarian's got a problem - do we allow the inmate to read this information, will it preempt any of the group work, will it forearm him against whatever the therapy might offer? There again, if he's already done part of the programme, why not let him use that book to reinforce his therapy? It's a balance, and it depends on the



individual - but I don't envy the librarian in that respect" (Library Orderly, Prison K).

A governor at this prison gave some additional information into this process:

"If I want to find out about you and your individual behaviour I could lock you up in a room with bare walls and just observe you for several weeks, but all I would see from you would be you in an empty room. But if I wanted to study you very closely and your behaviour and actions, I would let you roam about in society, then I would see what you get up to and then I'd get a better idea of what your real behaviour pattern is. So I'm not saying we're constantly monitoring reading patterns, but if someone is into child molesting and he starts requesting child psychology books, then I think that means something" (Governor, Prison K).

The Head of Inmate Activities responsible for overseeing this policy argued that if allowed free access to such material, it was likely that prisoners would employ it to rationalise and externalise their own offending, and utilise the received information to enhance their capabilities in manipulating further victims:

"The psychiatrist who did an initial assessment of this establishment and the type of person we have, she concluded that the person we have here is way above average intelligence, not just of the prison population, but of society in general. You could say that if they are studying, is that not challenging their behaviour, but I think once they start getting into it, it's a bit like Hannibal Lechter, they actually start saying I'm reading about this, let's start intellectualising about it. I guess I'm saying I don't want people to study psychology, because already our men intellectualise most things that are going on and they do have a high degree of manipulation. If you couple that with quite a reasonable standard of intelligence and knowledge of the ways of the world outside and positions held, then I think you're going to end up with quite a monster. I would say we've spoken about it widely in the institution and I think we've

listened to many people - we've taken good advice"  
(Governor, Prison K).

A senior member of the Education staff at the same prison confirmed this reasoning:

"The concern is that it might be used not only to interfere with the therapy programme, but I think more to the point, he'd use psychological skills to manipulate further victims if we weren't careful, because in psychology you learn, don't you, people's underlying motives, and methods of doing certain actions, and if they can learn to manipulate anybody at all then this isn't to be encouraged really. Because they're manipulative enough as it is, so we really couldn't support that. I think it would make people aware of other people's failings, which they look for anyway - they look for people's weaknesses and play on those to gain their own ends. And I think if we encouraged them, it's not the right thing to do"  
(Tutor, Prison K).

Similarly, an officer at the same prison commented:

"I've got to say, as an experienced officer, if I was in this prison, in the same position as some of these people, for any length of time, I would be as manipulative as the next man for my own ends, whatever those ends were. And I would tend to think some inmates may get some terrific information out of some of these books and it would be helpful, but I would still think they would use it for manipulation, and for conning people. I remember reading a story many years ago, I think it was in America, this guy was some sort of professional feller, and they'd had a series of murders on young women, and after so many years they put the finger on him and his mate. He, being in the job he was in, had read a lot of psychology, that sort of thing, books on crime and the reasons for it, and on interviewing somebody, a suspect or whatever, there's a certain pattern that a psychologist would use. And this fellow practiced answers in interviews, feigned hypnosis and did everything exactly according to the book according to this particular pattern. I think he was interviewed by three different psychiatrists, two of them were hoodwinked by him, the other one said no. And I always remember that - I thought well, if that's what reading up on it does, that you can actually

con the psychiatrist who's interviewing you. That sort of thing - there's probably a lot of inmates here who are capable of reading psychology books and digesting it very well I would think, because of their high intelligence, a lot of them have got. So I don't think it would be a good thing really. I don't think it would be a great help somehow" (Prison Officer, Prison K).

These views expressed by staff were endorsed by some inmates::

"There's a big danger in a community like this, especially for intelligent people, who can get things out of books, take them on to the group and they use it to cover their own problems. It's very easy, if you're into that kind of learned behaviour, defence mechanisms are very important. If you can build up your defences through reading quite a lot of psychology textbooks and stuff like that, it can be very damaging" (Inmate, Prison K).

However, the imposition of a total ban, or even tacit restrictions, on psychology books for example, was certainly not met with universal approval. When this practice was revealed to prison psychologists employed at this institution, it drew gasps of astonishment. Obviously, the implication is that there was little or no contact between the psychologists and the prison librarian. The Senior Psychologist at Prison K commented that:

"I had not realised that the books in the library had been subjected to scrutiny which excluded psychology text books. My own personal viewpoint is that I do not agree with censorship in principle, much less when it is applied as a blanketing ban on a section of books. The fact that I did not know these books were not in the library indicates that the decision to exclude them was made without wide consultation. I have the view that many books/text would be instrumental in developing self-awareness and highlighting/reinforcing issues of, for

example, victim empathy, sexual identity etc. etc. It would even be a possibility having sections of the library which dealt directly with sexuality and sexual offending, as books/articles of academic quality would, in my opinion, enhance the process of self-examination even further. I do not currently see how individuals could use psychology texts to either distort the SOTP or to manipulate victims upon release. Although pornography is not permitted in prisons, it is not always that easy to justify the decision to class something as unacceptable - for example, Mothercare catalogues are used as fantasy material by some paedophiles, and I believe it is possible for almost any object/item of clothing/type of situation to become a sexual fixation for some individuals so we would have to censor almost everything. I feel that the role of literature within the prison should be the same as the role of literature outside - to provide freedom of expression, the sharing of ideas between cultures and individuals, and should be used as a means of widening individual and group horizons, as well as acknowledging many topics exist, and that there are many differing views in the world. As well as having a great part to play in the intellectual and knowledge-based development of individuals, I believe that libraries should be a focal point for the exchange of ideas and ideals, and in my opinion giving the inmates the freedom to judge issues (or books) for themselves goes a long way towards enabling them to make their own minds up on other issues - a luxury not often given to people serving prison sentences".

The Head of Psychology at Prison D also argued:

"It is illogical and authoritarian to exclude books on psychology from VPU libraries or, indeed, any other library."

While staff at Prison K are concerned, quite rightly, for public safety, this particular issue must be put in perspective. Firstly, as the Senior Psychologist noted above, sex offenders may construct fantasies from a range of different stimuli and it would be impossible to construct a custodial environment which would restrict this generation of deviant thinking. For example, the

central ingredient in the fantasy of one sex offender interviewed was a drawing pin.

Second, at Prison K, some highly experienced officers argued that the restrictions regarding psychology books in particular were based on paranoia and ignorance. One Inmate Development officer commented:

"I'm a counsellor for the counselling skills course, I've done transactional analysis and I'm very aware that psychology is very, very important. And I'm not in agreement with this thing about not having psychology books in the library. OK, you will get the odd person who will use something in a book like that - if they can understand it, they're a very intelligent person anyway and they're going to be manipulative, irrespective of the stuff they get from a book on psychology. I think a lot more benefit could be gleaned by the person who genuinely wants to understand why he's done what he's done and the psychology behind his behaviour and how he can change that behaviour, because psychology can change a person - because he can understand what it's all about. I would like to think, and I honestly believe it, that if ten people went to borrow psychology books out of the library, then nine people would get some benefit and if there was one person who was using it for his own ends, then we can deal with that. I think the other nine should be given the opportunity. Some of these blokes have got more time than you or I ever will have to study and go down a particular line of thought - these guys have got an opportunity to really look at themselves and if they can help themselves by reading psychology books, the right sort of psychology books - there are good ones and bad ones, and we might need to choose the right ones, but to put a general block on them is totally wrong. I'm not being funny but I think that's people not knowing enough about what they're talking about. When you run a specialist establishment, and this is no disrespect to my governor, then people in positions of authority need the support of specialists - so why we haven't got a full time psychologist, I mean a real practicing clinical psychologist working here, I just can't believe it - we have access to a psychologist now and then, and it's not good enough. A psychologist who believes in the system we're operating and the way we do therapy should be running this establishment

and then could decide together with the staff, who would be properly trained to deliver what we're trying to, and then we could look at what books should be available in the library to enhance the therapy" (Prison Officer, Prison K).

Thirdly, inmates who had been reading or studying psychology at other prisons they had been located in previously, considered these restrictions to be detrimental to their rehabilitation:

"In the prison I was in before I came here, I was actually looking at psychology, and I've come here and been told I can't do psychology, because apparently you can use it in further offending. I'm a bit peeved about it, but I can't do anything about it, it's a prison. I can't change that, so I have to live with it. I did a lot of therapy - I was on a therapy ward and we did groups every day, so I had quite a lot of understanding of people and I was quite interested in it, and they were quite encouraging me to do it and I come here and they said no. I didn't even realise why. At the end of the day, if you're going to re-offend, you're going to re-offend - if they're saying psychology is going to help you re-offend, they're going to learn that when they get out anyway. But certainly with me, it gave me a better understanding of myself, and where I was going wrong and how it related to my offending, so it was useful to me. OK, perhaps you can see how you can use it to manipulate people but most people's attempts at manipulation after reading a book tend to fail anyway - it doesn't work like that. The therapy I was on, everyone was encouraged to get into it as much as possible, just to look at yourself. I don't think it's a good idea to restrict things, because it's almost as if they're saying psychology, can't do it because you're going to use it to re-offend, but psychology is looking at yourself, so they're really saying looking at yourself is bad. I don't agree with it. Psychology isn't bad, it's how people use it, and if people think it's bad, then you should try and identify people who might use it for bad things and look at them, not just dismiss it altogether and say you must not touch it. One thing that's going to get somebody really interested, say if they just had a mediocre interest in it, is if somebody says 'you can't do it'. What's the guy going to do then, want it even more" (Inmate, Prison K).

Rather than imposition of blanket bans, Prison D adopted an alternative approach. At this establishment, inmates were positively encouraged to read psychology and therapy-based material:

"I certainly try to have things on the psychological aspect of things, especially here for sex offenders. We've had various books - the effects on families, things like that - because here they're taught that what they've done is to offend against somebody else's family and their own family, so I try to have things that reflect that. And for some of the ones who've gone into their own past more deeply, I try to get whatever I can find. The main thing is being aware. It should be available, because people come here because they want to change, unless some of them think they're coming to a soft option and they get rid of that impression pretty quick. But the majority of them are very taken up with their therapy and most of them want it to succeed" (Librarian, Prison D).

Some inmates expressed dissatisfaction with the therapy programme - there were concerns that therapists had received inadequate training and that prisoners' opinions concerning the impact of the course counted for little, with the result that inmates tended to view the programmes as a compulsory, but fairly meaningless, activity:

"On the programme they've got prison officers who've had two weeks training to do the groups. Two weeks? You need about two years training to be able to sit there and understand what people are talking about. What can you learn in two weeks - nothing. I don't think you can learn enough to run a course. But who am I? I'm just a fucking number in this nick and if the screws say 'jump' you jump" (Inmate, Prison K).

Other prisoners argued that the use of officers and civilian staff to deliver some of the therapy programmes created a negative response among inmates:

"When the Home Office in 1992 said 'there will be therapy for sex offenders', it's been implemented in different ways in different prisons. The way it's been done here is at minimal cost, by taking some of the staff that were already here, train them for two or three weeks and push them in. So you get anybody that's around - so they got prison officers, works staff, education staff - so what you have is an overlap between therapy and other branches of the prison facilities. Having been subject to the therapy and having experienced the overlap, I think it's quite wrong, quite unsatisfactory. The people I've got most out of in the education department are those people who quite clearly have distanced themselves from therapy and are offering themselves simply as people with skills to offer to other people. For other members of the education department it's evident that their involvement with therapy is shallow and not helpful and it gives inmates the feeling that they're always under observation. There's nowhere that they can actually be themselves, whereas staff in the education department who don't see themselves in that role, you relax totally, because you're not under an inspecting eye and you'd actually have to commit a breach of discipline before word got out of the class to someone else. I'm all for an inter-disciplinary approach, it's often the most productive, but here it's been forced upon them by the fiscal structure - they've got to use whoever's available. Having said that, I don't think it works and it ought not to happen. You've got people delivering therapy and making observations about you that are totally out of order, because they're certainly not qualified to make such observations, and the problem is that such observations may get recorded and actually influence the course of the sentence, or parole or probation reports. The therapy, which is extremely intense, touching on very sensitive areas, needs to be carried out by professionals who are not part of other disciplines in the rest of the prison" (Inmate, Prison K).

Other issues raised by prisoners included the short duration of the programme and the fact that it occurred



too early in the sentence, with the result that few learned behaviours would actually be adopted, or even remembered, upon release:

"You do a sixteen week course. I finished mine last year - I can still personally remember what the other seven men were in for, I can remember the names of the victims, I know in detail what they did, but you ask some of the men what I was in for - 'what are you talking about? I've forgotten about all of that.' By the time they go out, what they've learnt on that sixteen week course they've forgotten, other things have happened in the meantime. So they've forgotten what they've learned - so what good does that sixteen week course does them? To me, nothing at all. I think it should be spread over your whole sentence - maybe one day a week, or two days a week. So one full day every week you should go in there and talk about what you did and ways to overcome it. To do a sixteen week course a few weeks after coming in, is no bloody good at all. Because once you've been on it, you come off it and six months later if I come up to you and say 'what did you learn off that course?' 'no, I've forgotten'" (Inmate, Prison K).

Success of the therapy programme is also likely to be constrained by the negative attitudes of some participants. As this inmate explained, from the point of view of many prisoners, the object of therapy is to secure release:

"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. People who are in for the first time generally have a more positive attitude towards therapy - perhaps that's just naivete" (Inmate, Prison K).

Some inmates did not consider the therapy intensive enough to reach those offenders who may have had a long

history of developing patterns of denial and formulating justifications for their deviant behaviour:

"I don't know whether somebody who comes in having no thought to the question of his offending - I wouldn't know how often he'd be turned round. I think the attitudes you come in with tend are likely to be the ones you build on. So if you come in hard, you may resist the attempts to get through. I don't think here there's enough time to give and to listen to the hardened people, to get inside them. The therapy itself is very superficial - so you're lucky if you can get much out of it" (Inmate, Prison K).

To a degree, some of these complaints may be justified. Adam Sampson, of the Prison Reform Trust has cited many problems "inherent" in the SOTP. These include inadequate resourcing, lack of commitment, prisoner resistance and subversion by the inmate subculture, negative staff attitudes, programme inflexibility and concerns about the duration and timing of the interventions (see Sampson, 1992). In addition, other issues have been raised. For example, all sex offenders typically tend to be included in the same conceptual category, and there is often little differentiation made between types of sexual offending. Furthermore, it is implicitly assumed that all sexual offending is a product of an individual's psychopathology, and the offender is therefore able to undergo readjustment via therapeutic intervention. However Player has argued that it is virtually impossible to isolate pathological characteristics in order to distinguish sex offenders from other offenders, or even from the general

population. Player also takes the argument one stage further and questions whether sexual deviance can be normalised by sanctions available within the criminal justice system (Player, 1992, p8) .

Thus rather than relying solely on the SOTP, for those inmates who are interested in addressing their deviant behaviour and are dissatisfied with the therapy programme, the material they can obtain from the prison library can be used to supplement these inadequacies. In addition, there may be sex offenders who are not receiving any therapy or treatment at all. Obtaining material from the library may be one of the few avenues open to them through which they can obtain this information. If prisoners are sufficiently motivated to do this, on their own initiative - and as has been shown, some are - then they should be given every encouragement. It is important therefore, that within the library there should be stock physically available on the shelf to encourage this kind of usage.

#### Special Needs 2: Stress Management

Besides assisting with treatment programmes directly, the prison library can also aid the overall rehabilitative initiative by providing inmates with entertainment and thereby help reduce stress levels, which can be very high during intensive therapy. The role of recreational reading is discussed in more detail .

in the next chapter, but will be briefly examined below in the specific context of provision for vulnerable prisoners. For example, one inmate commented:

"I came here to do my therapy, but the library's been informative, and it's been relaxing in the sense that there are times when you want to get away and I'll pick up a trashy novel and I'll read it from cover to cover and it just takes the pressure off. I've been here two years and if I thought about therapy every second of the two years I'd be dead. It drives you round the twist. But the library's actually helped me with better insights into myself, with books I've read to do with offending, psychology, stuff like that. That's helped me. So it's been an important part of it and I think it's an important part of any prison to be honest" (Inmate, Prison D).

This view was confirmed by an officer from the Inmate Development Unit who said:

"If I knew a particular book would be helpful to a person with a particular problem I would refer him to that. We're almost in the position that we can dictate what people do here, if they want to be helped. So if a bloke comes to me and says 'I need help with my anger problem', I can put him on an anger course and I could almost dictate to him and say 'I want you to read that book'. Now if that resource is there as part of the library back-up then that's great. But then if he wants to read Sven Hassel as part of his leisure, then let him go and read Sven Hassel. Because you can't do therapy 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, because you'd go absolutely crazy" (Prison Officer, Prison K).

It was felt by some prisoners that the library, particularly within a VPU, could have an important role in developing and enhancing the social skills of inmates, as well as helping to reduce stress levels:

"The library's here for people to learn on different subjects, to improve themselves, to be more aware

about things than they've been in the past outside. And to be able to socialise in a different way to what they've done in the past, because for them that's a big problem, particularly for sex offenders, they have a problem of mixing with their own peers, so I think the library encourages that. And it's a relaxing area, there's a lot of stress in prison, at all prisons. This prison has its own particular stress, because it's an emotional stress. Because the majority of people are looking to be addressing their offending behaviour, their crime is always on the forefront of their mind, so I feel they need the library as a relaxing point. It's also able to possibly help people share with others something of their own interest. It's good for those who want to educate themselves, or just for those people who want to try and relax. The problem with prisons, the privacy is very little, your life is watched completely by somebody and I suppose in some ways just to relax in an area where you feel secure and safe. I think the library takes a little bit away from the prison and it becomes more relaxing" (Inmate, Prison J).

Some officers however tended to argue that the library should concentrate on reducing stress by providing solely leisure-based reading:

"I can understand the idea that if they're inside they should be dealing with the offence, what caused it, all the rest of it. I can understand that, but at the same time, whilst they're in here, for instance in this place, if they're on the core programme, which is quite intensive, about twenty weeks or something, it's hard work for the inmates. Very hard work. OK, they've got to do it, that's why they're here. But I can't imagine an inmate going on that course and then going down to the library and picking up a book on sex offending. He won't want to know the first thing about it. He'll come out of that group and want to shut his eyes, or look at another book about some other thing, whether it be fiction, fact or whatever. I think you should be able to get a release from it. I can't imagine them coming out of there, with all that stress and pressure and then going up to the library and reading up on it. I don't think they'd want to do that. I think they need to be taken away from it for a while and then put back into it. That's the way I see it, as an experienced officer" (Prison Officer, Prison K).

However, even this primarily recreational function of the library has to be overseen with some care by prison staff:

"I think we must be very careful, because of the type of inmate, of the fantasies we're allowing them to indulge in, and as long as they are perceived as reasonable, normal fantasies then there's no problem. But we have to be very careful in what we do" (Prison Officer, Prison K).

However, some other inmates and staff interviewed took a more extreme position however, and argued that prisoners who held the view that the library should concentrate on providing recreational material, were simply trying to avoid confronting unpleasant aspects of their own behaviour:

"It's got to reflect the institution I think, and quite strongly, because you're not in prison to avoid realities. You're in prison because you've got to face realities. I'm not saying you've got to make them face realities twenty four hours a day, you shouldn't, and although the library is partially about relaxation, that's only a partial role. There's also a therapy angle, which is the facing up of things - the attending to reality. And there are sources of information here which can help you before you get into trouble again, before you go and do whatever. So we ought to encourage guys to go along there and research their own problems. I think that's something we ought to teach more of. So I don't think you can just say libraries are an oasis of tranquillity in the stormy waves of a prison" (Tutor, Prison K).

Similarly, an inmate said:

"I don't think there's a real advantage for people who say they want to use the library to escape completely from the rest of the prison, because that is what most of us have been doing all our lives - we've been walking around with our eyes

closed, while all around were obvious signs, things that we did and we tended to ignore them and make excuses for them. And on the same lines, by saying the library shouldn't have those things, it's an excuse, an excuse to ignore it. I would prefer people in this prison to be offended by being reminded about sex abuse, alcohol abuse, whatever abuse, than to go out of the prison and not having faced it. Personally, I believe that everything, in this establishment anyway, should be geared up to be part of the therapy programme. It should start the minute an inmate walks across the threshold" (Inmate, Prison K).

### Special Needs 3: Re-Settlement Information

Re-integration into the community following release from prison is of crucial importance for sex offenders. This is because aftercare arrangements for this group of prisoners may contain specific provisions concerning areas where these men are permitted to reside - for example, they may not be allowed to resettle within a certain distance of where their victims lived or where the offences took place, or there may be specific concerns that child abusers are not encouraged to settle in areas where there are known paedophile rings. Thus many inmates may be released into areas they know only slightly, or not at all. In addition, released sex offenders face greater problems of post-release adaptation because as a group they tend to be very much older than the prison population in general. Taking the prison population as a whole, about 40% are under 25 (compared with 16% in the general population) and only 1% are 60 or over compared with 26% in the general population (Walmsley et al, 1993, pvii). At the VPU in

the study, only 6% of prisoners were under 25, 36% were between 25 and 40, the majority, 52%, were between 40 and 60, and 6% were over 60.

Furthermore, released sex offenders can be very isolated - because of the nature of their offences, they have often been rejected by family and friends. Hence, obtaining information regarding aftercare is an essential part of the rehabilitation process, as this prisoner argued:

"What incentive is there for you to learn to carry on being positive if you're thrown out into a totally negative situation? If you're going down that road of sending people to prison, your responsibility doesn't end when they walk out of the prison gates - that's really where your responsibility starts, if anything" (Inmate, Prison K).

Librarians have recognised this need, as one library orderly reported:

"If when people are nearing discharge and they express a particular interest in a place, the librarian will write to the local authority and they usually send us a pack for the individual. Resettlement in this place is probably the big issue for any inmate because very, very few of them actually go back to the area they used to live in. Perpetrators of crimes, when they come into regimes like this, and society's view being what it is now, they become themselves victims of the system and so when they leave this place, they have to do so with almost a new identity, their whole lifestyle changes - so they leave here, they don't know anyone and they've got to start looking for accommodation and start to rebuild their lives. When you look at the average age of inmates here, it's well into middle age, and it's very difficult for them to do that. So I think apart from probation helping people to do that, I think the



library should provide more information as well"  
(Library Orderly, Prison K).

The problems of encroaching on the work of other departments has already been referred to above.

However, a library orderly pointed out that collecting information about accommodation for use in the prison library, although likely to be perceived as unpopular by other departments in the prison, is particularly important for this group of offenders:

"There's very little information in the library here but because we've got a NACRO trained officer here, it would be very difficult to provide information in the library without treading on their toes. So it's a political thing I think. But I'd like to see more information about housing associations, because this is where people are going to be housed anyway, because being single, middle aged, unemployed you're at the bottom of the scale"  
(Library Orderly, Prison K).

One inmate argued that because many sex offenders tended to have very weak or inadequate personalities, the library was essential in empowering these inmates and encouraging them to take more responsibility in running their lives:

"In terms of this establishment, which is specifically for VP's, there's a lot of people who have been taken advantage of in the system and perhaps need to be empowered. And when you get outside and finish your sentence, you need to know what your rights are. If you were that sort of person who when you came in here didn't know what your rights were and if you've gone into them while you've been in here, it's something you can carry on outside, and use the library in the same way as you've used this one to avoid being taken advantage of by people outside. You're talking about a learning process and part of the library is enabling people to learn about what their rights are. So in

those terms it's self-knowledge - how to cope with things, which probably they've never had time to sit and think about before" (Library Orderly, Prison K).

#### Other information needs

Besides the three main areas of need already examined (employment, accommodation and welfare rights information), providing a library service within a VPU necessitates taking into account some other unique considerations. For example, the library may have to provide an extended range of educational material:

"Because this is a sex offender prison, there's lots of people who don't wish to come from the college to teach. People perhaps are unsure of how to work, I suppose, with sex offenders, or they've got their own feelings against us. So the library is essential - at times there seems more people in the library than there is perhaps on the other activities - watching TV, playing pool, stuff like that" (Inmate, Prison K).

Another particular factor concerns the gender of the librarian - many staff argued that it was important for sex offenders to see women doing responsible jobs and considered that this helped reduce sexual stereotyping. In unpublished Home Office research, sex offenders underwent social skills training with female officers and it was found "their behaviour and attitudes changed significantly after treatment" (quoted in Laycock, 1979, p403). Similarly, in this study, inmates commented that the presence of a female librarian helped encourage better behaviour:

"I appreciate the fact that there are women who are prepared to work here and I think because of their presence the environment is generally improved, or balanced. People tend to behave better when they're around, so they have a relaxing effect" (Inmate, Prisoner K).

In addition, at Prison K, the librarian was also involved in delivering the treatment programme. Both staff and inmates considered this had several advantages:

"If a person is totally genuine in confronting his behaviour, changing his offending behaviour, then I think the librarian's dualism is an enhancement of her role and is better for them, because sometimes she's in a non-therapeutic environment by being in the library, sometimes that helps a person - they realise that she's not just a therapist, she's a human being. Hopefully, they can then realise one isn't divorced from the other. It's all about everything, not just about this and that" (Prison Officer, Prison K).

"Well, if you're prepared to tell her whatever you did was a nasty crime, then it's going to be a hell of a lot easier telling her about your poor education isn't it really? What are you going to be more embarrassed about? I suppose some people could shy away from it, but then everybody in here has nasty crimes, so it shouldn't really be a problem. We're not unique unfortunately" (Inmate, Prison K).

One other factor which should be taken into account when analysing library services to this group of offenders is the greater average length of sentence served. In 1989, 28% of sex offenders were serving sentences of 4 years or over - compared with 7% of all receptions (Player, 1992, p5). In addition, the Criminal Justice Act 1991, provided that a custodial sentence could be imposed on a particular offender if it was perceived they posed a

serious risk to public safety. Convicted offenders could thus be imprisoned "even in a case where the particular offence may not in itself be serious enough to justify custody, and the length of sentence given may be longer than is justified by the seriousness of the offence" (Guy, 1992, p2).

The particular problems of life sentence and long termers have been dealt with above, but Gonsa (1992, p16), argues such prisoners need an intensive programme of activities to help them use their time most constructively and to help prepare them for release. The prison library may have an important role in maintaining connections with the external world and in creating situations similar to those outside. This may be particularly important for vulnerable prisoners, who as noted above, are often very alienated individuals:

"There's always a different atmosphere in the library. It's usually the quietest part of the jail, which might be its attraction for some people. And it also gives you a feeling of a certain connection with things outside of prison - you have a library card for example, as you would have a library card at your own library. Just small things that you recognise" (Inmate, Prison D).

### Evaluation

Concerns raised by some prison staff regarding inmate access to, and possible subsequent misuse of psychology texts appear, though understandable, to be somewhat overstated. It is clear that, despite some other minor

reservations, primarily over the risks of inmates reading therapeutic texts uncritically, both prisoners and staff recognised the potential of the library to enhance the SOTP. Among the benefits which were identified were that the library allowed inmates to obtain information which they previously had no access to, and which thereby enabled them to develop a more realistic view of their motives, thinking patterns and behaviour. Many inmates reported that access to this material, perhaps after many years of denial or minimalisation, involving distorted thinking patterns, led to positive changes in their attitudes, self esteem and value systems. Some prisoners argued that this information empowered them with new knowledge, which would enable them to cope more confidently and responsibly with their problems and deviances. Other inmates said that they had used the library, on their own initiative, to obtain material to examine in more detail issues which had been raised during therapy groups, for example, victim empathy. In order that the stock within the library can be tailored to meet the therapeutic needs of the prisoners, it is essential that the librarian should have some control of the library's budget. At one of the prisons where this was not the case, the librarian argued:

"I don't have any budget. It's just the policy of the county library that the area library has the budget and you have to make them aware of your needs. But I would prefer a specific budget to get material, especially with the very specific

therapeutic needs of the prisoners here" (Librarian, Prison D).

Furthermore, inmates should be allowed more independent access to sources of information, and while librarians should be aware of the likelihood of duplication of resources held in other departments, this should not be seen as an argument to reduce the overall quantity of information held. Rather an integrated service should be the main aim of provision. Thus librarians must not only actively promote the library to other departments, but they also need to be fully aware of the complete range of therapeutic activities which are taking place in the rest of the prison, as this librarian was beginning to do:

"Teachers will certainly send people down here. We now have an art therapist in the prison and there's certainly guys coming in here for that - one came in this morning for Van Gogh. And the art teacher, she has borrowed lots of art books, to teach techniques and as a resource base. Others have got professional books for themselves - the Education Co-Ordinator has borrowed books on teaching and educational theories, therapists have borrowed psychological and psychiatric texts, the assessment wing borrow stuff on psychological testing, the gardener sends blokes in - some of them get interested in horticulture - funnily enough, one of the guys working out there today said 'Can you get me some books on greenhouse gardening?' And I said 'There's some sitting on the shelf, just come in and have a look and if they're not suitable, we'll get something else'. The gym sends guys over - one guy got interested in cricket umpiring, others in weights. The other departments use us to the extent of sending people in, or borrowing things themselves and I would encourage that. They all know anything available we'll get, or any research they want, the County Reference Library's at my disposal and I have a colleague there who's responsible for reference in prisons and so I can get on to him with any reference enquiry that may come up. Probation, the psychologists and the

therapists have all used us and know what we can provide. Often I'll send a note down to them 'Is this suitable with regards to therapy?' I would like to feel that I can help in some courses and programmes, providing books that therapists would deem helpful to somebody, so I make sure the therapists, psychologists and psychiatrists all have an awareness of what is possible. That's really my role, not so much doing things myself, as bringing it to the notice of other departments" (Librarian, Prison D).

#### 6.9. THE PRISON LIBRARY AND INFORMATION PROVISION: AN OVERVIEW

Other researchers have argued that the development of an inmate's cognitive and interpersonal skills (Nuttall, 1992, p41), the fostering of their ability to analyse situations (Zamble and Porporino, 1988, p155) and encouraging them to seek information independently (Albert, 1984, p48) are significant factors in promoting pro-social behaviour. These are areas in which the work of the prison library can have an important influence. To facilitate this, the evidence from this study clearly indicates that the provision of information within prison libraries needs careful management in order to maximise service effectiveness.

Seven general observations can be drawn. First, it has been shown that much information held in the prison library can be used by inmates to have a direct and positive influence on their future behaviour. Other types or sources of information may also be of value in

raising awareness of the problem area or utilised to supplement courses or programmes run elsewhere in the prison.

Second, it is apparent that inmates themselves cannot be relied upon to identify their own information needs as this librarian commented:

"Some of these lads are too frightened to ask, and don't know how to use information. They just don't know how to go about things. A lot are just institutionalised and don't know how to do things on their own, without being told how to do it"  
(Librarian, Prison E).

Third, the extent of inmates' information needs can be large, and so a clear sighted and comprehensive policy toward developing suitable resources is required. As one inmate commented:

"Once this happens to you and you're in here, everything is destroyed out there, just wiped out, so you need everything" (Inmate, Prison F).

Fourth, the range of inmates' needs can also be very extensive, with particular groups of inmates having very specific demands. Hence, librarians should be aware of inmate population characteristics, and disseminate and target information accordingly.

Fifth, because inmates are unfamiliar with finding and using information, this by no means constitutes an argument for "spoonfeeding" prisoners. Instead they



should be encouraged to learn how to access information independently:

"information poor inmates must be instructed in the inherent value of information if they are to discover and appreciate its impact upon their lives" (Albert, 1989, p126).

In this context, promotion and proactivity become issues of the utmost importance for the librarian.

Sixth, libraries may be an especially important source of information within the prison, for they allow inmates access to such resources in a more appropriate learning environment than that which other information providers are able to offer. As noted above, for many prisoners, the information they receive 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).

Seventh, and perhaps most crucially, providing information relating to the offending behaviour patterns of inmates is of more importance than trying to address their "everyday problems". As a result, the remit of the prison library becomes much wider than, and very different from, any branch library of similar size in outside society. In order to fully discharge this

responsibility, it is essential that the library becomes fully integrated into the whole of the prison regime.