

GETTING STARTED ON
LIBRARY SERVICE TO COUNTY JAILS

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GETTING STARTED ON
LIBRARY SERVICE TO COUNTY JAILS

A Handbook for
Public Libraries in Iowa

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WHY PROVIDE LIBRARY SERVICE TO JAIL INMATES?

Library service in correctional facilities can be a significant factor in a total program directed toward rehabilitation of inmates and their eventual integration into society.

In 1977 there were 46,590 persons detained in Iowa's county jails. While some are on short stays, others are serving long terms, some one year or awaiting trial in District Court for as long as three to six months.

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WHY PROVIDE LIBRARY SERVICE TO JAIL INMATES?

Library service in correctional facilities can be a significant factor in a total program directed toward rehabilitation of inmates and their eventual integration into society.

In 1977 there were 46,580 persons detained in Iowa's county jails. While many are there on short stays, others are serving sentences of up to one year or awaiting trial in District Court for as long as three to six months.

Local jails rarely offer recreation, education or rehabilitation programs, and inmates often suffer from boredom and idleness. Relevant reading materials can provide temporary mental escape, support self-education efforts, stimulate and produce employment interests and increase awareness of self and society.

Recent court decisions defining the right of a prisoner to access to legal materials have increased the need for provision of informational materials.

Few local jails have the facilities, staff or money to provide good library service. However, most public libraries have the ability to provide meaningful programs for persons housed in local jails. It is a good way for the public library to extend services to non-users at a time when they most need them. The American Library Association has declared the responsibility of public libraries in this regard in the following resolution adopted by the ALA Council in 1976:

Whereas, most people, youth and adults alike, confined to local jails and detention facilities are without library and information services,

Whereas, people confined within such facilities reside within the taxing district of the local public library,

Whereas, public libraries are responsible for providing library and information services to all people living within their taxing area,

Therefore be it resolved that ALA encourage public libraries to make a concerted effort to extend their services to residents of jails and detention facilities within their taxing areas.

GETTING STARTED

The library director and the person to be designated jail librarian should make an appointment with the Sheriff to discuss the possibility of establishing library service to jail inmates.

A policy statement should be drawn up and approved by both institutions stipulating lines of communication, areas of responsibility, kinds of services provided and job descriptions and training of staff. (See Appendix II.)

It is desirable that there be some joint assumption of funding responsibilities and a mutual respect for the objectives and policies of both the library and the jail. The inmates' right to read may have to be modified to meet the security and administrative needs of the jail. The injection of visitors into the jail routine creates some special adjustments for both institutions (search, approval of staff, unexpected emergencies, censorship). The director and jail librarian should tour the jail and thoroughly understand its rules and communication channels. Both jail and library staff should remain as flexible as possible and keep the reason

for the visits firmly in mind. After the jail librarian has proved his/her reliability and established trust, it is possible for positive changes to occur in the routines and programs - but they will come slowly.

FACILITIES

Over one-third of the 95 county jails in Iowa were built before 1915. Many have deteriorating buildings and inadequate space or facilities or staff for even basic detention and security functions. 90% lack any recreational or educational facilities. It is not surprising, then, to find that in 1977 only three jails permitted on-site space for book collections. In spite of this, standards state jails housing 25 or more inmates should give consideration to developing a room designated as a library. It should be centrally located, well-lighted and ventilated, staffed and open on a regular basis. Attention should be given to noise control and study space and cassette players and typewriters should be available. In smaller facilities, space for shelving may be found in a hallway or empty cell or a closet.

If no space can be found within the institution, books may be brought to the library by bookmobile, van or car. They can be transported to a central area within the jail or wheeled to each cell by bookcart. Less desirable, but better than nothing, is leaving books at the jail office for distribution by the jail staff.

As you develop a trusting relationship with the jail staff, you may be able to work to obtain improved library facilities. Volunteers or inmates may help by building bookcases.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The provision of library service to the inmates should be on a regular basis. Inmates should be able to depend on access to the jail librarian on a regular schedule to make possible face-to-face reader's advisory and reference service interviews and provide a chance to request special materials and select recreational reading. For inmates not allowed to come to a centrally-located library room, contact can be made using a book cart and going from cell to cell. Should the jail staff want to screen all materials delivered to inmates, provision for this should be made in the delivery system.

Services offered should approximate those offered in the public library as closely as possible. While library ethics (and often jail regulations) preclude the giving of medical or legal advice, inmates can and should have access to legal and medical information (see MATERIALS). The jail librarian should offer reference/information service as well as information and referral about local social services.

Most inmates will be finding themselves in a situation of enforced idleness for the first time. Not only will they be worried and pre-occupied, but may feel at a loss for how to occupy time. The encouragement of an outsider such as a jail librarian and a knowledge of public library services can be an educational opportunity and a first step toward rehabilitation.

By involving community volunteers and agencies, programs such as these can be offered:

- tutoring in beginning reading skills
- book discussions
- creative writing or drawing sessions
- re-entry counseling
- preparation for high school completion tests
- showing of 8 and 16 mm films

STAFFING

The right staff is vital to the success of the service. The library director must be committed to and supportive of the need for such a service. Someone on the library staff should be assigned to coordinate the jail program, negotiate policies and agreements, to recruit and train staff, select and acquire materials and investigate and work out any problems which may arise. The staff coordinator may involve other part-time employees, inmates or community volunteers in provision of service. It is possible to hire part or full-time staff inexpensively by use of CETA or work/study programs (see FUNDING). Well-trained and oriented volunteers working under the coordinator's direction can be very effective as jail visitors for the library. These are some possible sources of volunteers:

- Friends of the Library
- Ministers or laypersons from local churches
- School groups (highschool or college)
- Library trustees
- Service clubs or other community clubs
- Fraternal organizations
- Local law enforcement associations or guilds
- A special committee formed for jail service
- Donated time from library staff

Jail staff or trustees may take on some responsibilities for organizing or circulating materials.

Regardless of which staffing pattern is used, the library should seek assurance that each inmate will have access to the jail librarian or visitor without undue restrictions.

Persons involved in jail visits should possess high interest and dedication. They should be understanding, non-judgemental, mature, realistic, willing to learn and able to talk with and relate easily to people in trouble. They should be able and willing to serve inmates' reading and information needs objectively

without injecting personal opinions and belief and should be familiar with the Library Bill of Rights.

The person serving as jail librarian should abide by the rules of the jail but should be aware that he/she functions as an agent of the public library. Disagreements should be handled by the administrative personnel, though the jail librarian should know the jail communication and authority channels.

Regular meetings should be held between the jail staff responsible for the program and the library coordinator to keep communications open and to evaluate the progress of the service.

MATERIALS

Materials selection should always be based on the interests and needs of the population to be served. Librarians will find that their pre-conceived ideas about materials selection may not hold true in the jail setting; they should give heavy weight to inmate requests and may want to conduct a reader-interest survey before acquiring materials. Some knowledge of the demographic characteristics of persons in jail may be of help. 86% of the 46,580 persons confined in Iowa county jails are adult males (most between the ages of 18 and 30), unemployed or holding jobs of unskilled labor at time of arrest and with less than a 12th grade education. 7% were adult females, 5% juvenile males, and 2% juvenile females. 75% are residents of the local community and likely not to have been library users before arrest.

A major fact of life is the necessity to reconcile the reading and information needs of the inmate with the security needs of the institution. Any restrictions should be spelled out clearly ahead of time in

the policy agreement. Common restrictions include the exclusion of obscene materials (difficult even for the courts to define) or information on escape methods. Most libraries seem to be able to live with this type of limitation restrictions.

The book collection should contain both reference and circulating materials. Paperbacks are strongly recommended. Some loss of materials can be expected as in any lending service. Paperbacks are also often donated in great numbers to public libraries providing a good source of book stock from which to select. Drives stating that the materials are for jail service are often quite successful, given the right promotion.

The Reference Collection: This should include a recent encyclopedia, a dictionary, a cross-word puzzle dictionary, a sports record book, drivers manual, telephone books, television and radio program guides, almanacs, puzzles, games and rule books for games, posters and cassettes. Since the educational range of inmates may well be from non-reader to the college-educated, materials for the non-reader should be provided.

Magazines: Of special importance to inmates are current magazines and local newspapers. If the budget cannot stand the cost of subscriptions, it may be possible to encourage service clubs each to donate a subscription or to locate someone willing regularly to contribute the same magazine or newspaper soon after reading it. See Appendix III for a sample list of titles that have proven popular in jails.

Circulation Collection: Subjects which have been popular for recreational reading in Iowa jails are:

comic books	martial arts	humor
mysteries	popular psychology	the occult
science fiction	history	photography
westerns	black literature	crime
automobiles & motorcycles	popular applied sciences	
contemporary novels	young adult "problem" novels	
biographies of popular figures such as musicians		

Jail collections should include a good number of self-improvement books such as high-school completion study guides, vocabulary-building, manuals of writing style, college directories, job-finding skills, and "teach-yourself" books.

Special Needs: Inmates with more specialized interests can be served with loans from the regular public library collection or, if necessary, interlibrary loans.

Legal Materials: Most counties maintain law libraries near the courthouse, but nowhere we know of do prisoners have access to them in spite of court decisions requiring this. Most Iowa public libraries cannot afford federal or state statutes or court decisions even for their own collections and rely on the regional libraries for these. Recognizing this, it is possible for a relatively small amount of money to assemble a small but useful legal collection to shelve permanently in the jail library. Appendix IV contains a list of suggestions with prices. The University of Iowa Law Library and the Iowa State Law Library in Des Moines have staff members who have volunteered to be consultants to institutional libraries in Iowa on legal materials, and materials in these two libraries should be available through the interlibrary loan system.

Budget: While the library's goal should be to obtain additional funding or allocate a jail materials budget from its own book budget for purchasing new materials, magazine subscriptions, newspapers, and legal materials, donations from individuals and groups can also be used effectively if screened by normal selection criteria. Post Offices will often contribute magazines they are unable to deliver. Bookstores can contribute books that jobbers do not want returned to them. Telephone companies will contribute directories for the local area. Social agencies and government offices are sources of free information pamphlets that will be useful to inmates. (see FUNDING).

FUNDING

While both the jail and the library should be assuming some of the cost of the library, a variety of sources should be explored.

The local library may choose to absorb all costs within its budget, providing personnel, materials and delivery service to the inmates and staff. The jail facility may make the costs of the service a part of its budget. It may assign commissary funds to the service to help allay expenses.

Other sources include grants from federal, state or local agencies. LSCA Title I grants such as one to a group of libraries in a county to provide library service to the county jail have been approved. In Iowa these are administered by the Iowa Library Commission which can provide more information. County Boards of Supervisors could make a general funds grant or make library service to the jail a budget item. State monies could be applied for under recent legislation providing assistance to small communities. The public library through the city or county governing body could apply for Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) funds administered by the Iowa Crime Commission. The addresses of Iowa's regional crime commissions are in Appendix V.

Civic and fraternal groups could adopt this as a project. Service clubs and church groups could provide funds and personnel as well as promoting drives to collect materials for a jail collection.

Staffing may be funded through the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). Persons unemployed for 15 weeks or more are eligible for employment full or part-time with non-profit organizations with costs fully paid for by federal funds. Contact the local office of Job Service of Iowa for more

information. Students at a local college who meet income guidelines may be employed on a federal work/study grant with costs paid 80% by the federal government. Contact the college.

The provision of library service to jails should be as fiscally sound as any other aspect of public library service. While the initial program may carry itself on enthusiasm and donations of time and money, to insure the continuance of the service a lag of interest and support should be anticipated at the outset and plans for funding built into the long range plan.

PROCEDURES

In planning routines and procedures for jail service, it is important not to become burdened with unnecessary paperwork.

Organization: Arrangement of the collection should be by browsing subject interest (fiction, mysteries, humor, literature and poetry, black literature, etc.). In Iowa most collections will not be large enough to warrant any kind of cataloging. Contents will change and rotate frequently anyway and most use is by shelf browsing. Subjects should be clearly signed and labelled to facilitate browsing.

Losses: The library should expect to absorb some costs for lost books. Few jails would be willing to allow library service if they were expected to cover losses. At least one Iowa library has found that its loss rate in items loaned from its own collection to jail inmates is lower than for the general public.

Maintenance: A regular schedule for visits to sort, straighten and weed an on-site collection should be maintained and new titles added to it regularly. If the on-site collection is on loan from the library's

own collection, it should be rotated on a regular schedule

Circulation: Materials can be checked out from the library to the jail, to the person delivering the service (the jail librarian) or to the individual inmate using the library's regular checkout system. A decision should be made by the library and jail authorities as to whether or not materials will be checked out to individual inmates after they reach the jail. The person delivering the books may decide to keep a list in a notebook identifying the items borrowed by individual inmates and the dates due. Or a simple form like the one below can be used for circulation control within the jail:

Call No. _____ Author _____
 Title _____

I agree to accept responsibility for this material
 borrowed from the _____ Library.

Signature _____

Location _____

Date _____

Reference and Interlibrary Loans: These requests should be recorded by the jail librarian and handled at the library as they are for the general public.

Rules: For administrative or security reasons jails often require certain rules: limitations on the number of items loaned to each inmate; approval rights of persons entering the jail for library service; searches, inspection or approval of materials entering the jail in the library service. These rules should be spelled out in the policy agreement. Reasonable rules must be respected. Unreasonable rules may be discussed at the regular policy meetings with suggestions for change offered.

APPENDIX I. FURTHER READING

Most of the items listed can be obtained through interlibrary loan or from the Iowa Library Commission. The members of the Ad Hoc Committee of Books Behind Bars will also be happy to consult with you as you work out your service.

Guidelines for Jail Library Services in Oregon

Oregon Library Association, 3355 View Dr. South,
Salem, Oregon 97302, 1977. \$1.00

Inside-Outside: a newsletter on library services to youth and adults in prisons, jails and detention centers. Quarterly. P. O. Box 9083, Berkeley, CA 94709. \$3.50/year.

Jails Need Libraries Too: guidelines for library service programs to jails. ALA, 1976. 50 E. Huron St., Chicago IL 60611. 75¢

Library Service to Municipal and County Jails: guidelines for programs in the state of Washington. By Robert D. Cooper, 409 W. 5th Ave., Ellensburg WA 98926. 75¢

Library Standards for Jails and Detention Facilities
ALA/American Correctional Association recommendations. 1977.

Library Trends, Summer, 1977, issue on "Library Services to Correctional Facilities"

Wilson Library Bulletin, February, 1977 issue.

APPENDIX II. POLICY STATEMENT

The Policy Statement should contain:

- Goals and Objectives of the library service
- Responsibility for funding
- Any restrictions on service, materials or personnel required by the jail
- Types and frequencies of services and materials to be provided
- Designation of responsibility for lost or damaged materials
- Lines of authority and communication
- Reference to and agreement to abide by applicable federal and state laws and court decisions as well as library and jail policies
- Statement on inmate access to or withdrawal of privileges for library service

APPENDIX III. SAMPLE LIST OF MAGAZINES

Argosy	Jet	Rolling Stone
Circus	Mad	Sports
Cosmopolitan	Modern Photography	Illustrated
Cracked	Motor Trend	Time
Cycle	National Lampoon	Village Voice
East West Journal	Newsweek	
Ebony	People	
Esquire	Popular Science	
Fate	Popular Mechanics	
Field & Stream	Psychology Today	
Heavy Metal		
Hot Rod		

APPENDIX IV. SAMPLE LEGAL COLLECTION

Conway, John E. LAYMAN'S GUIDE TO PROCEDURE & EVIDENCE
Univ. of Wisconsin Extension Service, Dept. of Law
Madison, WI 53705, 1972. \$4.00

Gora, Joel M. DUE PROCESS OF LAW. National Textbook
Co., 1977. \$5.75

Handman, H.I. RIGHTS OF CONVICTS. Oceana, 1975. \$4.95

Inbau, Fred E. CRIMINAL LAW FOR THE LAYMAN. 2nd ed.
Chilton, 1977. \$3.95

IOWA CODE. (Latest edition is 1977). State Printer,
Des Moines IA. \$55.00. (Between editions, the CODE
is updated with the annual ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY, also available from the State Printer
for \$14.40). This item is expensive but absolutely
essential. Try to get it as a gift if you can't afford
it.

Israel, Jerold H. CRIMINAL PROCEDURE IN A NUTSHELL
2nd ed. West, 1975. \$5.95

Kling, Samuel. COMPLETE GUIDE TO EVERYDAY LAW. Pyramid,
1973. \$1.95

Krantz, Sheldon. LAW OF CORRECTIONS AND PRISONERS'
RIGHTS IN A NUTSHELL. West, 1976. \$5.95

Potts, James L. PRISONERS' SELF-HELP LITIGATION MANUAL
ACLU National Prison Project, Suite 1031, 1346 Con-
necticut Ave. NW, Wash., D.C. 20036. \$5.00 (Free to
individual prisoners)

Rosengart, Oliver. RIGHTS OF SUSPECTS. Avon, 1974 \$1.25

Rudovsky, David. RIGHTS OF PRISONERS. Avon, 1973. \$1.25

RULES OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE FOR THE U.S. DISTRICT COURTS
WITH FORMS. Issued each year in Jan., by the U.S.
Government Printing Off., Wash., D.C. \$1.50

RULES OF THE DISTRICT COURT (For your County). Free from
The County Clerk of Court

APPENDIX V. AREA CRIME COMMISSION OFFICES IN IOWA

Area Crime Commission administers LEAA funds in Iowa.
Contact the office in your area for tips on how to
become involved in the planning process.

NORTHWEST IOWA

Dean Haze, Director
315 Insurance Exchange Bldg.
7th & Pierce Streets
Sioux City IA 51101
Phone: (712) 252-4569

SOUTHWEST IOWA

Wendell V. Harper, Director
2800 Twin City Drive
Twin City Plaza
Council Bluffs IA 51501
Phone: (712) 366-9525

NORTH IOWA

Robert O. Bowen, Director
204 Brick & Tile Bldg.
Mason City IA 50401
Phone: (515) 424-5834

CENTRAL IOWA

Patricia (Trisha) M. Harlow
Executive Director
112 - 11th Street, 4th Floor
Des Moines IA 50309
Phone: (515) 283-1521

NORTHEAST IOWA

Marvin P. Bartels, Director
City Hall
715 Mulberry St.
Waterloo IA 50703
Phone: (319) 291-4365

SOUTH IOWA

Gordon E. Plepla, Director
P. O. Box 943
Fairfield IA 52556
Phone: (515) 472-5017

EASTERN IOWA

Carol A. Worlan, Director
303 Executive Plaza Building
4403 First Avenue, SE
Cedar Rapids IA 52402
Phone: (319) 393-9507 or 9508

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