

## **Books Behind Bars II: then and now**

### **Then**

During 1999 and 2000, I conducted a survey of all the 27 correctional centres in New South Wales. The results of the survey showed that each centre had a library and some centres had more than one.

Each library had an inmate library clerk. The criteria for selection varied from some who is interested in books to unsuitable to do any other work. The library was supervised by one of the education staff.

The amount of money spent on the libraries varied from nil to a few thousand dollars.

The number of trained library staff in the correctional centres libraries was two, a librarian and a library technician, at the Metropolitan Remand and Reception Centre at Silverwater, Sydney.

In 2004, as a result of a Corrections Inspector's report it was decided to centrally coordinate the provision of library services and combine this with the existing staff library.

### **Now**

The Library Services section of the NSW Department of Corrective Services is managed by a Librarian Grade 5, the most senior grade librarian position in NSW Public Service. The number of correctional centres has risen from 27 to 33, with a new one at Wellington to be opened very soon. The number of libraries in the system now totals 48 libraries.

### **Acquisitions**

Titles of books are requested by staff at the centres, these titles can be suggestions from staff and inmates and are ordered from a book supply company. Occasionally, catalogues are received from suppliers. These are sent to the centres and any requests for purchase are sent to the appropriate supplier. There are also some suppliers who visit the centres. This enables staff to browse various book titles.

Some titles are known to be popular with the inmates, such as Guinness Book of Records, Harry Potter and titles by Robert G Barrett. When these books are published they are purchased for all the libraries in the system.

Subscriptions to numerous magazines are also purchased for the libraries. Again, titles are requested by the centre staff and subscriptions are organised by a subscription agency. Magazines/newspapers such as, Koori Mail, National Indigenous Times, National Geographic and Australian Geographic are organised for all the centres.

Newspapers are usually organised by the centres and are either delivered or collected by staff and we arrange payment.

## **Donations**

From the survey it was shown that many of the centres relied heavily on donations to stock their libraries. The process of seeking donations still occurs but now it is a more coordinated approach. We are contacted by public libraries, local school fete committees and individuals wanting to donate their old books. These books are checked and the unsuitable ones, because of condition or content, are discarded. They are then sent to one of the centres for covering in plastic book covering material.

Once they are covered they are returned and staff determine which centre they are distributed. Since June 2006 we have distributed over 9,000 donations and there are many thousand still to be distributed.

## **Inmate Library Training**

To help in making the centre libraries operate like a library arrangements have been made with a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) to provide Certificate III, IV and Diploma qualifications in the Diploma in Library / Information Services. Inmates are provided with course materials, complete the tasks and their work is then assessed. To date we have had a number of inmates complete Certificate III and one working on Certificate IV and the Diploma. The training of inmates in the course is also regarded as part of the rehabilitation process and a way for inmates to work in the profession once they are released.

## **Classification Scheme**

To assist inmates to access material a number of unique classification schemes have been developed.

The classification scheme for fiction material, with some modifications, has been in operation for about 40 years.

F 1	General Fiction – Other
F 2	Spy / Thriller
F 3	Murder / Mystery / Crime
F 4	Historical Works
F 5	Humour / Comical
F 6	Romance / Love Story
F 7	Horror
F 8	Short Story Collections
F 9	Warfare
F 10	Western
F 11	Science Fiction / Fantasy
F 12	Classics / Poetry / Plays
F 13	Children's books

The scheme for non fiction is:

NF 1	General Non Fiction – Other
NF 2	Arts / Photography / Crafts / Music / Instruments

NF 3	Business / Management / Investing / Computers / Internet
NF 4	Cooking / Food / Drink
NF 5	Health / Medicine / Psychology / Psychiatry / Mind & Body / Self-Help / Parenting
NF 6	History / Military
NF 7	Home / Garden
NF 8	Law / Politics
NF 9	Criminology / True Crime
NF 10	Religion / Spirituality
NF 11	Science / Maths / Animals / Space / Dinosaurs
NF 12	Sport / Recreation / Cars
NF 13	Adventure / Travel / Countries / Lifestyle
A	Australiana / Aboriginal
B	Biography / Autobiography
M	Multicultural Collection (not in English)
NFL	Not for Loan
QR	Quick Readers
R	Reference / Dictionaries / Encyclopaedia

There are labels for each number or letter and these labels are placed on the spine of the book and then grouped together on the shelf. If a library uses DDC the books are then shelved in DDC order as well. Each library displays a full list of the numbers / letters and what subject or genre they represent. This scheme has been well received by the inmates and provides greater access to areas of interest.