



**International  
Federation of  
Library  
Associations and Institutions**



# **IFLA Guidelines for Library Services to Prisoners**

**Edited by Jane Garner and Lisa Krolak**

**With contributions and support from the working group on Prison Libraries  
of the IFLA Library Services to People with Special Needs Section**

**Fourth Edition**

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Jane Garner and Lisa Krolak, 2023

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# Preface

## Acknowledgments

This document uses the third edition of the *IFLA Guidelines for Library Services to Prisoners* as its starting point, and the authors of this current edition wish to acknowledge the creators of the past edition, in particular its editors Vibeke Lehmann and Joanne Locke.

This current edition is the result of a collaborative effort between many individuals from many countries. The writing team was led by Jane Garner (Charles Sturt University, Australia), with contributions from the IFLA Working Group on Prison Libraries led by Lisa Krolak (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Germany), and the support of the IFLA Library Services to People with Special Needs Section. The writing team consisted of the following authors, each of whom contributed to the Guidelines as much as they were able:

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## Background

This is the fourth edition of the *IFLA Guidelines for Library Services to Prisoners*. These Guidelines are regularly updated and revised, in order to reflect current research and practice. The first edition was published in 1985, when the *Working Group for Library Services to Prisoners* of the IFLA section *Libraries Serving Disadvantaged Persons* started to develop global guidelines and standards for prison library services. These were published in 1992 as the *Guidelines for Library Services to Prisoners*. In 1995, the guidelines were updated and a second edition was published. In 2001, particularly in light of developments in information technology, another working group started to update the Guidelines and published a third edition in 2005. In 2019, the *IFLA Working Group on Prison Libraries* was established under the leadership of Lisa Krolak (Germany) to connect the global prison library community. A sub-group started to update the IFLA Guidelines in March 2021 under the leadership of Jane Garner (Australia). The final draft Guidelines were presented at the IFLA World Library and Information Congress, Dublin, July 2022 and were published in February 2023 following the standard review processes of IFLA.

## **Purpose of the Guidelines**

The objective of this document is to provide a tool for the planning, implementation, and evaluation of library services to prisoners. The document is intended to serve as a model guide for the development of national guidelines for prison libraries. The guidelines are applicable to all places of incarceration, regardless of the term used to describe the facility. They are therefore applicable to adult and juvenile prisons, detention centres, and jails (see Glossary), and can be adapted to reflect local circumstances and needs. These are international guidelines that reflect an acceptable level of library service, which could be achieved in most countries where national and local government policies support the existence of prison libraries, ideally supported by trained library staff. A section of minimum standards is included in recognition that many countries will not be able to comply with these broader guidelines. It is hoped that these minimum standards will be achievable in most contexts and will provide a starting point for environments where prison libraries are not commonly available or well-supported.

The guidelines provide a tool for planning new libraries and for the evaluation of existing libraries and can be used in the absence of any local guidelines or standards. In addition to being a practical tool for the establishment, operation, and assessment of prison libraries, these guidelines shall serve as a general statement of principle for the fundamental right of prisoners to read, learn, access and acquire information. The guidelines are aimed at librarians, library administrators, prison authorities, legislative and administrative branches of government, and other agencies/authorities that are responsible for administering and funding prison libraries. When the guidelines are being used to inform and plan provision, planners should determine the priorities for the library and its facility and consider what is feasible within that particular context. Facilities may be aiming for minimum standards, to improve on existing provision or to achieve best practice. The timeframes for implementation should also be considered as facilities plan to establish or improve their library provision. Whether the implementation is planned to be undertaken in the short, medium or long term will have an impact on what can be achieved.

## **Role of prison libraries**

Prisoners have a fundamental right to access information, to read and to learn during their period of incarceration (UNODC, 2015). To enable this right to be upheld, prison libraries have an important role as educational, informational, cultural and recreational meeting and learning spaces for the entire prison community, including prison staff. Providing free access to appropriate resources is crucial for prisoners' personal development, recreation, education, well-being, rehabilitation, and re-entry. Taking security issues into account, prisoners should be able to enjoy the same-quality library services and materials available to people living outside prison.

The prison population consists of people with different backgrounds including a disproportionate number of people from poor and marginalised communities. They are more likely to have had experienced limited or no access to educational experience than the rest of society. Therefore, many prisoners might have difficulties with reading and writing (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2020), while at the same time prison libraries need to cater also for rather educated prisoners.

Offering quality prison library services has various benefits:

- Through prison library services and collections, prisoners have the chance to experience the joy of having access to reading and other materials, such as music or film, for education, entertainment, spiritual development, bibliotherapy, distraction, or simply recreation.
- Time in prison can provide an opportunity to commence, continue, or return to reading and learning. Prison libraries can support lifelong learning and literacy development during periods of incarceration.
- Books and other resources, libraries, and reading provide people with constructive and meaningful ways to occupy spare time. Excessive unstructured time has detrimental outcomes on mental health, wellbeing, and can result in negative behaviours (Garner, 2020; Krolak, 2019). A prison library provides prisoners with a means to use spare time productively and can lead to greater personal wellbeing and as a result, safer facilities for both prisoners and staff.
- The prison library can be a vital information resource that can assist prisoners to prepare for their lives after prison through the provision of resources that support re-entry into the community.
- The importance of a well-designed and managed library space cannot be underestimated. It can be a relief to come to the library and spend time in a social environment that differs from all other parts of the prison.
- Libraries in prisons can support the maintenance of positive relationships and connections with families during periods when family members are detained. This can be achieved, for example, through the provision of appropriate literature for children and shared reading opportunities during family visits and phone calls to children, and through reading opportunities for parents who are housed with their children.

Prison libraries will differ significantly from country to country and even from prison to prison. They also differ according to the needs of those who use them. A prison library for adult men may look different from a service for incarcerated youth or a prison library for women, including mothers and their small children. Such challenges require careful planning and management of prison libraries.

Given its transformative potential, the prison library can be an important part of the entire prison environment in its support for educational, recreational, and rehabilitative programmes. The prison library should provide its users with the opportunity to develop literacy skills, pursue personal and cultural interests, as well as lifelong learning. An incarcerated person has the right to learn and to access information, and the prison library should offer materials and services comparable to public and community libraries to support this right. At the same time the library should provide resources to support information needs specific to a prison, such as a legal collection. Special attention should be given to meeting the needs of multicultural and multilingual users. The prison library provides a level of independence in a highly regulated

environment as a place where individuals are free to make their own choices and engage in self-directed pursuits.

Providing a prison library that closely resembles a public library will build a familiarity and trust that can be carried into life beyond prison and create a confidence and enthusiasm to continue using public libraries. Access to information is a human right and does not need any justification. What the incarcerated person reads depends on the quality and relevance of the library collection. With the input of qualified staff, a collection of materials that meets the education, recreation, cultural and rehabilitation needs of its users, as well as an inviting physical space, the prison library can be an important part of prison life and prisoner programmes. The library also represents an important “lifeline” to the outside world. A prison library can also support the objectives of the prison administration by reducing idleness and encouraging constructive use of time, leading to a safer environment for facility staff and prisoners. Lastly, the prison library can be a vital resource that supports the development of sufficient information literacy skills for life post-release.

## Legal and policy context

Several internationally endorsed documents serve as foundations for the establishment and support of library services to prisoners. Education is a human right to which all people are entitled, including prisoners, regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, or socio-cultural background. Recognition of this fundamental right is reflected in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *Sustainable Development Goals*, and other key international instruments.

The right for prisoners to have access to a prison library is reflected in the authoritative frameworks of the *United Nations’ Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners*, also called the Nelson Mandela Rules. It contains 122 rules, one of which (Rule 64) specifically calls for the establishment of prison libraries:

Rule 64:

*Every prison shall have a library for the use of all categories of prisoners, adequately stocked with both recreational and instructional books, and prisoners shall be encouraged to make full use of it.*

Source: UNODC, 2015

The *IFLA-UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 2022* calls for public libraries to serve prisoners:

*The services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, language, social status, and any other characteristic. Specific services and materials must be provided for those users who cannot, for whatever reason, use the regular services and materials, for example linguistic minorities, people with disabilities, poor digital or computer skills, poor literacy abilities or people in hospital or prison.*

Source: IFLA/UNESCO, 2022



And *The Education in Prison* recommendations, endorsed by the Council of Europe in 2006 states that:

*28.5 Every institution shall have a library for the use of all prisoners, adequately stocked with a wide range of both recreational and educational resources, books and other media.*

*28.6 Wherever possible, the prison library should be organised in co-operation with community library services.*

Source: Council of Europe, 2006

In September 2015, the Member States of the United Nations adopted *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, which includes seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) addressing the global challenges we face, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, health and wellbeing (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). By ensuring access to information and through supporting lifelong learning opportunities for people during periods of incarceration, prison libraries will assist countries in achieving the SDGs, particularly SDG 16: ‘Peace, Justice and Sustainable Institutions’, and SDG 4: ‘Quality education’.

# Guidelines

## Management

### 1. Access

1.1 Every member of the prison population, including staff, should have access to the books, materials, and services of the prison library consistent with maintaining institutional security and operational needs.

1.2 All prisoners must be made aware of the library and its resources and services during their induction to the prison.

1.3 Library access, resources and services should be adequate to meet prisoner needs and should be available to all prisoners regardless of security classification and location within the prison.

1.4 Denial of access to library services or resources should never be a method of discipline or control.

1.5 Access to library services should be limited but not eliminated only as a last resort for documented infringement of library rules but never prison rules.

1.6 Prisoners with unrestricted movement within a facility should be able to visit the library and be given sufficient time to select and check out materials, ask reference questions, order interlibrary loan items, read materials that do not circulate, spend recreational time, and participate in cultural activities organised by the library.

1.7 Library services should be available for use based on the facility and prisoner schedules - ideally daily, including evenings and weekends.

1.8 Where prisoners are allowed to leave the facility for work, study, or to spend time in the community prior to release, arrangements should be made for them to use a local public or academic library.

1.9 Prisoners in segregated status, such as hospital wards, protective custody, or punishment units, should have access to a rotating mobile collection, or be permitted to request materials from the main collection and through interlibrary loan. They should have access to a regularly updated print or electronic catalogue of the prison library collection. They should also be able to ask and receive answers to reference questions.

1.10 Prisoners in restricted units should be given access to the main library collection. If this is not possible, a collection of at least one hundred (100) popular and current books or two (2) books per prisoner (whichever is greater) should be available in each restricted housing unit. This collection shall be changed frequently but at a minimum at least once per month. Each prisoner should be able to browse and select at least two (2) titles per week from the collection.

1.11 The prison library should comply with existing accessibility laws and codes that prescribe how they provide services to library users with physical or cognitive disabilities. Such requirements may relate to physical access to the library building/space, as well as access to library materials and information in alternative, non-print format, adaptive equipment, and special outreach services and accommodations.

## **2. Administration**

2.1 Written policies ensuring the provision of library services should be developed by national, sub-national, and/or local prison authorities. These policies should clearly state the mission and goals, as well as the funding sources and administrative responsibilities for the library services. The policies should be based on relevant national library laws and regulations and should be regularly reviewed and updated.

2.2 Prison library policies should follow current best-practices and principles as seen in national or international public libraries to the greatest extent possible within the prison environment. Where public library practices cannot be employed, the least punitive alternatives should be designed.

2.3 The prison library policies should serve as the foundation for the development of local library procedures, addressing such areas as daily operations and library hours, materials selection, cataloguing/processing, donations, circulation and access to materials, inventory and weeding, copyright compliance, collection of library data, staffing, budgeting, reader services, policy review, use of computers and information technology, and programming.

2.4 The administrative and funding authority for prison libraries varies among nations and can include national justice ministries, state subdivisions, county or municipal governments, public libraries or library systems, ministries of culture or education or other and, in some cases, several government entities sharing this authority and responsibility. It is therefore important to have a Memorandum of Understanding, or legal agreement or contract in place that outlines the contributions of each party and the levels of service and support provided.

2.5 Individual correctional institutions should develop and implement a long-range prison library plan of three to five years. The plan should be based on a thorough evaluation of the needs of the user population. It should include a mission statement and a description of the library's main role(s) within the institution, for example as a provider of resources for recreational reading, study and life-long learning, as centres for education programme support, a cultural centre, a career and job information centre, a legal materials centre, and a provider of resources to support personal development and re-entry back into the community at the end of a custodial sentence. Further, the plan should include goals, measurable objectives, strategies and required resources to complete objectives, and evaluation methods. The plan should be written in collaboration with staff responsible for the facility's libraries and endorsed by the prison administration.

2.6 A performance evaluation of the library programme should be undertaken annually to ensure compliance with policies and procedures, and to measure the effectiveness of services. This could be an internal evaluation by library staff, prison staff and users, or could be undertaken by an external body such as a public library service or a professional industry association.

### **3. Patron privacy**

3.1 Individual circulation records must never be shared with anyone other than library staff. Any records of loans should be disposed of securely on a regular basis to ensure prisoner privacy.

3.2 Patron privacy should be protected to the greatest extent possible in all print and electronic records and communications.

### **4. Organisational structure**

4.1 The organisational structure of a prison library will vary from nation to nation, jurisdiction to jurisdiction, and prison to prison. In general, the organisational structure of the prison library will feature:

- Chief correctional official in charge of the entire facility: May have direct or indirect involvement in the day-to-day operations of the library but has ultimate responsibility for the library.
- Chief Librarian: Must hold professional library qualifications. May or may not be on-site. Makes policy for a facility library or a group of libraries and ensures performance of those policies as well as multi-year plans.
- Library Manager: Must hold professional library qualifications. Assists chief librarian in carrying out the library's policies and annual plans as well as overseeing day-to-day operations. Should provide direct services to prisoners.
- Library Assistant: A library professional, para-professional or suitably trained prisoner. Works directly with library users to guide them in using the library, providing reference, reader's advisory, circulation and all other duties within the library.
- Library workers: May be prisoners or volunteers, and undertake library tasks including shelving, weeding, cleaning and various other duties.

4.2 Smaller libraries that cannot provide the above level of staffing should be served by at least a Chief Librarian, and a Library Assistant as described in Section 4.1. The Library Assistant may be required to also undertake the duties of the Library Worker in small libraries.

### **5. Budget**

5.1 The agency or authority responsible for the prison library should ensure that the library is funded as a separate line item and receives annual allocations to cover salaries, library materials, subscriptions, equipment, IT, supplies, contractual services, interlibrary loan delivery, network/consortia memberships, staff training, and database fees.

5.2 The long-range library plan (see 2.5) should serve as the basis for the annual budget.

5.3 The library budget should be developed and administered by the librarian in charge, either of the prison system or of the individual facility, with input from other library staff.

5.4 The library staff should develop an annual activity report that details expenditures, library activity statistics, and programme outcomes. See also Section 9 ‘Performance assessment’ for other reporting methods.

5.5 The annual library materials budget should be allocated by using the following formula:

The average price (in local currency) of one (1) general hardback book will serve as the basis for calculating the minimum budget for an established library: The average non-fiction hardback book price x 70 percent (%) of the prisoner population plus 10%; for example:

70% of 500 prisoners = 350 prisoners  
350 x 32.00 euros (where 32 euros is the average price of a book) = 11,200 euros  
10% of 11,200 euros = 1,120 euros  
11,200 euros + 1,120 euros = 12,320 euros  
Total annual budget is 12,320 euros for a prison with 500 prisoners

The materials budget will increase as the book price increases, and as the prison population increases in number. This formula does not imply the library will purchase only hardback books but represents a simple tool for calculating the minimum budget for all types of library materials.

See also Section 12 ‘Collection standards’, and Section 15 ‘Library materials’, for guidance on library resources and formats that should be provided by the library.

5.6 The start-up materials budget for new libraries should be sufficient to establish at least 50% of a full-service collection (see Section 12 – ‘Collection standards’). Additional funds beyond the regular budget should then be allocated each year for up to four (4) consecutive years, allowing the materials collection to reach full size within five (5) years.

## **6. Staff**

6.1 Facility library staff which could include Senior Librarians, Librarians, and Library Technical Assistants, in addition to prisoner workers, shall provide library services and materials.

6.2 All prison libraries, regardless of size, should be supervised and managed by a professional librarian with the necessary qualifications and skills obtained through a university degree in library information science or equivalent library school diploma. If this is not feasible, a professional librarian shall supervise and coordinate the work of several prison libraries in a region. The professional librarian will provide ongoing training on library best practices to any correctional staff tasked with daily operations.

6.3 Professional library staff should receive ongoing professional development to keep up to date with current practices. Paraprofessional and correctional staff tasked with providing library services should also receive library-specific training.

6.4 All prisons with a population above 100 should have a full-time professional librarian on site. Prisons with a population above 1000 should ideally employ at least two (2) full time

librarians. Prisons with a population of fewer than 100 should be managed by a librarian with regional responsibilities, such as described in section 6.2.

6.5 Additional staff should be employed according to the needs of the institution. The total number of staff will vary according to the size of the prison population and the following factors:

- The number of open library hours
- The size, direct accessibility, and configuration of the library
- The number of users allowed in the library at any one time
- The number of programmes and events offered by the library
- The number of satellite libraries or delivery sites
- The number and size of restricted access units
- The level of automation present to support lending and other library functions
- The movement restrictions within the prison complex
- The number and types of education and rehabilitation programmes available
- The security level of the facility
- The service model in practice e.g. In-person visits or delivery services

6.6 All library staff should possess the necessary professional and technical qualifications to provide direct user services and operational support.

6.7 Library staff should be knowledgeable of the many and complex information needs of incarcerated people. These may include users with specific conditions such as dyslexia or dementia who require appropriate reading opportunities to support their conditions. Library staff should possess the necessary human and interpersonal skills to work effectively in a prison environment.

6.8 Library staff may be employed directly by the prison authority, or by an external partner such as a public library system, an academic library, a state or national library system, or a cultural institution that has responsibility for the provision of library services to the facility.

6.9 Salaries and employment benefits for prison library staff should be comparable to those of public library employees with similar qualifications and responsibilities or those paid by the employer to similar positions.

6.10 Library staff should be given opportunities to participate in professional organisations and prison libraries should be part of a regional (prison) library network.

6.11 Prison librarians are often isolated in their jobs and deprived of regular contact with their non-prison professional colleagues. This isolation can be reduced by becoming part of a professional network, participating in internet discussion groups, subscribing to newsletters, attending professional conferences and workshops, contributing to the professional literature, and lecturing to library school students.

6.12 Library staff should extend services to all prisoners without discrimination and should respect and protect the privacy of library users.

6.13 The prison may employ prisoner workers in the library. Workers should be selected according to their willingness, skills, and experience, and should be paid a fair wage commensurate with the pay of other skilled prisoner jobs.

6.14 There are many advantages to having prisoners work as librarians or library assistants. It allows prisoners to be leaders and take initiative, enhancing self-empowerment and social skills. It also helps to identify the information needs of the prison community.

6.15 Training of prison library workers should be provided by supervising library staff members. Where possible, the training provided should be certified by an educational institution as this offers prisoners the opportunity to continue in this line of work once released.

6.16 Prisoners with library-related work responsibilities must benefit from their position through pay, training, skill development, and letters of recommendation to be used upon release.

6.17 Community volunteers may also be employed in the library. Volunteers should not be employed in lieu of regular paid staff but should provide extra support and special programmes, as necessary.

6.18 Both prisoner workers and community volunteers should be provided with a robust orientation programme and on-the-job training by prison library staff. They should be taught about basic library principles such as ethics, privacy, intellectual freedom and equity of access to information, basic classification and organisation systems, reading and writing promotion strategies, providing user assistance and reading advice, library promotion strategies, main literary genres, and using the library software

6.19 Professional prison library staff should ensure other prison staff are trained to understand the concept of intellectual freedom and the prisoners' right to access information.

6.20 Librarians and library workers should be supported and encouraged to seek out and participate in opportunities for professional development such as continuing education programmes, conference attendance, and university courses, either in person or online. Prison library staff members should seek to join and participate in the activities of professional networks and share their experiences through presentations and relevant publications. Prison managers should provide encouragement, support, funding, and time to make these activities possible.

6.21 It should be made clear to prisoners and prison staff that library staff and library volunteers are not custodial staff. Their roles and responsibilities are distinct. Library staff should not fill custodial roles.

## **7. Physical facility and equipment**

7.1 In modern prison facilities, the physical space occupied by the library should be designed specifically for library use, workflow and functionality. In older facilities, remodelling may be necessary for the library to function efficiently. Whether a new construction or a remodelled space, principles of user-centred, universal design should be the guide in the library creation process from inception to completion. Specialists in prison library design should be consulted during the planning process when possible.

7.2 The effectiveness and success of library services are related to a welcoming, user-friendly and comfortable physical environment.

7.3 The safety of the library for staff and prisoners must be supported through adequate lighting, appropriate shelving, accessibility, and clear sightlines.

7.4 A secure, lockable space should be provided to library staff to ensure their safety.

7.5 The library should be situated at a central location within the prison complex. The library should be easy to reach for the largest number of prisoners and be accessible for persons with physical disabilities.

7.6 The library should be a separate and lockable area. The design should include the following:

- Functional lighting for reading, computer use, and other library specific functions
- Acoustic treatment for walls, floor, and ceiling
- Climate control, including heating, cooling, and ventilation
- Load bearing capabilities of floors sufficient for book stacks
- Electrical and data outlets sufficient to accommodate the required technical and electronic equipment
- Visual control point for the entire library space
- Lockable storage space
- Telephone to the outside for non-prisoner library staff
- Internal telephone connection to select prison staff for prisoner library staff
- Electronic emergency communication system

The library floor space shall be large enough to accommodate user activities, staff functions, and materials storage & display, including:

- Reference station with counter and storage cabinets
- Reference desk
- Secure library office
- Lockable staff workroom for technical processing, computer equipment, shelves, cupboards, book carts, and tables
- Sufficient amounts of shelving for library materials including books, magazines, newspapers, audio-visual materials
- Display area for books and promotional materials
- Reading tables and chairs
- Listening area
- Computers for prisoner use
- Photocopier and scanner



- Space for group activities
- Study desks

7.7 The patron seating/study area should be large enough to accommodate at a minimum 5% of the prison population or the maximum number of prisoners allowed in the library.

- Space for seating, including tables and aisles, shall be allocated at 2.5 square meters per seat
- The shelving area should be 15 square meters per 1000 volumes
- The staff work area should be 9 square meters per person
- The library office should be a minimum of 9 square meters
- Five percent (5%) of the total library space should be allocated as “special use” space for certain library furnishings and equipment including computerised or card catalogue station, dictionary and atlas stand, patron computers, typewriters, photocopier, art or media display

7.8 Furniture and equipment must comply with security regulations and should be selected for its effectiveness, comfort, attractiveness, ease of maintenance, and durability. Furniture and equipment shall be arranged in configurations that comply with security regulations. Modular furniture pieces are recommended for flexibility, as the library grows and its needs change.

7.9 Adequate social spaces and events spaces should be provided in the main library or a secure attached space.

7.10 Where possible a mix of fixed and mobile furniture should be used to enable a flexible use of space for library events and programmes.

7.11 Library furniture and equipment should be for library use only and should not be removed from the library or repurposed by prison staff.

7.12 Any non-library related use of the library spaces by custodial staff should be outside library operating hours and by prior agreement with library staff.

## **8. Communication & marketing**

8.1 The prison library staff should maintain open two-way communication with library users and should welcome suggestions. Prisoner advisory committees should be formed, and regular user satisfaction surveys should be undertaken. The credibility of the library will be greatly enhanced if it implements viable patron suggestions in a timely manner.

8.2 Extra efforts should be made to support and provide library resources for speakers of non-dominant languages. This should include the use of icon-based non-language signage, and library resources in the languages represented within the prison population.

8.3 The library staff should maintain good relationships with other prison departments by offering support and resources. Library staff can demonstrate the importance of the library to the prison administration by participating in cross-disciplinary programmes, advisory

committees, and special projects. Education and treatment staff should be encouraged to bring classes and prisoner groups to the library.

8.4 A prison library advisory committee with representation from a broad spectrum of prison departments, non-prison library associations or institutions, as well as prisoner groups should be established. The committee members can strengthen links with the non-prison library community, act as advocates for the library, and can provide user feedback to the library staff.

8.5 Library staff can promote the use of the library and its materials in many ways. Effective ways of bringing people to the library may include:

- The publication and wide distribution of a library brochure
- Outreach activities within the prison community
- Prisoner ambassadors for the library
- Visual displays and exhibitions
- Linkages to popular culture and television programmes
- Visiting authors
- Presentations from visiting community leaders and members
- Having library staff participate in orientation for new prisoners

8.6 Library staff and prisoner library workers can prepare:

- Subject bibliographies
- Lists of new acquisitions
- Pathfinders and bookmarks
- Book and art displays
- Book reviews and reading guides

8.7 The library can also increase the number of library visits by serving as a central distribution centre for community social service publications and acting as a formal or informal referral centre to outside support organisations.

## **9. Performance assessment**

9.1 A prison library advisory committee should be organised and meet on a regular basis. The committee should include representation from prison departments and prisoner groups. It can also be useful to include representatives from non-correctional library services in the local area.

9.2 An annual evaluation of library services should be conducted with reference to the stated performance goals, policies and objectives of the prison library service. This evaluation should be made by the library services manager or another professional librarian of equivalent standing using input from staff and prisoners.

9.3 A comprehensive evaluation of the information and library needs of the prison population should be conducted through an open dialogue with the prison advisory group (See Section 8.4) and all library users and be regularly reviewed by prison and library administration.

9.4 Regular user satisfaction surveys are recommended.

9.5 Regular surveys on non-users to explore reasons for non-use and to feed into library improvement programmes are recommended.

9.6 Library statistics should be collected and reported to prison managers on a regular basis with reference to relevant national or international standards as well as best practice privacy standards. Statistics should be reliable and measurable, recording information about the collection, expenditure, staffing, services, and usage while respecting user privacy. Example statistics include:

- Number of loans (total and per capita)
- Number of hours of library operation per month
- Number of library materials (by subject area, in total and per capita)
- Number of visits (total and per capita)
- Median user satisfaction rating
- Number and value of donations received
- Number of new and weeded library materials
- The number of hours of staff time in designing and delivering library programmes
- The number of participants engaged in library programmes

9.7 Both quantitative and qualitative measures can assist in monitoring and demonstrating the effectiveness and value of library services.

9.8 Qualitative evaluations will discover elements of prisoners' experiences of the library that will not be discoverable from statistics, such as impact, satisfaction, frustration, and other feedback that can guide continuous improvement of library collections, services, programmes, and environments.

9.9 Users wishing to pass along comments or suggestions concerning, among other things, the library collection and available services, should be able to do so in either verbal or written form.

9.10 Attempts should be made to deal with complaints from users in an informal manner. Prisoners wishing to formally register a complaint should be encouraged to complete a prisoner complaint form, or equivalent and direct it through the appropriate channels.

9.11 The integrity and use of the library will be enhanced if accepted feedback is implemented within a reasonable timeframe.

9.12 One element of a long-term prison library plan should include an evaluation of the library from prisoners formally by a prisoner library committee meeting with library staff on a scheduled basis.

9.13 Formal staff/prisoner library committee meetings can also gauge satisfaction with user-centred design of the facility as well as overall satisfaction with materials and services.

## 10. Collaboration with public libraries

10.1 Prison libraries should not operate in isolation but should cooperate with other local libraries where possible. Where public library services operate in the same geographic area as a correctional facility, the two should attempt to form a collaborative relationship with the other. Apart from ensuring professional and modern library management, this enables prisoners to experience a public service that they can continue using once they are released. Prisoners remain members of the local community and according to the *IFLA-UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 2022*, the local library continues to be responsible for serving them.

10.2 If, after negotiations, the public entity and the correctional facility can reach a formal agreement, each should incorporate the relationship into their multi-year plans to include goals, activities, and anticipated outcomes. All agreements should include details of any relevant budgets and provisions of funding. Evaluation procedures to be used to determine the effectiveness of the relationship should be described.

10.3 The public library system and the correctional facility library will negotiate an annual or multi-year service agreement.

10.4 The correctional facility remains responsible for the provision of equitable library service to the prisoner population; however, they should be able to rely on the public entity for support within the terms of the agreement.

10.5 The purpose of the agreement is to supplement library services and resources for prisoners in correctional institutions by providing them with broader access to library materials, services, and the public library network.

10.6 Money should be made available from the correctional authority to public library systems to compensate for the system's services to the correctional facility's library and prisoners. The distribution of such money for this programme should be based on the annually negotiated agreement between the parties regarding how the public library system's resources may best be used to facilitate library services to prisoners.

10.7 The public library or system should submit and receive approval of the agreement if the state or other correctional governing authority offers reimbursement or other financial benefits for services.

10.8 These negotiated agreements are not intended to replace the correctional system's responsibility to provide for the growth of the facility library programme or as a substitute for basic library service and programmes that each facility provides for prisoners.

10.9 The library system and the correctional facility library negotiate responsibility for repairs and maintenance of these materials and equipment.

10.10 Some of the services that public library systems may provide include the following:

- **Interlibrary Loan (ILL) and Reference Services:** Some of the most important system services to correctional facility libraries, ILL and reference services ensure access to system-wide collections and the state-wide library network. If correctional facility librarians do not have access to online searching tools and system catalogues, systems may have to handle ILL and reference requests from correctional facility libraries in a different manner from member

library requests. The correctional facility libraries and the systems must ensure that requests are submitted and handled as efficiently as possible. The systems and the correctional facility libraries will negotiate criteria for filling ILL requests from holdings within the system and for filling from outside the system.

- **Special Formats:** Assistance with access to library materials in alternate formats, including Braille, large print, recorded and digital format for people with print-related and other sensorial disabilities can be provided by the public library system (See Section 34 ‘Disabilities and special needs’).
- **Collection Development:** Public library staff can assist correctional facility librarians to purchase all types of library materials which supplement the collection of the correctional library.
- Purchasing facilitated by a public library must occur in consultation with the facility librarian and be based on an assessment of the educational, cultural and recreational needs of prisoners.
- **Cataloguing and Processing:** The library system may provide cataloguing and processing services for materials acquired for the correctional facility library either with programme funds or with the facility’s library funds.
- **Consultant Services:** System consultant services may include training programmes, reading lists, identification and location of vendors for specialised materials, assistance with effective use of system resources, assistance with programme development, workshops for prisoners, exhibits, advice on library management, operations, copyright compliance, etc.
- **Continuing Education:** Continuing education and specialised programmes offered to system member libraries may also be useful to correctional facility librarians. Topics are designed to help correctional facility librarians maintain and develop professional skills, satisfy continuing education requirements for public librarian certification, and may include opportunities for professional conferences and travel when appropriate.
- **Programmes:** Funds, resources and support may be available to correctional facility libraries for programmes which encourage personal growth and learning by prisoners.
- **Additional services** may include but are not limited to the following:
  - Guides and directories to regional prisoner transitional and re-entry services
  - Loan of rotating or deposit collections
  - Printing and graphic arts
  - Inclusion of correctional facility library holdings in the system’s online catalogue
  - Technology support where appropriate
  - Advice regarding the successful development of programmes for users

10.11 Where a relationship exists between a prison and a public library that includes library staff visiting the prison, the prison should ensure all library staff receive an orientation to the facility that includes security-related expectations.

# Collection Management

## 11. General principles

11.1 The prison library collection should meet the informational, educational, cultural, recreational, health, wellbeing and re-entry needs of the entire prison population. Included should be a wide variety of current print and non-print materials similar to those found in a public or school library.

11.2 The library collection should be sufficient to meet the specific information needs of the prison population but also be broad and responsive enough (via purchases and/or inter-library loan) to provide a depth of interest and allow for personally directed growth.

11.3 A balanced and responsive library collection should be developed, managed and maintained according to best-practice professional standards and in such a way that maximises its use and access.

11.4 The library collection should be continually enhanced with new acquisitions which represent a broad range of ideas and viewpoints and reflect the changing needs and interests of the prison population and their reading abilities.

11.5 Collections should support facility programmes such as treatment, rehabilitation, transition, mental and physical health, and re-entry.

11.6 Collections should include resources for readers with low literacy levels, and for readers of non-dominant languages represented within the prison population.

11.7 The library collection should be regularly weeded to ensure materials are up-to-date and in good condition.

## 12. Collection standards

12.1 The amount and type of materials that constitute a minimally adequate collection will vary according to many factors, including the size of the prison population, the custody level(s), the number of satellite collections, the average length of stay, work and education programmes available, the number of library visits per week, and the extent of programmes/activities offered in the library. While taking these factors into account, a general guideline is for a full-service library to have a minimum of the following materials (with items in heavy demand shall be available in multiple copies):

**Books:** A collection of 2000 titles or ten (10) titles per prisoner, whichever is greater.

**Magazines:** A minimum collection of 20 titles or one subscription per twenty (20) prisoners, whichever is greater.

**Newspapers:** Local, national, and foreign newspapers — the number to be decided by the geographical areas/countries represented by the prison population. At a minimum the library should provide access to 2 daily English language titles; 1 title from each

prisoner language group (where available).

**Audio and visual materials, multimedia and computer software:** Sufficient quantity to meet basic needs and support ongoing prison programmes.

**Additional materials as needed** through ILL, regional consortia, or national collections.

**Easy-reading materials** for readers with low literacy levels.

**Non-dominant language materials:** including newspapers.

**Electronic resources:** Reference tools such as phonebooks, dictionaries, medical reference, re-entry resources, government websites.

12.2 Where tablet devices are available to prisoners, any e-book collections provided via the tablets should reflect the print collections described in Section 15 'Library materials'.

12.3 Tablet devices must complement print collections, not replace them.

### 13. User needs assessment

13.1 Having accurate information about users' needs can improve collection development through facilitating the greatest possible alignment of user information needs and collection provision.

Some of the actions the prison library can take to determine user needs are:

- Conducting regular surveys on genre and author preferences
- Analysing usage and interlibrary loan statistics
- Providing opportunities to suggest new titles
- Having impact studies to determine user satisfaction with the library services

13.2 Maintaining an inclusive, comfortable, and conversational atmosphere in the library at all times is likely to lead to the informal provision of information from users regarding their needs.

13.3 Libraries should take advantage of any existing information already collected by the prison that will identify user needs, such as language groups and education levels.

See also the Specific User Groups section of this document when assessing the needs of different user groups.

### 14. Collection management policy

14.1 Library should develop a written collection management policy/plan which serves as a general guide for the development and evaluation of the collection. The policy should be evaluated and updated annually.

The policy/plan should address:

- the mission statement of the library
- Information needs analysis and general information about the prison population: ethnic and cultural composition, ages, reading levels, educational backgrounds, disability, and languages
- the collection building priorities and collection scope (in relation to formats, topics, languages, access etc.)
- acquisition models (purchase, donation) and access to materials unavailable in the library (interlibrary loan, personal order/purchase)
- material selection guidelines (criteria, procedures)
- handling of challenged material
- appeals process for managing challenges to materials
- preservation
- weeding of materials from the collection
- collection promotion and evaluation
- budget
- donation guidelines

## **15. Library materials**

15.1 A balanced library collection, developed in accord with prisoners' needs, budgetary considerations and security concerns, should include materials in multiple formats in the native language and other languages spoken by the prison population.

15.2 Legal information resources must be provided to prisoners. The selection of materials for this section of the library should be guided by a legal practitioner experienced in the legal environment of the country. A legal practitioner should review the currency and completeness of the legal resources available through the prison library on an annual basis.

15.3 Sufficient materials in alternative formats, and playback equipment, should be available to meet the needs of prisoners who cannot use conventional print publications (including persons with physical or cognitive disabilities, and those with reading and learning disabilities).

15.4 Special attention should be given to materials aimed at beginning and developing readers.

15.5 The library collection should include the following types of materials, in multiple languages and formats:

- general reference titles (encyclopaedia, dictionary, atlas, almanac etc.), not older than 5 years
- prose fiction, containing a broad range of genres including, but not limited to romance, mystery, crime novels, science fiction, fantasy, urban fiction, adventure, satire, comedy, horror, etc.
- non-fiction, in all subject areas, such as history, religion, psychology, travel, etc.



- materials supporting programmes offered by the institution (substance abuse, building self-esteem, anger management, self-help, personal relationships, parenting, physical and mental health and wellbeing etc.)
- educational and self-study materials to support career planning and lifelong learning
- legal materials (to meet informational needs as well as constitutional or court mandated requirements)
- ethnically and culturally diverse titles
- magazines (general interest and subject specific)
- local and national newspapers (to stay in touch with world and local affairs)
- biographies and memoirs
- poetry and drama
- comics, manga, and graphic novels
- literacy & numeracy materials (for improving reading, writing, and math skills)
- community information and resources for preparing prisoners for re-entry into the community such as brochures, directories, handbooks, etc. for pre-release planning and job search. (See also Section 28 – ‘Work training/re-entry skills for prisoners’)
- arts and crafts materials (ideally, supporting the arts and crafts or skilled labour practiced in each prison)
- easy-to-read materials (for users learning to read and people who primarily read in non-dominant languages)
- large-print books (for persons with low vision)
- audiobooks (for all patrons and those with print disabilities)
- sign-language materials
- audio and visual materials, multimedia and computer software
- children’s material, picture books
- puzzles, games (for education and entertainment)
- LGBTIQ+ materials (See Glossary)
- Diverse religious and spiritual materials

## 16. Selection criteria

16.1 In developing a non-biased and responsive library collection, the selection criteria should include, but not be limited to:

- needs and interests of the prison population (in relation to topic, theme, language, format and reading level)
- suitability of subject and style for intended audience
- artistic, social, scientific, and cultural relevance of material
- factual accuracy (as a counter to disinformation or misinformation)
- timeliness and currency of information
- relevance to the existing library holdings and subject coverage

- suitability of format for prison library use
- costs

16.2 Library collections should reflect the ethnic and gender makeup, cultural backgrounds, language requirements and reading levels of the prison population.

16.3 Library staff should solicit suggestions from prisoners regarding materials to be added to the collection, both informally (by suggestion box) and formally (regular meetings with prisoners).

## **17. Excluded materials**

17.1 The library should provide any materials that might normally be found on the shelves of a public library.

17.2 Prison library collection should support intellectual freedoms of the prison population and restrictions on prisoners' reading materials should be minimal.

17.3 Library staff should have a challenged materials policy in place to ensure consistent responses when censorship issues arise.

17.4 Facilities that use a publications review committee to consider excluding materials must ensure library staff are permanent members of that committee.

17.5 In the selection of library materials no censorship shall be applied, except in such circumstances where an individual title, topic or item are proven to cause an explicit threat to the security of the facility, the safety of prisoners or staff, or are explicitly forbidden by facility policies.

17.6 Librarians can ensure no censorship in purchasing (e.g., deciding to not purchase a potentially challenging title) by always adhering to the library collections policy and be guided by the list at section 15.5.

## **18. Donations**

18.1 Library collections can be augmented by donations, from individuals, public or private institutions, civic organisations, religious associations etc., if donated titles meet the needs of the library.

18.2 Library shall have the right to reject a donation if it does not comply with collection management policy.

18.3 Donated materials should be subject to the same selection criteria as purchased materials, in addition to the physical condition, quality of an item and the currency of information in particular. Outdated books and those in poor condition should not be accepted.

18.4 Donations should not be a predominant acquisition model. Library should develop, and regularly update, the written donation policy which describes procedures for seeking and

accepting or refusing donations. The policy shall address:

- selection criteria
- evaluation procedure
- procedure for material acceptance and rejection (e.g., documentation, delivery costs etc.)

18.5 All donated items shall be inspected for safety and security by employed library staff before being placed in the collection.

## **19. Interlibrary loan**

19.1 Recognising the impossibility of meeting all reading and information needs of a culturally and linguistically diverse population in-house, the prison library should participate in a regional or national interlibrary loan system through formal or informal arrangements with local, regional or state library systems and networks.

19.2 When logistically possible, prisoners and prison library staff should have access to the local public library electronic catalogue (OPAC) to facilitate interlibrary loans.

19.3 Prisoners should be informed about the ways to request information or library materials that are not currently in the collection.

19.4 Interlibrary loans, which allow prisoners to access materials owned by other libraries, should be used to complement the library collection but not as an alternative to planned collection development.

19.5 It is recommended that the holdings of the prison libraries in a region be recorded in a central catalogue to enable an awareness of specialised collections, and to support inter-library loans.

## **20. Collection organisation**

20.1 All library materials should be classified and catalogued according to the most appropriate means for the library users. This may be according to national and/or international standards, or by genre, or another method. Library users should be consulted on the most useful means of organising the collection, and the staff in charge must be trained in the logic of the chosen systems.

20.2 Library materials should be labelled with call numbers (on spine labels) in order to ensure open and easy access.

20.3 Library shall have a catalogue of the library's holdings, available for the use of prisoners.

20.4 In order to increase search capabilities, manage the collection, and account for its use, an automated catalogue compliant with national cataloguing standards and an automated circulation system is highly recommended.

20.5 If access to bibliographic databases is available, existing cataloguing data should be obtained from such sources, eliminating the need for in-house cataloguing.

20.6 Collection signage and 'way-finding' resources should be kept up to date to assist users in navigating the collection.

## **21. Circulation**

21.1 All prisoners should have access to all library materials

21.2 A record system (print-based or automated) shall be maintained in order to identify the borrowers and the due-dates of materials in circulation in order to facilitate the return of resources to the collection.

21.3 Materials intended for circulation shall be clearly identified and displayed in a way that facilitates their browsing and retrieval. Items should be displayed so spines or covers are visible.

21.4 Prisoners should be made aware that library materials on loan to them are their responsibility. They should be encouraged to take care of the resources and to return items on time.

21.5 Late, damaged, or lost books should not result in punitive monetary measures such as fines or late fees. As an alternative, library staff may consider other methods of compensation such as the temporary restriction of borrowing rights, the provision of time working in the library, or the opportunity to replace damaged or lost materials.

21.6 Prison staff should be made aware that library resources are not the personal property of prisoners but are a common good and must not be disposed of as a punishment or when prisoners are relocated. They should return library materials located throughout the facility when not in the care of a prisoner.

21.7 All effort should be made to continue the circulation of library materials during facility lockdowns.

## **22. Collection promotion**

22.1 The library collection should be effectively displayed and actively promoted. Methods of promotion may include newsletters, posters, fliers, lists of new acquisitions, list of the most popular and frequently borrowed books, bookmarks, bulletin boards, exhibition and personal contact.

22.2 Library should offer reading promotion programmes to promote the value and enjoyment of reading, and a widening of reading choices.

22.3 In order to encourage library usage after release, the prison library should provide prisoners with information about their local library service and its collection and arrange for an introduction and library card for that library where possible.

22.4 The prison library is for all members of the prison community. Staff should be encouraged to be seen engaging with the services and collections as this can promote reading,

provide opportunities for conversation, and build trust between staff and prisoners.

22.5 Promotion of the library should extend to beyond the library space to encourage use by non-users.

## **23. Collection evaluation**

23.1 In order to maintain the quality standards, the existing library collections should be periodically evaluated in order to determine their quality and potential damages and losses. The following criteria should be used:

- usage statistics
- user satisfaction
- accuracy of information
- currency of information
- physical condition of the material

23.2 Underused, biased, outdated and worn materials should be regularly discarded and replaced. Approximately 10% of the collection shall be weeded and replaced with new materials each year.

# Services & Programmes

## **24. General Principles**

24.1 An induction to the library and its services should be included in the general induction to the facility for incoming prisoners. Prisoners must be made aware of the existence and location of the library and the services it offers.

24.2 Besides loaning books and other materials, it is essential for the prison library to offer additional services. In this way, the library is established as a comprehensive agent for the common purpose of offering education, recreation, culture, work training, social and legal orientation; and supporting re-entry, and relationships between prisoners and their families.

24.3 Services and programmes can be done in cooperation with other prison departments, the local (public) library or other community services and outside facilitators such as creative agencies, local colleges and universities, and health educators. Working with institutions outside the prison provides an opportunity to access the expertise of specialists from outside the prison, and in doing so provide a window and a bridge to the outside world.

24.4 Prisoners' literacy skills levels should always be considered when designing and coordinating the services and programmes offered by the prison library, adapting some of the activities so the prison library becomes an inclusive space for the whole prison population.

## **25. Reading and writing promotion**

25.1 The library should offer literacy activities and/or establish alliances with the prison schools or other institutions to support prisoners who wish to improve their ability to read and write.

25.2 Easy-reading materials, comics, spelling books, dictionaries, vocabulary card sets, among other literacy skills materials, should always be available in the prison library. Both printed and as digital apps in tablets or computers, when possible.

25.3 Literacy and reading programmes and initiatives offered to prisoners should reflect those offered outside the prison in public libraries and schools to enable prisoners to be involved in the literary world when they leave prison.

25.4 The library should organise and support a variety of activities and programmes that promote reading and creative writing, such as:

- Book clubs and discussions
- Letter and greeting card writing
- Creative writing initiatives
- Family literacy programmes
- Read-aloud groups
- Author visits and readings
- Autobiographical writing, poetry or short stories workshops
- Creative writing contests
- Personal journal or collective publications
- Publishing a prison newspaper
- Prison national book day/week/month celebrations
- Poetry readings
- Theatre workshops
- Debating groups

25.5 The library should also create or have access to a facilitator's handbook, as well as provide instructional materials so any staff member, volunteer or prisoner who wants to conduct a reading promotion activity can have access to guidelines with workshop ideas and strategies.

## **26. Cultural events**

26.1 Having access to cultural events and displays of artistic expression has shown to encourage emotional and intellectual development, contribute to mutual understanding and bring a sense of community identity.

When possible, the prison library should offer its space for housing varied artistic and cultural events, such as:

- Events of performing arts (dances, drama, skits, music, poetry)
- Art exhibitions
- Celebrating various cultures and ethnic groups
- Film screenings

## **27. Family events**

27.1 Prison libraries can provide family literacy programmes, ‘read-aloud’ recording programmes for incarcerated parents and their children, and shared reading opportunities during family visitation. In some situations, family members may also be able to borrow from the library, creating opportunities for families to spend time together in the library during visits. Maintaining strong family connections increases prisoners’ rehabilitation possibilities and minimises the negative impact of incarceration on families, particularly on children. In addition, incarcerated mothers might have their small children with them.

27.2 The prison library should provide the conditions or manage initiatives for family bonding, such as:

- Children books, games, toys, crafts or other relevant materials for children
- Children’s’ activities during visiting hours or other instances where children are present
- Book loans to the family, which can be returned on their next visit
- Creation of audiobooks recorded by incarcerated parents
- Birthday celebrations
- Family fun days and family time

## **28. Work training/re-entry skills for prisoners**

28.1 Prison libraries should help prepare prisoners for life after prison through life skills programmes and activities. Some of the actions the prison library can take to support the work training and re-entry of prisoners are:

- Incorporating skilled labour manuals and tertiary education handbooks into their collections
- Offering resume writing, job search, application, and interview skills training courses
- Developing library programmes that incorporate presentations and workshops with local industry leaders

28.2 Information resources regarding the following should be considered to assist in re-entry:

- Housing
- Voting
- Getting a public library card
- Immigration/citizenship
- Indigenous resources
- Driver licenses

- Social security
- Personal records such as birth certificates
- Emergency services such as accommodation and food services
- Addiction/substance abuse support
- Employment
- Financial management and budgeting

## **29. Library user education**

The prison library should teach prisoners how to most effectively use a library, so they become informed library users during their time in prison, and once they return to their community. Such skills and knowledge will improve prisoner's browsing and searching techniques, and their confidence in using libraries in the future.

29.1 The library should offer training sessions that include at least:

- An introduction to the logical arrangement of library material by subject, creating a general understanding about branches of knowledge among prisoners.
- Instruction in how to use a library catalogue
- Instruction in how to borrow and return library resources
- An awareness of the elements of their specific library collection i.e., fiction, non-fiction and other genres, so that they can consult relevant library sections as per their need.
- An awareness of their capacity to borrow resources through interlibrary loan.

## **30. Information literacy training**

30.1 Information literacy training should be offered to prisoners to enable them to:

- recognise when they have an information need
- be aware of the resources available to them to meet their information needs, and be able to use them effectively
- judge the quality and authority of information found
- process and create information in a critical, creative and ethical way.
- For further information on IT in prison libraries, see section 43.



# Specific User Groups

## **31. General Principles**

31.1 Prison libraries need to be inclusive and cater to the different needs of a diverse prison population. In order to provide equal opportunities for all library users and equity in reading and learning, it is necessary to critically evaluate the physical condition of library buildings, as well as its materials, library services and programmes.

31.2 As with all library work, the information needs and reading practices of all users should be treated with respect, without judgement and with user privacy at the centre of all interactions.

31.3 Users with specific requirements need special attention when visiting the library or using library services. The library staff should be knowledgeable about serving specific user groups and they should know of practical solutions such as how to obtain specific materials from other libraries.

## **32. Ethnic, faith, and linguistic diversity**

32.1 The prison population consists of various nationalities, faiths, and languages. Ideally, books and other materials need to reflect the multicultural, multifaith, and multilingual needs of a diverse prison population. In addition, graphic, audio-visual and easy reading materials as well as dictionaries and reference materials in foreign languages should be made available within the library collection. Faith-based collections should be available to all prisoners.

32.2 Written information about the library, its services and programmes should be offered in languages represented in the prison.

## **33. Low literacy levels**

33.1 For those prisoners, who have difficulties with reading and writing, the time spent in prison should be used to give them a chance to improve their educational qualifications and their literacy and learning levels as needed. To address their specific needs, they may need educational assistance and access to materials for different reading levels, including graphic, easy reading materials and audio-visual materials

## **34. Disabilities and special needs**

34.1 Prisoners with disabilities and special needs should ideally have access to materials that are designed to meet their reading and learning requirements. This can be library materials in alternate formats, including Braille, large print, talking books, audio-visual materials with subtitles and/or sign language.

34.2 Partnerships with external specialist libraries that support users with disabilities and special needs should be developed to extend the availability of resources to prisoners with these needs.

## **35. Youth**

35.1 Prison libraries need to support incarcerated youth in continuing their (school) education. Educational and library staff should work hand in hand to support their learning and other interests.

35.2 Libraries in juvenile prisons should build collections that are appropriate to the interests and needs of young people. These collections should reflect their cultural and personal experiences and are written at a level accessible to them, such as Young Adult Fiction.

35.3 The intellectual freedoms of youths in prisons should be protected through strong collection policies and guidelines to support library staff managing challenges to Young Adult collection items. See also Section 14 – ‘Collection management policy’.

35.4 To enable school education to continue during periods of incarceration, libraries in juvenile prisons should consult with facility teaching staff to identify and collect up-to-date textbooks as required by the educational system of the country or state.

35.5 The time spent in prison could be used to encourage reluctant readers as it provides an opportunity to address young people’s literacy and educational gaps. They should not leave prison without knowing where the next public library is and ideally feel invited to go there, for example, by receiving a welcome package with a free library card and a free book.

## **36. Gender and sexual identity**

36.1 Library collections, services and programmes should reflect the diversity of possible genders and sexualities of prisoners.

36.2 Women and men may have different reading and information interests and needs, and these needs must be met by the prison library.

36.3 Library collections should include items regarding transgender, women’s and men’s health.

36.4 Members of the LGBTQ+ community (See Glossary) might have specific reading and information interests and needs, and these needs must be served by the prison library. These may include but are not limited to health, legal, and re-entry information, and recreational material. Regular guidance from the LGBTQ+ community within the prison should be sought regarding collection management, organisation and physical arrangement.

## **37. Parents**

37.1 Some prisons allow children to stay with a parent through their period, or some of their period of incarceration. Special attention is needed to serve these parents as they need appropriate library materials and services.

37.2 In prisons where children live with a parent, the library collection must include children’s books appropriate for the age of the children. These should include picture books and reading aloud books.

37.3 Prison libraries should provide materials on parenting skills and support parents engaging with their children as discussed in the section on family events (See Section 27).

37.4 Family members without children residing with them, such as grandparents who will play a role in young family members' lives should receive the same support as parents.

### **38. Elderly**

38.1 Prison libraries should provide collections that reflect the health and social needs and interests of elderly prisoners. Large print and audio books should be made available to prisoners with poor eyesight as would be found in public libraries.

38.2 The library should offer assistive devices to enable elderly prisoners' engagement with reading, such as magnifiers and audiobook players.

38.3 Collections should include resources relating to aging and end of life care.

### **39. Political prisoners**

39.1 Political prisoners are often highly educated and access to relevant literature and information may be of particular importance to them. They might suffer from harsh conditions, such as lack of recreational activities, solitary confinement, torture, few or no visitors and strict censorship. Political prisoners must have the same rights and opportunities to access quality prison library services and further education as any other prisoner.

### **40. Prisoners in segregation or health care units**

40.1 Prisoners who are housed in segregated units such as 'protection' units, 'disciplinary units', health care units, and 'isolation' should be provided access to library collections, via a mobile collection or branch collection that is regularly refreshed from the main library collection.

40.2 Prisoners housed in such units should be provided with access to a print or online catalogue of the main library collection and be able to request items to be delivered to them from the main library.

40.3 Prisoners housed in such units should be able to participate in library programmes and events whenever possible.

### **41. Prisoners nearing release**

41.1 Prisoners nearing release must have their access to the prison library collection maintained, even when housed in separate units. This access could be via a mobile collection or a branch of the main collection that is housed in their units that is regularly refreshed from the main collection.

41.2 Re-entry resources should be made available to prisoners nearing release, including information about local library services, and if possible, an introduction to their public library and a free library card to enable borrowing after release. See ‘Section 28 – Work training/re-entry skills for prisoners’ for detail on suitable resources.

41.3 Prisoners nearing release should have their reference queries answered in a timely manner to allow them the best possible chance of preparing for re-entry.

## 42. Students

42.1 In some situations, prisoners may be allowed to enrol in educational activities delivered by external providers such as universities. In these cases, prison libraries should support the student prisoners within their capacity. For example, prison libraries should:

- facilitate inter-library loans via the student’s campus library
- provide a suitable study area for the student
- support extended access to the library spaces and collections for the student
- work with prison education staff to ensure the student has access to necessary information resources

# Information Technology

43.1 The prison library should make use of current information technology to the greatest extent possible.

43.2 We live in a world increasingly shaped by digitisation - with all its complexity of opportunities and risks. The question is no longer whether people in custody should be given access to electronic devices and media, but how to find practical solutions to information technology driven efforts for information access and lifelong learning.

43.3 Digital literacy skills are necessary for participating in society and prisoners should not be deprived of this, rather they should be provided with opportunities to develop and update their digital literacy skills to support their re-entry to the community if needed.

43.4 Digital collections and content should supplement, but never replace, physical collections, access to a library space, or in-person programming.

43.5 Digital collections should prioritise open access materials whenever possible to reduce costs to the library and prisoners.

43.6 Library staff should have consistent, daily access to the internet and email to answer information requests, search web-based library catalogues, communicate with the library community and vendors, participate in distance learning, videoconferencing and in interlibrary loan networks.

43.7 An Information and Communication Technology (ICT) committee should be set up comprising the Librarian, security and education staff, particularly where new prisons/buildings are being erected. The presence of a professional librarian on such a committee would ensure current and ongoing library requirements are met, and new technologies are evaluated from an information perspective as they arise.

43.8 The library should implement an automated circulation and catalogue system which uses a bibliographic database using international standardised formats.

43.9 Ideally standardised programmes should be used by all prison libraries in a region and a common central catalogue of all materials should be established to facilitate research and interlibrary lending.

43.10 Prisoners should be able to search online in the local prison library catalogue or in other library catalogues and borrow media locally or by inter-library loan from another library via the prison library staff.

43.11 Access for patrons to computers or other devices with multimedia software is highly recommended for informational, educational, health care and recreational pursuits. By creating a secure environment and allowing access to selected internet sites, limited access to the internet can be made possible without compromising facility safety.

43.12 Computers or other electronic devices should include updated resources to complement and support:

- Formal or informal prisoner education
- Legal inquiries
- Other training programmes offered in the prison
- Skilled labours practiced in the prison
- Job searching strategies
- Recreation, through eBooks, games, videos, etc.
- Local, national, and global current affairs
- Health and self-care
- E-government services

43.13 Prisoners should have supervised and/or mediated access to digital legal resources including legal databases.

43.14 The library software is to be supplemented by a word processing programme.

43.15 Prisoners should be given supervised internet access for education and recreation, as well as pre-release planning.

43.16 In facilities that allow prisoners to access tablet devices loaded with e-books, prison library staff should be in charge of managing these collections, unless this can be done online by prisoners themselves.

43.17 Where possible, collaborations with external providers of digital collections should be sought to enable access to their digital collections.

43.18 The hardware and software introduced should be regularly maintained to ensure it is up to date (e.g., every five years) and renewed as necessary.

43.19 Library and IT staff should work together and provide expert induction and training on the use of hardware and software in the libraries.

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# Glossary of Terms

**Access:** Freedom and ability to obtain and make use of information, library materials and services.

**Agency:** Public or private institution or system providing library services to people in custody.

**Large-print books/publications:** Materials printed or displayed in 14 point or larger type.

**LGBTQIA+:** A term that includes people of all diverse genders and sexualities, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, queer, intersex, asexual, pansexual, and allies.

**Library:** These guidelines use the following definition of ‘library’ adapted from *ODLIS – The Online Dictionary of Library and Information Science*:

A collection or group of collections of books and/or other print or nonprint materials organised and maintained for use (reading, consultation, study, research, etc.) to meet community needs.

**Prison:** Any institution or facility where people are held in custody, incarceration, or detention. Also known in other contexts as penitentiary, penal institution, jail, correctional facility or institution. May include adult and juvenile facilities and those institutions that house non-correctional populations, such as immigration centres or those for political prisoners or prisoners of war.

**Prisoner:** After much deliberation, the word ‘prisoner’ was chosen by the authors of this edition of these guidelines to describe the population from which the users of prison libraries are drawn. This decision was taken for reasons of consistency with earlier editions, multiple international examples of other similar guidelines, and the broader literature about prison libraries. Other words considered included ‘inmate’, ‘users’, and ‘incarcerated people’. Each of these terms were rejected as either having connotations more negative than ‘prisoner’, unclear meanings in non-English speaking contexts, or of insufficient scope to indicate the groups of people who are eligible to use prison libraries but choose not to. The authors recognise the word ‘prisoner’ is not without its own controversy and apologise for any offence the use of the word may cause.

**Prison authority:** National or local government department responsible for administering prison facilities.

**Segregation/segregated status:** Physical separation of prisoners for the protection of staff and other prisoners, institutional security or for punishment.

**Satellite library:** Subsidiary library or branch within the prison complex, supervised by staff of the main library. Smaller than the main library and often located in restricted areas (e.g., protection unit, segregation, school or hospital).



# Appendix – Minimum Standards for Prison Libraries

Prison libraries are places where people living in justice facilities can read, access information, borrow media, participate in occasional events, and/or spend time alone or with other prisoners, depending on the type of prison. They build a bridge to the world outside the prison walls and support prisoners' wellbeing. They are also one of the few places in prison that allow prisoners some freedom to take responsibility for their own education and recreation. Prison libraries serve as educational, informational, cultural and recreational meeting and learning spaces, where their users can spend meaningful leisure time.

Although prisons are required by international frameworks to provide adequate prison library services, the reality often looks different. To support prisons in starting a basic prison library service that builds up to become a professional library service, we herewith provide minimum standards. It must be stressed that these *Minimum Standards for Prison Libraries* do not replace the professional *Guidelines for Library Services to Prisoners* but serve as a basic and minimum starting point.

## **Prison libraries shall meet at least the following standards:**

- Every prison shall maintain a library. (See 'Glossary of Terms' to understand what can be described as a library.)
- The establishment of a library in each prison shall be mandated in national correctional practice and guidelines.
- The design and organisation of the prison library shall be laid down in guidelines issued by the responsible correctional authority and supported by it accordingly.
- Prisons should consult local library associations and institutions such as national and public libraries for guidance, advice, and an understanding of the role and value of libraries.
- All prisoners must be made aware of the library, for example during their induction to the prison, and encouraged to use it.

## **Management**

- The correctional authority of the region, and the prison management are responsible for the long-term development of the prison library. A specific development plan should be developed and reviewed annually by management in each individual prison that reflects and ensures how these minimum standards are met and maintained. Written agreements should be drawn up to establish how the library will develop beyond these minimum standards.

## **Staffing**

- If no library professional is employed in a prison library, a professional unit managed by a library professional should be set up for the region.- In cooperation with the correctional

authority, this unit coordinates the work of the prison libraries in the region, supports their professional development, and represents them in the professional library community.

- Prison libraries and other local libraries and library professional associations should be in contact with each other to share knowledge, materials and services and other opportunities for cooperation.

- Regional prison library staff should network, receive professional development training, and meet at least annually.

### **Budget**

- Prison libraries should receive sufficient financial support in the form of an annual budget to enable an expansion of the collection through acquiring up-to-date and appropriate materials, and to conduct activities and services.

### **Collections**

- The collection should be suitable for all user groups at each facility and contain both books and audio-visual media relevant to user needs. Additionally, current newspapers / magazines and media in different languages and reading levels should be included.

- The prison library should contribute to an environment that encourages prisoners to develop, enhance and sustain their reading and writing skills. This is supported by the provision of materials in different languages, and easy-to-read materials.

- Donated materials can only be included to supplement the collection, provided they are current and relevant to user needs. They are not a substitute for the acquisition of new and appropriate materials.

### **Programmes**

- Interactive activities that promote reading and writing should be offered. Activities can be carried out in cooperation with other prison departments, the local (public) library or other community services and outside facilitators.

### **Partnerships**

- Prison libraries should cooperate with local (public, regional and/or national) libraries outside the prison walls for collection and knowledge sharing and reflect their standards. Within the framework of local security regulations, the library services for prisoners should be similar to that of the local (public) library.

### **Access**

- All prisoners should be able to visit the library regularly, at least once every two weeks, to spend time there and / or to borrow materials. If the collection can only be borrowed via catalogue, the catalogue should contain author names, titles, and brief abstracts of the individual items and be updated regularly, at least once a year.

- If there is no suitable space to house the library collection, temporary minimum services should be provided to all prisoners using mobile collections that circulate via library carts until an appropriate space is found.