

# Library Outreach on the Inside

A toolkit for successful  
partnerships between libraries  
and correctional centres

# How to Use

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he purpose of this toolkit is to encourage connections between public libraries and correctional centres. Many of the correctional centres' libraries are struggling to provide basic services to inmates and staff – this is despite the recommendations to employ professional librarians and provide accessible, convenient library services for inmates. Public librarians can help by extending library services to inmates who occupy correctional facilities in their communities.

Since each correctional facility and library is different, the templates in this toolkit are meant to be customized. Librarians and correctional administration staff are encouraged to get together and discuss the kinds of services that would be most beneficial, the procedures to follow to minimize security risks, and the steps to take to achieve successful partnerships between the public library and correctional centre libraries.

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# Introduction

**T**here are many benefits of library services, or public library outreach, to inmates. These benefits extend beyond the prison walls to ex-offenders' lives and their communities. Prison library services address the recreational, cultural, spiritual, educational and information needs of incarcerated people.<sup>1</sup> According to Book Clubs for Inmates, the act of reading and discussing books in a group encourages inmates to appreciate other viewpoints and feel empathy for others. This can result in the building of cooperation and mutual respect among opposing groups,<sup>2</sup> which has the potential to reduce security risks in the correctional environment.

Another potential benefit of library services is that it prepares inmates to return to their communities.<sup>3</sup> Ex-offenders are a vulnerable population, and need help with job-seeking, literacy, eligibility for government assistance and housing.<sup>4</sup> Those who have experienced public library outreach in prison, learn about public library services,<sup>5</sup> and may be more likely to use them in their communities, when released. The communities to which inmates return also benefit, since inmates who have received the benefit of educational programming are more likely to have undergone lasting personal changes, which will encourage them to reintegrate successfully.<sup>6</sup> Libraries can play a key role in this process, contributing to the reduction of re-offending and, as a result, to safer communities.

The right of inmates to read and access information has been supported by many international documents,<sup>7</sup> and has recently been endorsed by the Canadian Library Association and the Canadian Association of Law Libraries.<sup>8</sup> A 2003 article about Canadian prison libraries emphasized the importance of ensuring that "those who relinquish most of their freedoms and rights while incarcerated are not also denied rights that ensure dignity and assist with rehabilitation, such as access to a good library service."<sup>9</sup>

Canadian public library mission statements include words like "universal access,"<sup>10</sup> "all ... citizens and their communities,"<sup>11</sup> and "free place for everyone,"<sup>12</sup> demonstrating that a core public library mandate is to serve the entire community. Many correctional facilities are receptive to the idea of providing library services, but simply lack the resources, expertise and time. This presents an opportunity for public libraries to provide outreach services to inmates, many of whom will return to their communities upon release. One Manitoba librarian put it very simply: "They are part of this community too."

There are many ways public libraries can partner with inmates and correctional staff — this will be determined by several factors: the capability and wishes of facility administration; librarian, staff and volunteer time; the physical capacity of the facility; and inmates' specific needs.

**"They are  
part of this  
community  
too."**

Library services in correctional facilities may include:

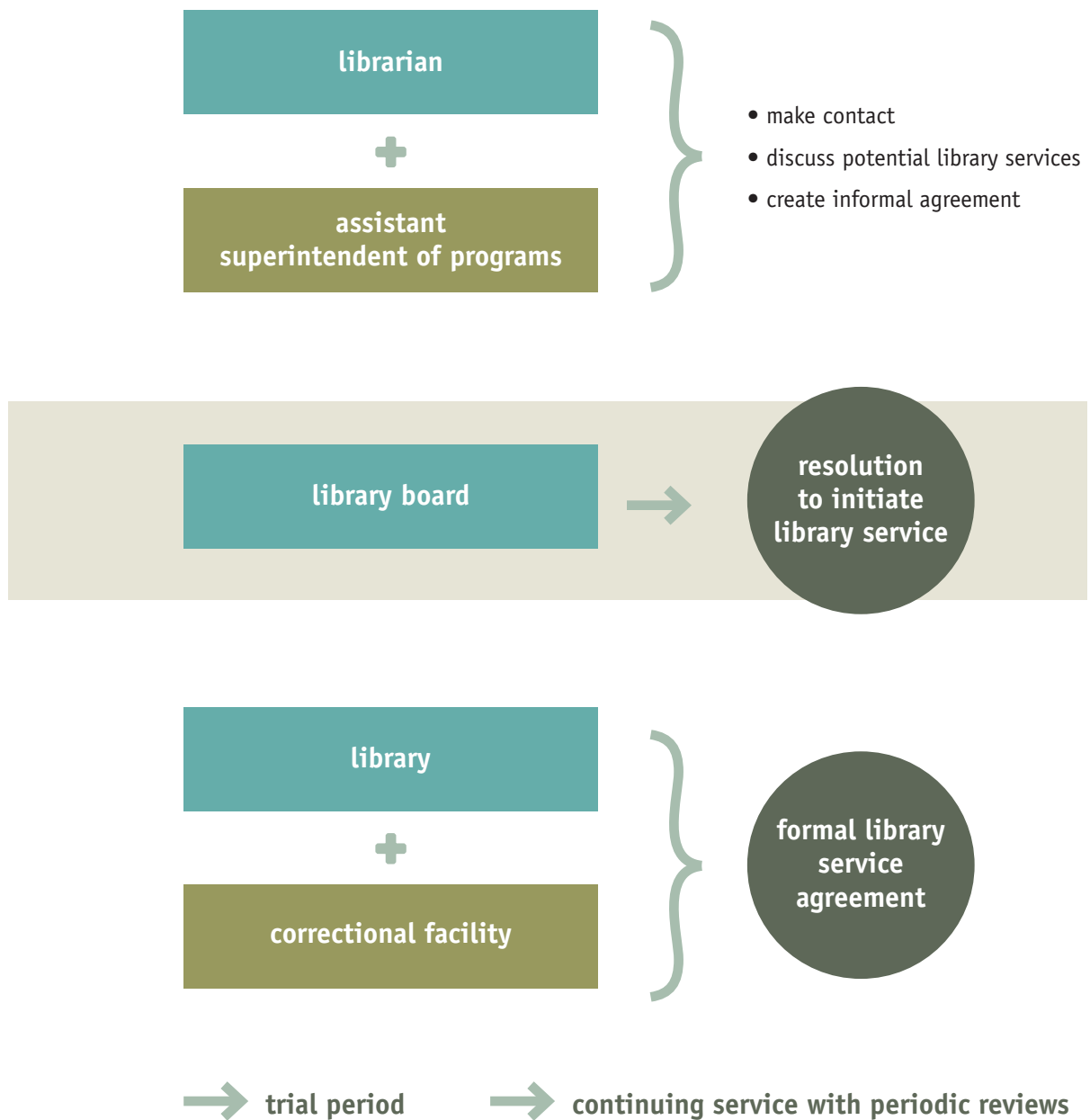
- developing and maintaining a library collection for the facility
- providing institutional borrowing to inmates for items not in the collection
- supporting existing correctional education programs and literacy initiatives
- providing library services such as reference, readers' advisory, instruction and programming

Since establishing relationships are most important, interested librarians should first seek to build connections with correctional administration, specifically with the assistant superintendent of programs. Librarians are also encouraged to develop relationships with teachers and chaplains working in the correctional centres. They are often allies for library services and support the library establishment process. To ensure the process is successful, it is recommended that librarians and correctional administration meet to discuss concerns, ethics and goals. Effective partnerships are established through mutual understanding.

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- <sup>1</sup> Correctional Service Canada. (2007). *Commissioner's directive No. 720: Education programs and services for offenders*. [www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/plcy/cdshtm/720-cde-eng.shtml](http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/plcy/cdshtm/720-cde-eng.shtml)
  - <sup>2</sup> Book Clubs for Inmates. Book club for inmates [video]. <http://youtu.be/n22BuxKbmn8>
  - <sup>3</sup> Canadian Library Association/Canadian Association of Law Libraries. (2014). Position statement on the fundamental right of people who are incarcerated to read, learn and access information. [www.cla.ca/Content/NavigationMenu/CLAAatWork/Advocacy/CLA\\_CALL\\_statement\\_prison\\_libraries\\_14Sept2014\\_Final2.pdf](http://www.cla.ca/Content/NavigationMenu/CLAAatWork/Advocacy/CLA_CALL_statement_prison_libraries_14Sept2014_Final2.pdf)
  - <sup>4</sup> De la Peña McCook, Kathleen. (2004). Public libraries and people in jail. *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, 44(1), 26-30. [http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1105&context=si\\_facpub](http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1105&context=si_facpub)
  - <sup>5</sup> Lilienthal, Stephen M. (2013, Feb 4). Prison and libraries: Public service inside and out. *Library Journal*. <http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2013/02/library-services/prison-and-public-libraries/>
  - <sup>6</sup> Correctional Service Canada. (2007).
  - <sup>7</sup> Lehmann, V. & Locke, J. (2005). *Guidelines for library services to prisoners*. 3rd Edition. IFLA Professional Reports, No. 92. <http://archive.ifla.org/VII/s9/nd1/iflapr-92.pdf>
  - <sup>8</sup> American Library Association. (2014). *Prisoners' right to read*. [www.ala.org/advocacy/prisoners-right-read](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/prisoners-right-read)
  - <sup>9</sup> Canadian Library Association/Canadian Association of Law Libraries. (2014).
  - <sup>9</sup> Curry, A., Wolf, K., Boutilier, S. & Chan, H. (2003). Canadian federal prison libraries: A national survey. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 35(3), 151.
  - <sup>10</sup> Toronto Public Library. (2015). Vision, mission & values. [www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/about-the-library/mission-vision-values/](http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/about-the-library/mission-vision-values/)
  - <sup>11</sup> Winnipeg Public Library. (2014). Mission statement and policies. <http://wpl.winnipeg.ca/library/libraryservices/missionpolicies.asp>
  - <sup>12</sup> Vancouver Public Library. (2015). Vision, mission, values. [www.vpl.ca/about/details/mission\\_vision\\_values](http://www.vpl.ca/about/details/mission_vision_values)

# Sample Procedure

For public libraries establishing service to correctional facilities:



# Allowable Materials Guidelines

**S**ecurity is a primary concern in correctional centres, and there are many guidelines to ensure the safety of correctional libraries. The main resource for Canadian prison libraries is the *National Guide for Institutional Libraries*.<sup>13</sup> This was developed by Correctional Service Canada and heavily influenced by guidelines from the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA).

It is recommended that librarians and corrections administration develop a policy for collection development, taking into account institutional rules and library ethics and values. The American Library Association's *Prisoners' Right to Read* provides a good benchmark:

Libraries and librarians serving individuals in correctional facilities may be required by federal, state, or local laws; administrative rules of parent agencies; or court decisions to prohibit material that instructs, incites, or advocates criminal action or bodily harm or is a violation of the law. Only those items that present an actual compelling and imminent risk to safety and security should be restricted.<sup>14</sup>

## Provincial Regulations

The most relevant provincial legislation surrounding correctional libraries is in the *Correctional Services Act*:<sup>15</sup>

### Possession of certain items prohibited

**47** The facility head may prohibit an inmate from possessing any publication, video or audiomaterial, film, computer program or other item that the facility head believes on reasonable grounds

(a) creates or could create a hostile environment in the custodial facility or is otherwise exploitive or discriminatory;

(b) is child pornography, or is obscene in that its dominant characteristic is the undue exploitation of sex, or of sex in conjunction with crime, horror, cruelty or violence; or

(c) promotes gang culture or a gang lifestyle.

## International Guidelines

The IFLA *Guidelines for Library Services to Prisoners* contains a section on collection development:<sup>16</sup>

8.5 Materials should be selected according to a collection management policy/plan that is based on the demographic composition of the prison population. The collection management policy/plan should state clearly that no censorship will be applied in the selection of materials, except in such circumstances where an individual title/item is known to cause a threat to prison security. The policy/plan shall address:

- the ethnic/cultural composition, ages, reading levels, educational backgrounds, and languages of the prison population
- the need for materials helpful in preparing prisoners for re-entry into the community, including information on community resources and support groups, job and housing opportunities, education, and job training options
- the need for reference and other materials supporting programs offered by the institution (drug & alcohol treatment, anger management, parenting, literacy tutoring, art & music, etc.)
- a process for recommending titles and a process for handling requests to remove titles from the collection
- procedures for weeding outdated and unnecessary materials from the collection
- a process for handling donations

## A Note about Commissioners' Directives

Provincial correctional centres are governed by the federal *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*, and the *Prisons and Reformatories Act*. At the provincial level, sector-wide policies are developed from these acts. The policies are then further developed into standing orders at individual facilities.

Commissioners' directives have been developed to help federal corrections staff apply The Corrections and Conditional Release Act (and its associated regulations) to their work. This means the directives do not apply directly to the work of provincial, correctional centre staff. However, they can provide a useful benchmark from which to evaluate prison library services. The relevant sections of the commissioners' directives are:

Commissioner's directive No. 720: Education programs and services for offenders, paragraphs 35 – 38.

Commissioner's directive No. 764: Access to materials and live entertainment, paragraphs 4 – 7.

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<sup>13</sup> Correctional Service Canada. (2012). *National guide for institutional libraries*. [http://cla.pwwebhost.com/conference/assets/sessions/I71\\_2012\\_National\\_Library\\_Guide.pdf](http://cla.pwwebhost.com/conference/assets/sessions/I71_2012_National_Library_Guide.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> American Library Association. (2014). *Prisoners' right to read*. [www.ala.org/advocacy/prisoners-right-read](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/prisoners-right-read)

<sup>15</sup> Province of Manitoba (2014). *The Correctional Services Act*. Retrieved from <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/c230e.php>

<sup>16</sup> Lehmann, V. & Locke, J. (2005). *Guidelines for library services to prisoners*. 3rd Edition. IFLA Professional Reports, No. 92. <http://archive.ifla.org/VII/s9/nd1/iflapr-92.pdf>



# Correctional Centres in Manitoba



## LEGEND

### Federal Institutions

- 1 Stony Mountain Institution

### Provincial Correctional Centres & Youth Centres

- 2 The Pas Correctional Centre
- 3 Dauphin Correctional Centre
- 4 Brandon Correctional Centre
- 5 Headingley Correctional Centre & Women's Correctional Centre (Headingley, MB)
- 6 Milner Ridge Correctional Centre
- 7 Winnipeg Remand Centre & Manitoba Youth Centre (Winnipeg, MB)
- 8 Agassiz Youth Centre

Map © 2002. Her Majesty the Queen in the Right of Canada, Natural Resources Canada. Retrieved from <http://atlas.gc.ca>.

### **Stony Mountain Institution**

- well-established library in an independent space; many different genres including French-language materials
- opportunity for inmates to visit twice a week; remote collections for segregated groups
- Book Clubs for Inmates programming (<http://bookclubsforinmates.com/>)

### **The Pas Correctional Centre**

- library service through The Pas Public Library (established April 2015)
- open 2 hours a week
- 1,000-book collection, housed in a small room off the gym

### **Dauphin Correctional Centre**

- collection of books in the common area; inmates can visit individually on request
- occasional funding from inmate fund; most books donated or purchased through the Rotary Club book fair
- need for low-literacy materials

### **Brandon Correctional Centre**

- library collection in a classroom; cart of books brought around to inmates
- interest in an institutional borrowing card for inmate requests
- need for literacy materials and vocational materials

### **Headingley Correctional Centre**

- library collection in an independent space; cart of books brought around to inmates
- each living location also has area set aside for books
- funds for purchase of cost-effective materials come from education budget
- hardcover books not allowed

### **Women's Correctional Centre**

- library collection of approximately 1,000 books in an independent space
- library programming, collections and readers' advisory provided by Manitoba Library Association's Prison Library Committee
- need for low-literacy materials and multilingual materials, particularly Vietnamese

### **Milner Ridge Correctional Centre**

- library collection of approximately 800 books in an independent space; inmates in minimum security can request access seven days a week, twice per day
- books acquired through donations from private citizens and the Beausejour library
- need for French-language materials and more current materials

### **Winnipeg Remand Centre**

- library collection in multi-purpose room, currently under construction
- library programming, collections and readers' advisory provided by the Manitoba Library Association's Prison Library Committee
- hardcover books not allowed

### **Manitoba Youth Centre**

- small library collection managed by teachers in one common area
- inconsistent funds from education budget for purchasing books
- need for books for late teens, with positive messages that do not glorify gang lifestyles or violence

### **Agassiz Youth Centre**

- library collection in area shared with offices and programming; students allowed to visit every two weeks for half-an-hour
- materials mainly donated – some from Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire, others from the Portage la Prairie Library
- need mainly for teen materials

# Guidelines for Library Staff & Volunteers

**C**orrectional facilities are highly regulated environments, and security considerations are in place to ensure the safety of inmates, staff and volunteers. It is important to remember, however, that inmates have the same emotional, physical and spiritual needs as other human beings. In an effort to build effective relationships, library staff and volunteers are advised to treat both inmates, and correctional staff, with respect.

Inmates are a socially excluded population in the most fundamental sense, and many will never have had experiences with public libraries. To achieve successful and sustainable library service, we recommend a community-led approach. In this model, librarians and library staff are partners who build relationships with patrons and learn through listening. The community-led approach ensures that public library outreach reaches the widest possible audience. For more information and guidelines, see [www.librariesincommunities.ca/resources/Community-Led\\_Libraries\\_Toolkit.pdf](http://www.librariesincommunities.ca/resources/Community-Led_Libraries_Toolkit.pdf).

The correctional environment may be unfamiliar to many. Nevertheless, volunteers and staff can succeed in building effective relationships if they follow the facility's rules, and act as role models for inmates. Inmates are just people who have had different experiences – even so, staff and volunteers must avoid being susceptible to manipulation.

Correctional centres may require staff and volunteers to go through a clearance and orientation process. It's important for librarians to discuss the specifics of this process with the centre's administration, and ensure that all staff and volunteers abide by it. Many facilities screen volunteers and staff for weapons or contraband. Most facilities also have a "nothing in, nothing out" policy. This means that staff and volunteers should never accept gifts, packages or letters from inmates, and should never bring anything in for inmates, other than what their position entails. When in doubt, they can ask the staff or the program coordinator.

One of the main considerations for working with inmates is to maintain confidentiality and privacy. A confidentiality agreement is required by many correctional centres to ensure that information about inmates is not circulated. For this reason, it is important not to ask about inmates' charges or convictions. However, if an inmate chooses to share this information, just listen without judging the person. Finally, it is crucial that staff and volunteers do not give out any personal information to inmates.

These guidelines were inspired by volunteer and orientation documents from the Women's Correctional Centre and the Winnipeg Remand Centre, and by the library philosophy of the MLA Prison Libraries Committee. Individual facilities will provide more information about specific procedures, according to their policies.

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## Social Media Resources

Prison librarian. <http://prisonlibrarian.blogspot.com/>

Library success: A best practices wiki. Services for the imprisoned. [www.libsuccess.org/index.php?title=Services for the Imprisoned%20](http://www.libsuccess.org/index.php?title=Services_for_the_Imprisoned%20)

Exploring prison librarianship: Prison librarianship resources. <https://exploringprisonlibrarianship.wordpress.com/prison-librarianship-resources/>

# Service Agreement Template

This agreement is between [*Name of Correctional Centre*] and [*Name of Library*].

The librarian is responsible for:

- screening items based on established rules or on the collection development policy
- ensuring that all staff, who will be working within the correctional centre, gain clearance on appropriate timelines
- planning and delivering programming, in consultation with corrections administration
- abiding by the rules and regulations of [*Name of Correctional Centre*], and ensuring that staff do the same

The correctional centre is responsible for:

- ensuring inmates sign a borrowing agreement to request materials from [*Name of Library*]
- providing and maintaining appropriate shelving and equipment, as agreed upon by [*Name of Correctional Centre*] and [*Name of Library*]
- providing appropriate criminal record checks, and orientation, to library staff and volunteers

This agreement between [*Name of Correctional Centre*] and [*Name of Library*] is subject to periodical reviews, which will take place every *X* months. The *X*-month probation period will end on [*Date*].

A note about inmate volunteers:

Inmate volunteers will be recommended by [*Name of Correctional Centre*], and trained by the [*Name of Library*] librarian. Library staff will inform correctional contacts of any issues or conflicts.

Signed this [*X*] day of [*Month*], [*Year*], by:

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[Representative of [*Name of Correctional Centre*]]

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[Representative of [*Name of Library*]]

# Inmate Agreement Template

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to take care of the library material I have requested. If library materials are lost, damaged or destroyed, I will pay the full cost of repairing or replacing the materials. I understand that my library privileges may be taken away if there is a continuing problem.

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Signature of Inmate

Date

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Signature of Corrections Representative

Date

# Professional Networks

Manitoba Library Association Prison Libraries Committee

[www.mla.mb.ca/content/prison-libraries-committee](http://www.mla.mb.ca/content/prison-libraries-committee)

Canadian Library Association Prison Libraries Network

[www.cla.ca/Content/NavigationMenu/CLAAatWork/Networks1/Prison\\_Libraries\\_Net.htm](http://www.cla.ca/Content/NavigationMenu/CLAAatWork/Networks1/Prison_Libraries_Net.htm)

ASCLA Library Service to Prisoners Forum

[www.ala.org/ascla/asclaourassoc/asclasections/lssps/lspf/lspf](http://www.ala.org/ascla/asclaourassoc/asclasections/lssps/lspf/lspf)

## The Public Library Services Branch

The Public Library Services Branch is a branch of the Manitoba government that is committed to supporting the extension of public library services across Manitoba. For more information on library services to correctional facilities, contact us at [pls@gov.mb.ca](mailto:pls@gov.mb.ca) or 1-800-252-9998. For more information on Public Library Services Branch programs, visit our website at [www.gov.mb.ca/chc/pls/index.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/pls/index.html).