



Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office

Department of Inmate Programs

Library Services Annual Report 2007



REPORT PRODUCED BY

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Mission
MCSO Libraries

*To provide a service that exposes
the inmate population to reading,
programming, and legal
information in an attempt to
ease tension and promote
Literacy.*

*Composed by the
Library Assistant Class of 1998*

2007 Highlights

📖 Collaboration was the operative word for 2007. Ever expanding and demanding needs for library services required additional resources and personnel. Thus, MCSO looked to PLCMC as a major partner. The results were more than successful providing a foundation for an ongoing partnership.

📖 After more than six months, the doors of the Jail Central Library reopened with a new librarian and an administrative support position. This is a milestone for library operations... full-time support staff to help serve the average daily population of Jail Central that can exceed 1500.

📖 The scope and depth of Freedom Reads, the youthful offender book club, continued to grow. Led by the teen technology librarian from ImaginOn, the group explored many new avenues of library services well beyond loaning books. Special events included a visit by young adult author, Nikki Grimes, compliments of Novello.

📖 The circulation software was moved from an MCSO locally based server to a web-based server hosted by the vendor InMagic.

📖 JN welcomed the first bi-lingual library assistant in March. She has proven to be an incredible asset to the library patrons and JN operations outside the library.

📖 A feature article in the Charlotte Observer was picked up by the American Library Association electronic newsletter and distributed nationwide.

History

Building a Collection In 1997, the doors of the MCSO libraries at Jail North and Jail Central opened to rooms of empty shelves. The signs on each door proclaiming LIBRARY were overstatements. Filling the shelves began with what would become one of many adventures. Seated between two deputies in a truck, I as the single library employee, headed to Allendale Prison in Fairfax, SC.

Allendale was a contract warehouse operation for Penguin Books. Inmates processed returns from bookstores. Because they could not be resold, the books were distributed to nonprofits and other detention facilities. Numerous titles and hundreds of copies were available with one caveat, the books were pre-boxed and potluck; NO selection process.

Thus, as we melted in the 90+degree heat of August, inmates loaded the truck with pallet after pallet of boxes. Some were destined for a new jail in Fort Mill, SC, but most would arrive at Jail North.



Inmates dove into the boxes and began shelving the books. Most were Puffin Classics but at least the shelves were beginning to fill.

During the next 12 years, the collection would grow to the current size of approximately 10,000 volumes. Weeding and new acquisitions create a balance and the collection continues to hover at the 10,000 level. The primary source of resources is the generosity of donors. However, some nonfiction is purchased as are all audio books and videos.

Foreign Language Just as the population of Spanish-speaking residents has grown in the community, so too does the inmate population reflect this change in community demographics. The limited availability of funds and publications in Spanish has made building this collection a challenge. In addition to fiction and nonfiction, English Language Proficiency (ELP) learning materials are on hand to supplement classes taught by Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC).

Delivery of Services How to provide services to the patrons, i.e. inmates, became an evolutionary process. Demographics, number of patrons, building architecture and operating within a detention facility added multiple layers to the planning process. Several methodologies were tried before final procedures were established. Although, good customer services requires that nothing be set in stone. A brief discussion of major services will be presented in independent sections of this report.

Staff Development During the earliest stages of library growth, only one full-time librarian was employed. Therefore, the two libraries, JN and JC, were open alternating weeks. In 2003, a second full-time librarian was approved and when filled, both libraries were able to operate 40 hours/week. Part-time library assistants at each location provided clerical/circulation assistance until 2007.

Primary Services

Leisure Reading

Jail North

Although JN houses only males, the different age groups, youthful offenders and adults, access the library differently. Book carts function as in-house bookmobiles. Adult housing units, known as pods, have a cart and a cart attendant who serves as the pod circulation clerk. Carts are in use for approximately 30 days before they are restocked with new titles. Pods compete to be named Book Cart of the Month because the winning pod will receive a cart, twice the size of those pictured, loaded with the newest acquisitions.



Although a cross section of fiction can be assembled for the carts, a cross section of subjects is not possible. Therefore, adult males may request to visit the library to browse for nonfiction or audio books. Fiction must come from the cart.

Housing units for youthful offenders were consolidated into one unit and the schedule for library visits was reevaluated. Due to conflicts with mandatory school attendance, youthful offender library visits were moved to Tuesday nights.

Youth may select either fiction or nonfiction. Popular subjects are poetry and relationships including parenting. Usually, the population of youthful offenders averages 100 young men and about 70-80% voluntarily request to visit the library during any given week.



Youthful Offenders, attired in green, browse the nonfiction collection.

Jail Central houses approximately 2000 inmates making it four times the size of Jail North. No browsing is possible. Therefore, all books are: 1) requested using a printed catalog; 2) pulled from the shelves by library helpers (inmates); and 3) delivered to individuals in their housing units. Although slow and labor intensive, books are eventually in the hands of readers. Only books in print are available at Jail Central. Readers at JC include adult men and women and a few female youthful offenders. Thus, the collection at JC includes titles and subjects related to women's issues.

Law Library - JN & JC

This service is provided consistently between the two branches. Anyone wishing to use the law library must submit a written request. Those who are approved to come are notified in writing of the day and time of their appointment. Most appointments are 2.5 hours but users may leave earlier if their questions are answered.

Resources are in print and online through Lexis.com. Because MCSO houses both state and federal inmates, the libraries have all statutory and case law at both levels. The collection is supplemented with treatises on such topics as Search and Seizure, Substantive Criminal Law, Immigration, and Prosecution and Defense of Criminal Conspiracy Cases.

Librarians began using OMS to track law library requests and responses. Enhanced report writing is anticipated in early 2008.



Legal resources are available in print and online

In addition to library appointments, information can be delivered in the form of document printouts or books taken to high security housing units. Like patrons in public libraries, inmate users are not necessarily familiar with legal formats and terminology.

Library Electives

Classes that emphasize reading as a tool to improve life are administered by the libraries. Although, participants become better readers and potentially perpetual readers the classes do not teach or tutor literacy directly.

PLCMC Partnerships

In March, the handshake of partnership was extended to the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (PLCMC). The negotiations began with a meetings and tours including Charles Brown, library director, and Patty Norman, chairman, Library Board of Trustees. All were enthusiastic about Jail North and Jail Central as locations for outreach programs. However, Jail North is the predominant location due to accessibility and classroom space.

Because this was new territory, how many PLCMC staff members would respond to the call for program leaders was an unknown. The response was almost overwhelming and staggered schedules were necessary to blend with other established program schedules. New program leaders were asked to focus on young adult males 18 - 24 because they are a somewhat lost population between youthful offenders and older adult males.

Seminars

Most classes were designed as short term compact seminars to introduce participants to new topics and technology. This design helped reach those who are detained by MCSO for an intermediate amount of time. New topics offered included:

- ◆ Poetry I & II - November, repeat in 2008
- ◆ Games & Technology - October, repeat in 2009
- ◆ Storytelling (scheduled for Jan. 08)
- ◆ Meditation (scheduled for April. 08)
- ◆ Art History (scheduled for 08)

Dream it Do it – Moving into virtual worlds. Using Teen Second Life as a platform, Global Kids (www.globalkids.org) and Youth Venture (www.genv.net) have joined to promote teen awareness of improved health and access to healthcare. “The initiative supports young people to launch their own sustainable ventures that create lasting benefit to their communities. This project is supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (www.rjwf.org)

Global Kids was founded in New York City to reach urban youth in the public schools. The moderators working through PLCMC are very interested in ideas that may be developed by MCSO youthful offenders. All necessary groundwork was prepared in late 2007 to prepare for a first quarter 2008 kickoff.

Reading Fathers

Building on a very successful past, the format and presentation for RF was revamped in early 2007. Eight classes, previously spread over 4 weeks, were consolidated into two weeks thus assuring a higher completion rate. Additionally, classes were expanded to include three specific audiences, English, Spanish and Teen dads. Following the successful completion of the class, participants may read to their child on a Sunday afternoon. Contact visits within the jail are a rare and special event.

The Reading Fathers program prepares, encourages and supports fathers in reading aloud to their young children. The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for a child's eventual success as a reader is the introduction of reading aloud to them at an early age. If a child is old enough to be spoken to, then child is old enough to be read to, according to Steve Newman, program moderator.

Book Clubs

Freedom Reads – This group is composed of young men ages 16 & 17. They request to be members and may remain in the group as long as they are at Jail North and contribute positively to the discussion. Meetings are the first and third Wednesdays of each month. The scope of the “book club” expanded to include many activities available through ImaginOn as part of an effort to move the youth from the street corner to the library. Participants are usually limited to 8 young men and a waiting list is never ending.



Libros en Espanol - The target audience for this reading group is adult Spanish speaking males. All books and discussion are in Spanish. Leadership for this group is provided through a partnership with PLCMC. Ten men participate for eight sessions. At the conclusion of a session, the books are recycled and a new session begins with new participants.

Ladies First – This is the oldest book group and the only one at Jail Central.



Members gather in JC library twice each month.

During 2007, two very enthusiastic and qualified community volunteers continued to provide stable and consistent leadership. Selected titles range from classics, *The Great Gatsby*, to *Tuesday's with Morrie*. Film interpretations of the books expand the scope of the group's discussion. Ladies First was established in 1999.

Vocational Training - Library Assistant

Currently, this is the only program at MCSO that trains inmates to qualify for an existing job opportunity. The curriculum is based upon the requirements for a Library Assistant I at the public library. Participants attend a 20-hour course and must pass a three-part test before receiving a certificate. Successful graduates are interviewed for positions in the MCSO libraries as library helpers. During 2007, inmate library helpers at JC & JN supplied 400 hours of service valued at \$5000. The average weekly assistance equals 7.6 hours because library helpers can only work when library staff members are present to supervise.

Statistical Summary

A comparison between 2006 and 2007 statistics is more like apples to oranges than apples to apples for several reasons. Tracking loans and borrowers was a challenge at best for reasons highlighted below. Also the different environments of Jail Central and Jail North dictate the use of very different service methodology.

Jail Central

- 📖 Closed for the first half of the year while a new librarian and support staff were recruited and hired.
- 📖 Law library services resumed in August one floor per week, reaching full service in September
- 📖 Leisure reading services were rolled out in a similar fashion and full service was in place by October

Jail North

- 📖 Mid-year the housing structure was revamped to help alleviate overcrowding. Youthful Offenders were merged into one major pod with a smaller unit for overflow and orientation.
- HB formerly for YO, became an adult unit
- Workers from HL and HM were merged

Leisure Reading

	2006	2007	Notes
Jail North			
Individual. Adult borrowers	337	555	
Loans	*2883	1298	
Book Cart users	3677	3931	
Loans	11604	11418	
Young adult borrowers @ JN	224	254	
Loans	*2387	1482	
Loss rate			
Jail Central			
Adults	2512	2552	
Loans	9330	4936	2006 = 11 mo. service, 2007 = 4.5 mo. service
Grand Totals			
Library Patrons	6750	7292	
Circulation Loans	26204	19134	

Law Library

	2006	2007
Jail North		
Requests received	597	393
Appointments	308	217
Doc. Del	109	
Received no service	180	176
Jail Central - data represents 4 months of operation in 2007**		
Requests	1383**	1172
Appointments	525	441
Doc. Delivery	264	
Received no service	594	731

Program Participation

Reading Fathers

Youthful Offenders	2 teen dads
Adults	29
Children	32 (were read to by their dads on a Sunday afternoon)

Freedom Reads book club* 35 young adult men

Ladies First Book club* 26 adult women

Vocational Training Classes 6 adult males @ JN
no classes taught at JC due to extended closure

Poetry I 8 young adult men (18 - 24)

Games 6 adult men

** Books clubs are open ended and therefore, membership is fluid and numbers represent all who participated throughout the year. Most club membership averages about 8-10 at any one time.*

Guidelines for Donations to Library Services

Thank you for considering the libraries at the Mecklenburg County jails as recipients of your book donations. Reading is an extremely important part of an inmate's life both as a learning experience and a pastime. Therefore, your donations are a significant part of our efforts to make as many books as possible available.

To guarantee the best use of your donation and that we adhere to the restrictions of an institutional library, the following criteria are suggestions for evaluating your donation prior to transferring the materials to us:

Types of books accepted:

- a) Adult fiction including bestsellers, mysteries and westerns.
- b) Adult nonfiction including biographies, history, philosophy and humor
- c) Juvenile and young adult fiction and nonfiction are desperately needed
- d) Paperbacks or hardbacks are acceptable
- e) Audio books
- f) Books in Spanish are desperately needed.
- g) Think about adopting one of our book clubs:
 - Ladies First Book Club at JC. Contact the JC Librarian at 353-0926
 - Spanish Mens Book Club at JN
 - Young Adult Book Club at JN

Please inspect the book for: [Books should be in new or near new condition](#)

- a) torn covers
- b) torn pages
- c) writing or highlighting
- d) unglued spines
- e) water damage
- f) brittle, yellow, cracking pages
- g) unpleasant smells
- h) personal items - name, address labels, old letters, newspaper clippings, bookmarks etc.
- h) Mold or mildew - These organisms can spread to other books and potentially damage the entire collection. Also as they become airborne, they create a respiratory hazard for library workers.

Books not accepted

- a) Textbooks are not useful. Specific learning materials are purchased for the educational classes.
- b) Harlequin brand or other similar romance novels – we have enough
- c) Out-of-date non-fiction, e.g. *How to Invest*, copyright 1975.
- c) Readers Digest condensed novels – unless within the last two years

How to Donate Books

1. Contact the MCSO librarian at 336-3565
2. The content of the collection, titles and authors will be reviewed during a phone conversation to determine if they meet the needs of the library.
3. Jail North, 5235 Spector Drive, is the designated depository for all donated books.
4. Please call in advance of your delivery to ensure that someone is available to receive your donation.
5. Donors of books will receive a letter itemizing quantity and condition of books that are donated. Library staff will not place a value on book donations.

Library Fund

The library has a designated account for monetary donations. If you or your organization would like to make a contribution that can be used for purchases identified by library staff as specific needs, please contact the *Library Manager* at 336-3565. Monetary donations are tax deductible and will be acknowledged with a letter.

How to Volunteer

Contact the MCSO Library Manager at 704-336-3565 to discuss opportunities. Needs may vary with time of year and current inmate population. Please note that all volunteers are subject to a criminal background check.