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# Books Open Worlds for People Behind Bars: Library Services in Prison as Exemplified by the Münster Prison Library, Germany's "Library of the Year 2007"

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## ABSTRACT

The prison library at the Münster Correctional Facility was named "Library of the Year 2007" by the German Library Association. An examination of this specific library in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) provides insight into the operation and services of prison libraries in Germany. This article will hopefully inspire readers to get involved in library work with a social focus and bring attention to the new advocacy organization Prison Library Support Group (Förderverein Gefangenenbüchereien e.V.). Besides opening the door to a world normally closed to the public, this article seeks to sensitize the reader to the microcosm of human experience that exists behind prison walls.

## PRELIMINARY NOTE

The purpose of this article is to provide insight into an otherwise closed world, which is the prison environment, through the example of the prison library at the Münster Correctional Facility. This description shows both the library's ordinary and award-winning features, as well as its limitations. The expression "books open worlds" is applicable not only to those behind bars, but also for you, the reader, as you look into an alien world. Through books and audiovisual materials, prisoners can remain connected to the world outside the prison walls. They can make new discoveries that help them spend their time productively while in custody. Ultimately, books and other library resources help them better reintegrate into society after release.

## HISTORY OF PRISON LIBRARIES AS A MIRROR OF THE PRISON EXPERIENCE

The history of prison libraries in Germany is intrinsically linked to the history of the penitentiary system as well as the history of libraries in society. The evolution of prison libraries reflects the spirit of the times. They are witnesses to history.<sup>1</sup>

In the nineteenth century, members of the clergy were in charge of prison libraries, which contained mainly religious materials, organized according to denomination. Materials depicting crime were prohibited. Prisoners were encouraged to read and discuss these religious texts. The main purpose of reading was considered to be the (positive) impact this activity would have on the reader.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, prison teachers have generally managed the facility libraries. In the 1903 administrative regulations of the city of Münster in Westphalia, the former imperial state, the following reference is made to its prison libraries: "Each prisoner is normally given one library book per week from a teacher." In addition to providing support for the pursuit of reading, the teachers worked hard to increase the literacy skills of the inmates.

Occasionally, the library community on the outside reached into the prisons. It was not, however, until professional librarians were employed in the prisons that the institution libraries began to develop in a professional and consistent manner. These librarians were then also able to establish themselves as a distinct interest group with representation in professional associations.

In most German federal states, unfortunately, the prisons do not employ professional librarians, a situation that makes it nearly impossible to share information and experiences. No systematic information about prison libraries in other states is available. Full-time professional librarians with academic degrees are employed in only three of the sixteen federal states: in Bremen, Hamburg, and North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW). Comments from the general library community about this situation are rare, and the prison staff who manage the libraries in the institutions are often on their own. Prison library management at the regional level exists only in a few places. On occasion, prison staff contact local public libraries or library systems for guidance and advice.

Access to books offers prisoners the opportunity for constructive leisure activities. The prison libraries serve three purposes: recreation, education, and personal development of the prison population. The reading of books and the use of audiovisual materials give the inmates the opportunity to direct their thoughts away from the prison environment and create their own emotional space. The audiovisual materials are a source of information and education on a variety of subjects; they also improve language skills and increase self-awareness. A collection of relevant

audiovisual resources provides people behind bars with a certain degree of cultural freedom and, at the same time, a small amount of privacy.

### LEGAL RIGHTS OF PRISONERS TO ACCESS LIBRARIES

Each of the sixteen federal states in Germany administers its own prison system and is responsible for overseeing the incarceration of adults and juvenile offenders in both detention centers (preconviction) and correctional facilities (postconviction).<sup>2</sup> The purpose of a criminal sentence is to make the offender capable of living a responsible and crime-free life after release from prison and to protect the community from further crime.<sup>3</sup>

During the term of imprisonment, every offender has the right to access a library during his/her free time.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, almost all correctional facilities in Germany have a library. The organizational structure and resources of these libraries are not further specified in the code. The federal government structure of Germany makes each of the sixteen states autonomous. Research conducted in 2007 found that nine of the sixteen states did not mention the requirement to provide a library in the drafts of their new juvenile detention laws, in spite of a mandate by the European Prison Rules. Article 28 states explicitly: "Every institution must provide an adequately stocked library accessible to all prisoners. It should offer a variety of books and other materials, suitable for both entertainment and education" (Art. 28.5); "Wherever possible, the prison library should be managed in collaboration with public libraries" (Art. 28.6).

As the result of various research findings, the president of the German Library Association (Deutscher Bibliotheksverband) in September 2007 urged the justice ministries of each federal state to incorporate a mandate for prison libraries into their new prison legislation. It would be helpful if members of the regional library associations would follow this recommendation and actively advocate making library materials available to incarcerated persons. An examination of the extent to which this mandate for libraries has actually been adopted in new federal state laws has still to be conducted in 2010.

### THE PRISON LIBRARY AS MODEL FOR SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE LIBRARY SERVICES

Socially responsible library services are aimed at people who live in disadvantaged circumstances and who need special assistance. These groups include the elderly, hospital patients, people with visual disabilities or other physical disabilities, as well as incarcerated persons. Socially responsible libraries see their mission as ensuring access for all citizens to information resources in all formats.<sup>5</sup> This "social" work happens both inside and outside the library. UNESCO (1976) defines the functions of socially responsible library work in its "Recommendation on Participation by the People

at Large in Cultural Life and Their Contribution to It." The basic principle is that all social groups must be afforded the opportunity to pursue cultural interests and be involved in cultural activities. This philosophy clearly encompasses libraries as they endeavor to fulfill their mission for cultural and social inclusion.

The mission of the German public library system to guarantee access to information for all citizens presents a constant challenge as society changes and evolves. To succeed in providing equitable services to users with special needs requires, besides political support, skilled library staff and adequate funding. Since the closing of the German Library Institute (Deutsches Bibliotheksinstitut) and the subsequent dissolution of the Commission for Special User Groups (Kommission für besondere Benutzergruppen), the social role of libraries is rarely discussed in the professional library community and has been taken to heart by only a few dedicated individuals. Additionally, lack of resources over the last few years means that public libraries are struggling to provide adequate services, and programs and initiatives for special user groups have been eliminated or substantially reduced. Kaden and Kindling (2007) includes a series of articles that provide a good overview of current library work with a social agenda.

The expression "books open worlds" is especially applicable to the prison environment, where the world is a strictly limited space, an actual microcosm of society (Thompson, 1997). It is a place associated with the dark side of society. Most people prefer to look the other way when real stories from prison appear in the news; they would rather keep their own illusion of prison life, which is mostly based on movies and crime fiction.<sup>6</sup>

Incarcerated people attach great importance to their prison library, a fact that is reflected by usage data and reader surveys: approximately 80 percent of prisoners are regular library patrons. The library in the Münster Correctional Facility strives to meet the many diverse needs of this population. The library is deeply committed to the principles of socially responsible user services and can be considered a model library in that respect.<sup>7</sup>

## PRISON LIBRARIES: THE NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA (NRW) MODEL

Each federal state in Germany keeps its own data on individuals in its custody.<sup>8</sup> The rising number of incarcerated people (70,252 in year 2000; 78,664 in 2005; 79,713 in 2008) must be distributed equitably among approximately 200 penal institutions.<sup>9</sup> Tasks associated with the daily operation of the library are generally performed by inmate workers under staff supervision. In all of Germany, there are only four full-time prison librarians. In addition to Hamburg and Bremen, there are two positions in NRW (at the Cologne Correctional Facility and the Münster Correctional Facility).

Until 2007, the NRW correctional system was administered at three separate levels: the Ministry of Justice, the county justice department, and the individual institution penitentiaries.<sup>10</sup> In 2008, the county justice department was dissolved, and a two-tiered structure was introduced. The Prison Libraries Department in Cologne and Münster was placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice.

Approximately 18,000 prisoners are housed in the thirty-six state correctional facilities. About 180 youthful offenders are housed in the five juvenile facilities. In 2007, foreign nationals (from more than 100 countries) accounted for 28 percent of the prison population. The female population is about 5 percent of the total.

Library services in the NRW prisons are founded on modern principles of public librarianship, and both library management and user services follow accepted public library practices, if at all possible, within the restrictions of the prison environment. The NRW prisons have about sixty separate library service points, each with a collection ranging in size from 1,000 to 12,000 items. The total of all collections stands at approximately 240,000 items. The prison library represents one option within the institution's total recreational program. It is used for entertainment, personal development, continuing education, and independent study. A specific purpose of the prison is to encourage the inmates to read, to use library materials in creative ways, and to make them lifelong library users.

The prison library can be considered a special subtype of public libraries in its role to provide access for incarcerated people to informational materials. The NRW prison libraries use identical management software. A plan exists to convert all the sites to a standardized commercial integrated library system in the near future, which will require new library policies and operational procedures.

Responsibility for library operations and services falls into three levels: inmate library assistants perform the practical tasks of daily operation on-site (level I); prison staff with various professional backgrounds supervise the library at each site (level II); and two librarians from the Prison Library Department coordinate the management and services of all the libraries (level III).<sup>11</sup>

#### *Level I: Inmate Library Assistants*

The inmate library workers have limited access to computers and information technology. In their role as library assistants, they perform collection maintenance tasks, such as inventory, technical processing, and cataloging, and they handle circulation and data collection. They are permitted to turn the computers on and off but can only use the library software. They are able to process bibliographic records, as well as patron information.

The inmate assistants perform circulation tasks under the guidance and supervision of civilian staff. Generally the policy of open stacks and browsing is adhered to, and in the institutions that have free inmate movement, the inmates can select their own materials. In higher-security prisons with restricted movement, the inmates are not allowed to visit the library and must submit written requests to obtain library materials. In these cases, the inmates have access to a print "catalog" that contains short annotations or reviews.

The library assistants also perform necessary repairs of library materials and prepare reports of damage. The library collection is subject to extreme wear and damage. The library enforces strict rules on the handling of materials and requires restitution for lost or damaged items. The library assistants also perform custodial tasks in the library. The library assistants are involved in activities to promote library services and recruit new users, both through user surveys and simple word-of-mouth publicity. Similarly, they encourage suggestions for new acquisitions or library programs.

#### *Level II: Library Supervisors*

The library supervisors are prison employees who coordinate local library operations and services in collaboration with the prison administration, management services, and program specialists (social workers, educators, psychologists, health workers, and clergy).

The library supervisors at each site select, train, and supervise the inmate library assistants. It is difficult to find capable library workers. This is a major problem, especially for the juvenile facilities and for institutions with a high turnover rate of staff and inmates. The quality of library services therefore varies according to the skills and dependability of the available labor pool. Strict operational procedures and professional standards are designed to minimize this problem.

Library supervisors define the functional parameters for library use and services. They alone are authorized to make decisions regarding the functions of the library system software, such as loan periods, number of items allowed to be checked out, holds on materials, and hardware settings.

Library supervisors are responsible for inventory and weeding of the collection, and for the purchase of new materials. The library assistants are encouraged to participate in these decisions.

Finally, library supervisors are responsible for providing the necessary library supplies and equipment. They perform this work in close coordination and consultation with the professional library staff at the Prison Library Department. The departmental librarians can then directly address individual concerns and/or coordinate a response to all the institution libraries.

*Level III: Professional Librarians of the Prison Library Department*

*History and Development.* More than twenty years ago, North Rhine-Westphalia took the initiative to establish two professional librarian positions within the NRW prison system, following the recommendation of a report by the German Library Institute to develop and support socially engaged library services.<sup>12</sup> The two positions were placed in two separate locations: Cologne in the Rhineland in 1986, and Hamm in Westphalia-Lippe in 1988. This positive step led to the appointment of library supervisors in each of the thirty-seven correctional facilities, the adoption of guidelines for prison library services, and the gradual development of plans to implement or enhance these services.

Since 1992, the focus of these positions has been on the integration of prison library services with community library services and the recognition by the library profession of these libraries as legitimate libraries. Both positions are members of the North Rhine-Westphalia Library Association (Verband der Bibliotheken des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen) and Section 8 of the German Library Association. In 1998, after years of effort, a standardized information technology solution for the processing of library records was implemented, and several new prison libraries and library premises were constructed.<sup>13</sup>

Since the introduction of a CD collection at the Detmold correctional facility in 1994, the holdings of audiovisual materials have increased and been standardized in many of the prison libraries. The collections of foreign language materials have also been enhanced to meet the needs of the growing number of non-German speaking inmates.

*Responsibilities of the Professional Librarians.* The two librarians have workplaces at the Cologne Correctional Facility and the Münster Correctional Facility, respectively. Only 20 percent of their work is allocated to on-site management of the library; the remaining 80 percent is allocated to responsibilities at the regional or central levels of the prison system.

Their main responsibility areas are

- monitoring the management of library resources;
- providing guidance and assistance to site library supervisors and inmate library assistants;
- providing basic and ongoing training to library supervisors, conducting staff meetings, maintaining contact with the outside library community, and conducting public relations activities (internal public relations involve efforts to adopt uniform library standards throughout the correctional system; external public relations involve efforts to integrate the prison library system into the professional community and to create awareness of the accomplishments of prison libraries);
- assisting with collection development and the management of book donations, review of material use (turnover rate, circulation rate), cata-

logging, and, when required, central purchasing of materials (site library supervisors are allowed to procure new library materials themselves but may ask for help from the professional librarians);

- promoting reading activities and the creative use of library materials through programs such as author readings and other literary events;
- coordinating the collection of library data and the production of reports.

#### INTERACTION BETWEEN THE PRISON LIBRARY DEPARTMENT AND THE MÜNSTER CORRECTIONAL FACILITY LIBRARY

In 2003, the location of the Prison Library Department was moved from the office in Hamm to the Münster Correctional Facility, and the management of the Münster prison library was assigned to the department librarian at the same time. Since then, the prison library at Münster has been under the management of one of the two Prison Library Department librarians. This arrangement has made it possible to totally renovate the site library, both conceptually and physically, within a period of two years.

With the transfer of site library management to the departmental librarian, the library took on a role of higher importance at the regional level. In Münster, there are many opportunities for cooperation among university libraries, religious libraries, and the public library. The departmental librarian seized these opportunities and gradually built a multi-type network consisting of the prison library, other types of libraries, and various cultural organizations.

#### A LOOK INTO THE WORLD OF PRISON LIBRARIES THROUGH THE WINDOW OF THE MÜNSTER CORRECTIONAL FACILITY LIBRARY

##### *The 157-year-old Münster Correctional Facility*

The Münster Correctional Facility was built in 1853 and is one of the oldest prisons in Germany.<sup>14</sup> With its star-shaped design—the panopticon—it represents an architectural curiosity and is protected as an architectural heritage building (see fig. 1). The prison houses 528 male inmates. A certain number of these are under investigation for rule infractions and are held in closed custody. Most are held in the general population and can choose to participate in various programs and activities, including studies to earn a high school equivalency diploma. The prison has thirteen places for inmates in treatment for substance abuse. Approximately 310 inmates are employed in bookbinding, carpentry, and locksmithing work, as well as jobs in the library, business office, maintenance department, kitchen, and general housekeeping. The Münster correctional facility has a total of 280 employees, who work in the areas of security (73 percent), facility operations (9 percent), professional services (9 percent), and management (9 percent).





Figure 1. Entrance to Münster Correctional Facility (Photo: Peschers)

### *High-Quality Innovation*

*Difficult Circumstances and Limited Resources.* The Munster prison library has been able to develop high-quality services and innovative projects under difficult conditions and with few resources. The departmental librarian spends only 20 percent of his time on activities directly related to the site library.<sup>15</sup> Almost all routine tasks are performed by inmate library assistants. This requires a willingness by management staff to make compromises and accept imperfection, as they work with unskilled and inexperienced assistants who are limited in the tasks they may perform. Additionally, the Prison Library Department must comply with all the rules and regulations of the prison administration, and it must operate under increasingly greater competition for available financial and human resources. Thus, many challenges still remain in the library development area. Interdepartmental and cross-departmental collaboration also need improvement. Even so, “libraries in prisons remain an important tool for social rehabilitation” (Bundesvereinigung Deutscher Bibliotheksverbände, 1984, p. 31).

*Successful Renovation and Higher Quality.* The redesign and renovation of the Münster prison library occurred as new development opportunities presented themselves in the wake of the transfer of the library administration



Figure 2. Prison library located centrally between two cell units (Photo: Aperdannier)

to the Prison Library Department. The warden was also very supportive of the renovation proposal. The vision for the new library was inspired by the example of the Münster City Library, an innovative, effective, and modern library, located in a historic section of town. The architecture firm Bolles+Wilson (<http://www.bolles-wilson.com>) began the renovation in 2004. Their blueprint for the library space was groundbreaking and opened up unimaginable opportunities that would represent a “new era of quality” (Zeit-Stiftung & Deutsche Bibliotheksverband e.V., 2007). The state and the institution provided solid financial backing, which was supplemented by donations from about one hundred contributors. These contributions were indicative of the wide support enjoyed by the library, both inside the institution and in the Münster community.

The new library illustrates, both in the literal and figurative sense, that libraries do indeed open new worlds. The room opens into a large, colorful space (see fig. 2). The visitor has the same experience when leaving the library or browsing the stacks, due to the clever use of mirrors, which enlarge the room while creating a kaleidoscopic effect. Library materials are arranged on three levels, on open shelves, moving carts, and low cabinets. This “railway station for literary travels” (“Bahnhof der Bücher,” in the words of Geoffrey Wilson) is designed to lead the patron out of the confined and dreary monotony of prison life and into distant imaginary worlds, where opportunities for learning abound. The new library has indeed become a true “apothecary for the soul.”

Library patrons from almost fifty different countries will encounter books in thirty languages. Users with reading difficulties will find appropriate materials for their needs. In addition to comics, easy-to-read titles are available through the support of the Literacy Association (Bundesverband Alphabetisierung). So books open new worlds for weak readers from many nations and offer new life opportunities.

The new display arrangement, on the one hand, requires patrons to locate materials themselves in a space that is larger than it appears. On the other hand, they will no longer be overwhelmed by a large number of items in a single location; rather, the interface allows for easy access. The simple layout illustrates the design principle that "less is more."

Finally, the library collection was carefully updated and enhanced with new popular and relevant materials. Each year, 10–15 percent of the collection is replaced with new and current titles. In March 2010, the average age of the nearly 10,000-item collection was six years. The library collection has been kept up-to-date through government funds and frequent donations of books that arrive in nearly new condition.

Open stack access is not provided in all prison libraries but has been the norm in the Münster prison library for more than twenty years. Recently, the option to access the library catalog remotely on an intranet was added when computers were installed at various locations in all the NRW correctional facilities. The inmates can now conduct their own research.

### *Built for the Future*

*Yearly Development Plan.* Each year, a library development plan with specific objectives is formulated in cooperation between the librarian and the warden, and each year the outcomes of the previous objectives are evaluated. One of the objectives for 2005 was the renovation of the library; in 2007, an objective was the application for "Library of the Year"; since then, an objective has been the gradual use of the 30,000 EUR award. The library is constantly evolving and changing but remains an important resource for social rehabilitation of the prison population.

*Prison Library Support Group.* In December 2006, the Prison Library Support Group (Förderverein Gefangenenbüchereien e.V.) was founded in Münster as an advocacy organization to support library services in juvenile and adult correction facilities.<sup>16</sup> This significant event took place following the completion of the successful library renovation inside the Münster Correctional Facility. The founding of the Prison Library Support Group represents a positive development at a time of almost nonexistent library budgets and lack of staff at both the juvenile and adult facility libraries. The Prison Library Support Group has eighty members, representing prison staff, judges, lawyers, book dealers, and authors.<sup>17</sup> The group is registered as an official nonprofit organization.

The purpose of the group is to support the development, education, and welfare of incarcerated people through enhancement of the prison libraries. The contributions of the group members may consist of public relations activities, funding for the collections, data processing services, library design services, reading promotion, and participation in library programs. Honorary members include the author Günter Kunert, formerly of the GDR, and the author Jiri Grusa, who was imprisoned in the former Czechoslovakia and who later became president of PEN International. Federal President Horst Köhler recognized the Prison Library Support Group when he invited the chair of the association to his New Year reception in January 2010 in Berlin.

The Prison Library Support Group is planning a program at the 2010 Frankfurt Book Fair that includes events focusing on the importance of library services to incarcerated persons. An exhibit will feature artwork and literary works that have been posted on the website "Dreaming of a Book-Tree on a Wall" (<http://www.libertree.eu>). These contributions are coming from many different people in various countries and are gradually being translated.

*Special Events.* The renovated library at the Münster Correctional Facility is ideally suited for cultural events. Some of these programs have included well-known authors and artists, and many more events are planned. These events have generated considerable interest from the press and the general public:<sup>18</sup>

- At the first anniversary of the new library on November 13, 2006, Bernhard Schlink visited the Münster Correctional Facility; he read from his bestseller *The Reader* and led an active discussion with the inmates, which was covered by the prison newspaper and the local press.
- On the occasion of World Book and Copyright Day on April 23, 2007, there was a reading for young people by Wolfgang Hohlbein at the Münster City Library, followed by a similar event for the inmates inside the prison.
- For Library Night in North Rhine-Westphalia on October 26, 2007, and with the theme "Crime Scene Library," the Münster prison library hosted an event moderated by Jo Bausch,<sup>19</sup> in which one hundred inmates from three prisons and members of the Prison Library Support Group read from their own work or from titles in the library's collection. Steffi Steffan's band played rock music.
- In October 2008, the author Erich Loest, who was a political prisoner in the GDR between 1957 and 1964, came from Leipzig to read for the first time after his imprisonment in the prison and in the Münster City Library.
- In November 2009, Jiri Grusa spoke with students from a local school and also with prisoners after a reading in the Münster Correctional Facility.

*With the Future in Mind.* In January 2006, an agreement between the Münster Correctional Facility Library and the Münster City Library was signed to enable the prison library to borrow books from the municipal library, when needed, and to have access to its reference services. Staff and trainees from the Münster City Library and prison employees have visited each others' library. The 2007 activities for World Book and Copyright Day and for Library Night were jointly organized. The director of the Münster City Library, who is a member of Prison Library Support Group, supported the application for the "Library of the Year" award with a recommendation letter. The library at the Münster Correctional Facility is a member of the recently established group, Friends of Münster City Library (Freundeskreis der Stadtbibliothek Münster).

#### *Computer Technology*

Despite certain restrictions on prisoners' access to information technology, the libraries in all NRW prisons have been using a computer application, developed in-house, for many years to manage their collections. Standardized hardware and a standard operating system (Windows XP) have also been deployed. The replacement the existing software with the commercial system Bibliotheca 2000, which is widely used in Germany, has started.

Stand-alone computers currently give inmates limited search access to the library catalog.<sup>20</sup> Most inmates, however, require training and assistance in order to use this system successfully, and the search option is not widely used, due to technical and organizational limitations. In 2006, the library catalog was made available for the first time to all staff; they can now conduct their own searches and also assist the inmates.

*Cooperation with the Prison Education Department.* The "Library as a Partner in Education" project, recently introduced by the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, inspired a new level of cooperation between the prison education department and the library. Teachers from other facilities also became involved. The education department offers inmates the opportunity to complete two types of secondary school diplomas (Hauptschule and Realschule) as well as the highest secondary school diploma (Abitur). School classes include an introduction to the library and its resources, so the inmates are able to use these materials effectively. The prison teachers also make purchase suggestions to the library for class-related materials.

*An Inspiration for Other Institutions.* Several meetings have been held at the Münster Correctional Facility with library supervisors from other correctional facilities in Westphalia-Lippe, in order to generate momentum for additional library enhancement at those sites. The library at the Münster Correctional Facility has become and will remain a source of inspiration for other facilities through its direct affiliation with the central Prison Libraries Department, and it continues to facilitate meetings of professionals. The library has hosted visitors from other German states

(including Lower Saxony and Rhineland-Palatinate) and several foreign countries (including Brazil, Macedonia, Norway, Russia, and Hungary).

*The Challenge of Imperfection.* The prison is an environment where one is constantly confronted with challenging situations and imperfections. To function and survive in this environment, staff and inmates must observe many rules and limitations related to order and safety. At the same time, it is possible to create imaginative solutions and introduce improvements in a responsible manner. For example, access to the Internet and other types of networking is expected in most libraries today, yet for security reasons, these resources are barely available for inmates, even in "open" facilities. A pilot project is needed to test the feasibility of these electronic resources—when the political climate permits. The inmates are allowed to use CD and DVD players; e-books, however, have not yet been considered.

Even the newly renovated library is not finished. Details are continuously added. The renovation created new opportunities and challenges, such as more cultural events, optimal search options of the bibliographic records, and a collection-management application. The prize money from the Library of the Year award made it possible to purchase a significant collection of DVDs in 2008, all of which are being heavily used. The DVD collection includes feature films, documentaries, and instructional/informational titles.

#### *Common and Unique Features Contribute to Lasting Success*

*Management by Professional Librarians.* The renovation of the prison library, the integration of the NRW Prison Library with the Münster Correctional Facility, and the resulting management of the prison library by professional librarians have had lasting impact. The transfer of the prison library management in North Rhine-Westphalia to the professional librarians of the Prison Library Department has been the determining factor for the successful prison library renovation. This management model has shown that the employment of professional librarians is essential for effective prison library development. Yet, what is considered normal in the context of public or university libraries is still the exception in the prison environment. This means that the library of Münster Correctional Facility is quite exceptional in its dedication to the principles and practices of socially responsible library services. The interaction and coordination between the prison library staff and the Prison Library Department management have been beneficial for all parties. The department librarians have been successful in advocating for prison libraries through the Prison Library Workgroup (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Gefangenenbüchereien), which is a unit of the German Library Association. The fact that a member of the Prison Library Department chairs the Prison Library Support Group has also helped raise the profile of prison libraries at the national level.

*Creative Remaking of Library Space.* The innovative and resourceful rede-



sign of the library was created by Bolles+Wilson. In 1993, Bolles+Wilson built the Münster City Library and is currently designing the Biblioteca Europea di Informazione e Cultura (BEIC) in Milan (<http://www.beic.it>). The new library has become the most innovative room in the old prison, which is designated a protected historic building. The architectural vision of a prison library as a modern space within an old building is similar to the concept used by the architects in their design of the new Münster City Library, which is creatively integrated into the historic section of the city.

The new space invites visitors to become engaged and enjoy the library environment. The inviting interior inspires library users and leaves them with a positive impression. For the inmate patrons, a library visit provides a short break from the otherwise crowded and impersonal prison area and offers the opportunity to enter into another world. The library is colorful and spreads out like a fan from the door. This design creates a sense of “mental and spiritual uplifting”<sup>21</sup> for those who enter. The cheerful and attractive interior invites the user to engage with the library materials and to experience the healing effect of the library as the “apothecary for the soul.”

Seeing the successful renovation of the library at the Münster Correctional Facility, the Dortmund Correctional Facility, in December 2006, decided to remodel its own library. In 2008, under the direction of Professor Julia Bolles-Wilson and with participation of staff from the NRW Prison Library Department, two seminars titled “Project Proposals for the Interior Design of Prison Libraries” were held at the Münster Technical University. Representatives from twelve NRW institutions and one from Italy participated in the seminars. Since then, two correctional facilities have developed blueprints for a new library, two others will renovate their libraries in 2010, and projects for two more institutions are being discussed for 2011. A documentary film about the various library projects will be available in 2010.

*Apothecary for the Soul.* The term “apothecary for the soul” as a designation for a library, like the inscription above the entrance to the Abbey Library in St. Gallen (“*Psyches iatreion*”), is particularly appropriate for a prison library (see fig. 3). For the inmates, the library offers a degree of cultural enrichment in their daily lives. The physical space and the library resources offer the soul “mental and spiritual uplifting.” All patrons can find something that enhances their quality of life. Many with low reading skills experience the joy of reading for the first time in prison. Funny comic books and other illustrated books are relaxing and entertaining; legal publications and other nonfiction books inform and educate. Dictionaries and foreign literature build bridges to multicultural understanding, which is particularly beneficial in the prison environment, where many individuals from diverse backgrounds live in a tight space, constituting an actual international community.<sup>22</sup>

According to Maria Look, Münster Correctional Facility Warden, “The



Figure 3. The prison library space (Photo: Bönte)

person who discovers reading and the appreciation of books during incarceration has opportunity to integrate this experience into his life after release from prison. In this way, an important goal of the prison sentence has been achieved—helping the offender use his/her leisure time constructively—especially today with the high unemployment rates.”

*The Importance of the Library: A Survey of Prisoners' Reading Habits.* In May 2006, the Münster prison library, with the cooperation of the Documentation Center for Prison Literature at Münster University, conducted a survey of the inmates' reading habits. Approximately 40 percent of the inmates participated, and 200 questionnaires were returned. A summary of the main findings follows.

Eighty percent of the respondents were between the ages of twenty and forty years. Every fourth prisoner had no secondary school certificate (25 percent), more than half had no vocational training (55 percent), and one-fourth (24 percent) had parents who lacked vocational training. The average sentence served was two years. Most had no regular work before being incarcerated (57 percent), and even more had no work assignment in prison (73 percent). Leisure time was used for reading (79 percent), watching television (71 percent), writing (54 percent), and playing sports or listening to music (40 percent). Reading was by far the most popular leisure activity!

Each week, three-fifths (60 percent) of the respondents spent an aver-



age of thirteen hours reading, or almost two hours a day. Among the heavy readers, two-thirds (65 percent) spent less time reading before their incarceration. One-third (31 percent) of the respondents were able to read foreign-language literature—for presentenced offenders this number was 44 percent—reflecting the high number of foreign inmates. The inmates obtained the majority of their reading materials from the prison library (88 percent), but 33 percent said they got most of their books from fellow inmates. Books promote communication among readers, and most inmates (52 percent) discuss what they are reading with others. More than 80 percent of the inmates used the library monthly, and nearly half (49 percent) used it weekly. The majority of the offenders read for entertainment (74 percent), for information and education (83 percent), and one-third for self-improvement. One respondent stated that he reads in order to “avoid decaying.”

*A Model for Socially Responsible Library Services.* The library at the Münster Correctional Facility has become a model for many small libraries that serve users with special needs, since it incorporates both regular and specialized services—the latter often referred to as outreach services to socially disadvantaged population groups. In this role, the Münster prison library has overcome many challenges. The library belongs to Section 8 of the German Library Association through its connection with the Prison Library Department. The library continues to be involved in professional conferences and public-relations activities by contributing articles and generating media attention.<sup>23</sup> The prison library also maintains a good partnership with the West German Library for the Visually Impaired (Westdeutsche Blindenhörbücherei) and the local libraries for hospital patients. The importance of the Münster prison library in the area of socially responsible library services has been recognized by experts both inside and outside Germany.<sup>24</sup>

#### *Cultural Freedom for Prisoners*

The Münster Correctional Facility library provides a wide range of services and materials, some of which are summarized below:

- With an open access policy, the library serves more than five hundred inmates per week.
- A user rate of more than 80 percent reflects a high level of interest in the library among users and the importance attached to library services.
- The innovative shelf arrangement allows for a versatile and logical display of popular materials in the centrally located library.
- The attractive and welcoming library space creates the illusion of a wider world where one can enjoy freedom of choice and, for a short time, forget the otherwise dreary prison life.
- Weak readers can find easy-to-read titles, and reading materials in more

than thirty languages are available, as well as dictionaries and language instruction books.

- The collection includes books, audio-visual materials, newspapers (including local newspapers, *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, VDA news, Turkish newspapers, *Die Zeit*), and magazines (*"draußen," Westfalenspiegel*, and several others).
- Support and guidance are offered to inmates with reading difficulties. This is of great help for those who were not regular readers on the outside. This foundation also opens opportunities once the offenders are ready to lead socially responsible lives.
- The electronic catalog makes the entire collection accessible, including from satellite locations.
- The library is a multipurpose space and can be used for different events. The inauguration took place on October 28, 2005, during NRW's Library Night; the prison library participated by offering 1,001 stories behind bars, including fairytales in Arabic, German, and Persian.
- Audiobooks have been integrated into the collection; DVDs were added in 2008.
- The collection of Münster City Library can be accessed through an interlibrary loan arrangement.
- Through facilitation by the Prison Library Department, interlibrary loan among the prison libraries is also available.
- The collection is managed by a user-friendly and reliable software application installed on standard hardware. IT-supported library services are not common in prison libraries, but since 2000, it has been the norm in NRW.
- A designated part of the collection is available for inmates awaiting transfer to other correctional facilities.
- Inmates enrolled in formal education courses are given orientation to the library.

#### *Internal and External Public Relations*

*Internal Public Relations.* The new prison library has received very positive feedback from both prison staff and inmates, and the library has created its own Web page on the Münster Correctional Facility website.<sup>25</sup> The librarian works closely with the warden and participates in the monthly meetings of the professional staff (librarians, teachers, medical staff, clergy, and social workers). These colleagues make suggestions for additions to the user-focused collection.

The Prison Library Department librarians meet regularly with the site library supervisors. These meetings may also include representatives from the juvenile facilities, as well as other libraries or schools. The Minister of Justice for North Rhine-Westphalia, Roswitha Müller-Piepenkötter, has

established a budget for prison libraries, and, in September 2006, she met with the spokesperson for Section 8 of the German Library Association to learn more about the services of prison libraries. Shortly afterward, she discussed "Library Services in Prisons" with the NRW prison wardens. She was very supportive of the application for the "Library of the Year 2007" award and the establishment of the Prison Library Support Group. Many people are now advocating for the development and enhancement of prison libraries, including professional staff in other correctional facilities and the prison wardens.

*External Public Relations.* The renovation of the Münster Correctional Facility library is to a great extent the result of the tireless public relations effort by the Prison Library Support Group.<sup>26</sup> The library staff of the Prison Library Department have published several articles in professional journals. The NRW Library Association (Landesverband der Bibliotheken NRW) and Section 8 of the German Library Association work closely together and exchange information. I also gave a presentation about the Münster prison library at the 2003 International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) conference in Berlin.

The University of Applied Media in Stuttgart and the German Library Association assisted with the creation of the website for the Prison Library Workgroup (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Gefangenenbücherei) (<http://www.gefangenenbuechereien.de>). Through efforts by the Prison Library Department since 2003, the Münster Correctional Facility has formed many new relationships with local organizations and agencies, including bookstores, publishers, and, especially, the Münster City Library.

A large number of donors have contributed to the successful transformation of the library, and many of them were guests at the inauguration celebration. Since then, the library has received many visits by colleagues from other parts of Germany and from abroad. Seventeen public figures from government, the judiciary, religious organizations, and the library profession wrote recommendations for the nomination as "Library of the Year 2007." The overwhelming reaction to the awarding of the German library prize to the Münster prison library speaks for itself. As of January 2008, the German Library Association website contained more than 160 references to this event (Pressespiegel, 2007). At the 99th German Library Day (2010) and at the Leipzig Book Fair, the prison library at the Münster Correctional Facility was featured in a presentation by the institution librarian.

### *Global Focus*

At the Münster Correctional Facility and in prisons in general, it has become increasingly important to cultivate a global and multicultural sensitivity. In the prison environment, the "world comes together"—literally. The inmate population mirrors society as a whole. Thirty percent of the

Münster Correctional Facility inmate population (about 180 individuals) are foreigners from nearly fifty different countries.<sup>27</sup> Over the years, much work has been done to expand the collection of foreign language publications. Some of the prison libraries maintain large collections of foreign titles that are available to other institutions. This is the case at the Münster library, which has more than 2,000 titles in more than thirty languages. Some of the library supervisors are also foreign nationals, originating from Albania, Greece, Iran, Morocco, the Netherlands, and Turkey. They are constantly called upon to assist with the technical processing of the foreign language materials.

Some donations come from foreign countries, including France, Iran, Croatia, Macedonia, and the Netherlands. Arabic and Russian books were supplied by German distributors. The library has had visitors from Brazil, Bulgaria, Denmark, Ghana, India, Morocco, Macedonia, the Netherlands, Norway, Palestine, Portugal, Romania, and Russia. The library received assistance from the University of Münster with the organization of the donated materials in Persian and Arabic.

At the 2003 IFLA conference in Berlin, I gave a presentation about the library work in the NRW prison system and made many useful contacts with prison librarians in other countries. This led to a work exchange with Belgian prison staff, who came to the Aachen Correctional Facility in 2004. In 2006, this author facilitated the German translation of IFLA's third edition of *Guidelines for Library Services to Prisoners* (2005). And in 2007, information about the Münster Correctional Facility—the 2007 German Library of the Year—was integrated into a poster exhibit about prison libraries worldwide. Finally, in 2008 and 2009, the Goethe Institute supported a series of lectures I presented in Italy, Israel, Palestine, Argentina, and Brazil.

#### **“A FINAL CHAPTER”: THE IMPACT OF THE GERMAN LIBRARY AWARD ON THE MÜNSTER PRISON LIBRARY**

On World Library Day (October 24, 2007), during a celebration with more than two hundred guests, the German Library Award was presented to the Münster Correctional Facility Library.<sup>28</sup> This award, which “honors libraries of all sizes and types,” was especially significant as the recognition of a unique area of library services that generally receives little attention from the library community. Even so, prison libraries still remain relatively isolated from the mainstream of society. The award, however, has motivated many, including library supervisors, prisoners, and volunteers, to become advocates for quality library services not only to incarcerated persons but also to other individuals with special needs, for example, persons with visual disabilities, hospital patients, senior citizens, and families in religious communities.

Following the award announcement, more groups wanted to see the

winning library, including the board of the German Library Association, representatives from the Goethe Institute in ten different countries, library supervisors from prisons and juvenile facilities in North Rhine-Westphalia, One Person Libraries from Münster, the NRW chapter of the Association for Library Information (Berufsverband Information Bibliothek e.V.), and trainees from other libraries in Münster. The press has documented the reaction to the award both inside and outside Germany (Deutscher Bibliotheksverband e.V., 2007). Finally, the Goethe Institute has been instrumental in drawing attention to the Münster Prison Library as the "Library of the Year 2007" through invitations and travel support for the NRW Prison Library Department professional staff, who were able to present papers about prison library services in Italy, Palestine, Israel, Argentina, and Brazil.

## NOTES

1. See Peschers (2000).
2. Juvenile Court Act (JGG), Federal Penal Code (StVollzG), and Federal Custody Act (UVollzG).
3. The primary goals are defined in Section 2 of the Federal Penal Code (StVollzG § 2) as follows: "Upon completion of a prison sentence, the offender should be capable of leading a socially responsible life without future crime (Vollzugsziel). Incarceration also serves to protect the greater society from further crime."
4. In Section 67 of the Federal Penal Code (StVollzG § 67), the prisoner's right to use a library in his/her free time is guaranteed: "The prisoner receives an opportunity to occupy himself/herself during his/her free time. He/she should have opportunities to participate in educational pursuits, including sports, distance education and other forms of continuing education, recreation groups, group discussions, and sports events, and have the opportunity to use a library."
5. See Motzko (2008, January). Reference is made to the discussion of updating user group definitions and the resulting consequences for user-oriented library services. In my opinion, this takes nothing from the basic community orientation of socially responsible library services and its focus on people in various life situations. Incarcerated persons therefore constitute an especially concise and clearly defined target group. To me, the concept of "social" is valuable and must be preserved. Unfortunately, the connotations of "ineffective" or "charitable" detract from its positive meaning.
6. In the microcosm of the prison, prison life and living conditions represent a world where the full range of the human experience—along with its limitations, prejudices, and infatuations—can be observed. Through contact with other people and personal insight, every person must deal with these experiences, including those who have been barred from participation in "normal" society.
7. The European Commission has proclaimed the year 2010 as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in Germany is responsible for funding projects under this umbrella. More than eight hundred applications were submitted, but only forty projects were funded. Unfortunately, two projects to serve incarcerated people were not selected. One was the production of a CD called "German Is a Lot of Fun" in cooperation with the West German Library for People with Visual Disabilities (Westdeutsche Blindenhörbücherei), the hospital patient library at Bistum Münster, and the Prison Library Department of Westphalia-Lippe. The other project involved adding children's books to the library collection, which would enable incarcerated parents to read these books aloud to their children in the visiting rooms in about two hundred correctional facilities. The idea for this project was conceived by the Prison Library Support Group (Förderverein Gefangenenbüchereien e.V.) in cooperation with the Borromäusverein (a Catholic library institution) and the ministries of justice in each of the federal states.

8. For more information, see <http://www.gefangenenbuechereien.de>, which has links to individual federal states. Given the lack of information from individual states, the library management data are incomplete. Due to lack of staff, this Web page is not regularly updated.
9. See Statistisches Bundesamt (2009), Justice, 10.16–17.
10. For more information regarding the prison system in North Rhine-Westphalia, see <http://www.justiz.nrw.de>.
11. For information on earlier articles about prison library services in North Rhine-Westphalia, see <http://www.gefangenenbuechereien.de>. Included are Peschers (1999a; 1999b; 2001) and Möllers (2001).
12. Under the direction of the municipal library of Gelsenkirchen through Ernst Hugo Käufer, *Bibliotheksarbeit in Justizvollzugsanstalten* (1986) was published by the German Library Institute in Berlin. This report critically states that prison libraries resemble “literary flea markets” more than libraries. The report also includes guidelines for prison library services comparable to the guidelines for library services to prisoners of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA).
13. New libraries are located in the prisons of Bochum-Langendreher (1995), Gelsenkirchen (1998), Bielefeld-Brackwede II (2001), and the politically contentious immigration/deportation center at the Büren Correctional Facility (1994). Existing library facilities were totally renovated at Coesfeld (2003/2004) and Münster (2005).
14. See “Gefangenenbücherei” (Prison library) at <http://www.jva-muenster.nrw.de>.
15. As a rule, the library supervisors are not given clear instructions on the extent of their total work time that is supposed to be devoted to library work. They are often expected to perform their library duties in addition to their main job assignments. This situation is not effective and is demoralizing for those affected. Nevertheless, many of the library supervisors are interested in the library and are doing a good job, under the circumstances. An effort is underway to incorporate the operation and supervision of the library into the institution work plan and work assignments.
16. The Prison Library Support Group (<http://www.fvgb.de>) supplements the project “Dreaming of a Book Tree on a Wall” (<http://www.libertree.eu>). Comments to the page are encouraged. E-mail: [foerderverein@gefangenenbuechereien.de](mailto:foerderverein@gefangenenbuechereien.de)
17. Members include the NRW Minister of Justice, Roswitha Müller-Piepenkötter; the warden of the Münster Correctional Facility, Maria Look; the director of the Münster City Library, Monika Rasche; author and lawyer Bernhard Schlink; author Sten Nadolny; the real-life prison physician as well as the “Tatort” television-series prison physician, Jo Bausch; instructor at the Münster School of Architecture, Professor Julia Bolles-Wilson; Peter Wilson, of the architecture firm Bolles+Wilson; and lawyer Professor Thomas Hoeren.
18. “The diverse public relations activities of prison libraries are impressive. The excellent integration of the library within the correctional facility is apparent by the intensive use of the library and the support from prison management. The close cooperation with the municipal library is also noteworthy, not only through the loan of books from the municipal library to the correctional facility, but also through joint events like ‘Long Night of the Libraries.’ Thus, the prison library has established a presence in the city outside the walls. Events in the library with well-known authors such as Bernhard Schlink and Wolfgang Hohlbein [Sten Nadolny and Erich Loest in 2008, and Jiri Grusa in 2009] have generated considerable interest and positive response. Through these activities, the inmates are provided not only a gateway to literature, but also a venue to participate in the cultural life” (Zeit-Stiftung & Deutsche Bibliotheksverband e.V., 2007).
19. Bausch is physician at the Werl Correctional Facility, actor in the television series *Tatort*, and board member of the Prison Library Support Group.
20. Flat monitors are located behind security glass in the prison wall and connected to a computer located in a staff-only room. The inmates can access only a keyboard and mouse to search the online catalog and cannot access other data.
21. This is an old expression related to the purpose of prisoner education.
22. Zingler (2007) describes this experience as a former long-term inmate and current author.
23. See *ProLibris*, no. 4, 2007, or “Der Vollzugsdienst,” no. 1, 2008.
24. For example, through recommendation letters for the German Library Award from Hugo



- Ernst Käufer; Dörte Hundrieser; and Vibeke Lehmann, IFLA member from the United States.
25. See "Gefangenenbücherei" (Prison library) at <http://www.jva-muenster.nrw.de>.
  26. For example, the most recent contribution "Bibliotheksarbeit im Justizvollzug in Deutschland am Beispiel NRW," presented at the 2007 Leipzig Library and Information Congress and published in Kaden and Kindling (2007).
  27. As of February 1, 2007, out of 545 inmates, 177 foreigners came from the following 46 countries: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, the Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Great Britain, Greece, Guinea, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Morocco, the Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Spain, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and Ukraine.
  28. For more details about the award ceremony, see Deutscher Bibliotheksverband e.V. (n.d.).

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