

American Prison Writing Archive
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Prison library

How important is a library in a prison? Well reading is certainly a much better choice to pass time than gambling, extorting, fighting, and other rule breaking.

It is a well known fact that educated people usually make better choices than those with less education. So isn't a library also a source of learning?

Should a prison library help prisoners? The Michigan Dept of Corrections operating policies say it "shall." But how can you utilize a library that has no index? (The prisoner clerks 'magically' read minds to be able to 'help' prisoners find materials - where no browsing is allowed.)

KCF Michigan prison facility is just such a place: No Browsing - mind reading clerks - no categorized, alphabetical index! So **IF** you know an author you are brought a handful of books to the counter to choose from. But no one knows enough authors to keep reading!!

I've even tried to grieve this issue, as a remedy, with only an answer that an electronic system was purchased (a long time ago) and its programming is done (that was Jan) and still no implementation. I've now sent the enclosed 'lite' on this subject, hoping 'magically' for a solution.

Sent to administration of a Michigan Prison

~~Warden Brada~~

2/29/20

Many prisoners I've asked, here at KCF, "Why don't you go to our General library for books to read"? (When they've told me they are bored.) The answer I get is always the same: "How do you know what to take out, there isn't any index."

Where is the reasonable value in a library that can't be fully utilized because it has no subject organized, alphabetical index of its contents? Why is it that prisoners seeking to pass their time by reading (and learning from it) are hindered from that, I would think, desirable activity, because even while knowing a subject they are looking for is of little help when you can't know the available choices. (Can our clerks magically 'read minds'?)

So if its going to take so long for the electronic Index to be installed and become usable, as seems the case, (I first wited last year of this) Then why not just compile a list of the books the library contains, by hand; Categorize, alphabetize, and have a ~~a~~ usable index - While we are waiting - so what is there can be used! A hand compiled, organized, alphabetical list (index) would only take about 30 days to do or less. All you do is go shelf to shelf, listing title, author, dewey code - alphabetize and categorize - type up, copy: done!!! (I've done more work than that in a month taking notes on a physics book here.)