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# Sandhills Youth Center Library

Robert E. Drake

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The library at Sandhills Youth Center serves a multitude of purposes. It is located within the school complex. It supports the educational program and falls under the supervision of the Education Director. Being the institution's only library, it must provide for recreational pursuits including facilities for pleasure reading, amusement games such as chess and checkers, a listening center for popular music, film showings for both video cassettes and regular 16mm films and live television. The library is also the holding and distribution center for all audiovisual equipment. Since it is the hub of so much activity, its bulletin board is a posting place for current directives and notices for residents.

The Youth Center population is made up of 18-24 year-old male youthful offenders whose average academic achievement level is between 5th and 6th grade and whose school history typically ended with them as 8th grade dropouts. The students are essentially considered in two categories: those who have the potential to earn their high school equivalency (GED) and those who can be expected only to learn to cope with daily living. Thus, our program reaches from the elementary through high school grades. With the resident's average stay of 7 months, the curriculum addresses only basic needs in mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies. In addition, there are daily periods of vocational training and physical education.

To support the education program, the library reference section, comprising about 500 books, includes the usual encyclopedias, fact books, and atlases (students' knowledge of geography is incredibly poor). The reading level of these reference books is generally too high for the average resident. Why then do we have such books? The answer is a puzzling dilemma: residents will not publicly use books of low-level reading since the child-like presentation of these

books is ego-deflating; on the other hand, they understand little from a reference resource too advanced for their comprehension. So the reference section does not get a big play by the students. It is useful to the staff. As part of our staff support, we subscribe to eight professional journals such as *The Journal of Learning Disabilities*, *Library Journal*, *The Physical Educator*, and *Science Teacher*.

The school is supported to some extent by a small collection of classics. Except for occasional required reading this material does not often leave the shelves. We have also accumulated extensive material to support our vocational training. Even though this material does have appeal, the reading level (technical vocabulary) and measurement techniques are pitched too high for our average student. We do try, however, to surmount these shortcomings by supportive teaching in our basic mathematics and reading classes.

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The general reading collection includes about 7000 volumes (3000 paperbacks and 4000 hard covers) and many current periodicals. The favorite reading or browsing material reflects the cultural mode of today's young society. No wonder then that *Playboy* ranks highest on the magazine list and that *Conan the Barbarian* is the preferred way to enjoy mythology. The popular authors are Donald Goins, Stephen King, Harold Robbins, Louis L'Amour and the multiple Conan authors. In addition to *Playboy* other magazine favorites among our twenty-one subscriptions are *Easyridders*, *Hot Rod*, *Ebony*, *People*, *Gentlemen's Quarterly*, *Jet*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Iron Horse*. Because our residents are drawn from every corner of the state, we keep six of the major daily

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state newspapers on our racks. In this connection, our post GED classes have used the "Newspapers in Education" program with much success. We have had classes in science, current events, cultural affairs, and communication skills all based on the daily newspaper as text material. The program also has taught students how to use a newspaper and has motivated their interest in reading. The librarian distributes these papers and varies or cancels the weekly subscriptions to meet the unpredictable weekly fluctuation in enrollment.

In spite of our effort to foster good reading habits, the major attractions of our library are music and video presentations. Through our listening center we transmit cassette and phonodisc music over four different stations to wireless headsets. Like the use of the library, the use of the headsets is a privilege earned by residents as part of the institution's behavior modification program. Issuance of the headsets as well as admittance to the library is regulated by the librarian. Keeping up with the musical tastes of the population is a further responsibility of the librarian, who must choose the cassettes and discs for purchase. Recognizing that video constitutes a principal means of reaching our students, we include in our video cassette collection documentaries of cultural depth, many recorded by the librarian from live broadcasts. We show video cassettes or 16mm movies one day each week. The movies are selected from the State Library Film Service on the basis of their educational merit. We also order films from industry usually to enhance vocational training and science classes. Sources are typically the aircraft, steel and petroleum industries and are at no cost. Correspondence relating to these films is maintained by the librarian in coordination with the responsible teacher. By careful advance planning, the librarian keeps up a steady exchange of films. Live television is infrequent: we permit classes to view news items of special interest such as the space shuttle, political highlights, and, of course, ACC basketball finals.

The Sandhills Youth Center library is a busy place and the librarian and assistants are busy people. Use of the library, by those earning the privilege and by an occasional class from absent vocational teachers, involves some 1500-2000 residents per month. We are proud of our good service and of the professional environment offered by our library. Surely, it is a major step to divert the attention of these youthful offenders from crime to more worthwhile pursuits.

## State Official Presented ECU Award

Helen Tugwell of Greensboro and President of the ECU Library Science Professional Society presented last week the first Honorary Membership of the organization to Carol Gaston Lewis, Director of the Division of School Media Programs in the N.C. State Department of Public Instruction. Ms. Lewis, who holds degrees from East Carolina and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill was cited for her many contributions to library development in North Carolina and her aid given to members of the society which is made up of the alumni of the Department of Library and Information Studies.

Ms. Lewis has been with the State Department for several years and prior to that was associated with the public schools in various North Carolina communities. She is a native of Pitt County, North Carolina and has often been associated with workshops and seminars sponsored by East Carolina. The presentation was made at the annual alumni workshop sponsored by the society with over 100 participants present. The Professional Society is a section within the ECU Alumni Association.

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