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# A Prison's Library — A Look Inside

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As you walk through the doors of the media center, you will see what appears to be an ordinary library. The colorful books in Mylar jackets are arranged on the shelves that surround the 2,000 square feet of floor space. Shiny rectangular tables and upholstered chairs fill the orange-carpeted and well-lighted room. Seasonal and colorful bulletin boards line one wall while scenic paintings and hanging green plants grace the others. Attractive lounging furniture, paperback novels, periodicals and newspapers all help to create an atmosphere that is relaxing and enticing. However, the young men you see browsing through magazines while listening to the latest tunes on tape or phonodisc are not the ordinary patrons of a library; they are incarcerated youthful offenders—prison inmates. Even the color of their clothes has a very distinctive meaning. The grayish brown signifies medium custody (restricted movement with gun towers) and the dark green signifies minimum custody (less restricted environment). These eighteen-to twenty-three year-old offenders are housed at Cameron Morrison Youth Center, part of the Youth Complex of the North Carolina Department of Correction. It is situated in Hoffman, North Carolina, in the northern end of Richmond County.

The media center, located in the academic/vocational building, is the "heart" of Cameron Morrison. The question of how the "heart" responds to the demands of its patrons is answered by the large number of residents using the service. The 4,000 hardback books (classified according to the Dewey Decimal System) offer the resident varied opportunities for research. Audio-visual materials selected according to the academic and vocational needs of the residents provide learning experiences through pictures and sounds.

The recreational library is a special feature of the media program and is the most popular. For hours, residents leave the world of reality behind

and live in a world of fantasy by reading their favorite paperback books or listening to the "top of the chart" soundtracks through stereo headsets (a wireless system of electronic and mechanical technology). Color television, movies and games are also part of the recreational library privileges. The library has an area designated for residents who desire to read religious materials or to listen to religious tapes. Other media programs include a core law library which allows residents at Cameron Morrison and Sandhills Youth Center to do legal research. Poetry contests, quiz bowls, book review and other programs are used to stimulate and maintain interest in the offerings of the media center.

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Of the 400 inmates at Morrison, approximately half are enrolled in academic and vocational classes. All classes are scheduled to visit the media center once or twice a week. On Fridays and two Sundays each month, those residents on work assignments or those not assigned specific duties may use the media center. The demand for services has been so great that media personnel have established three satellite libraries in the dormitories.

The Media Specialist holds both Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees. She has spent sixteen years at Cameron Morrison Youth Center and relates well to the residents and staff. The library aides are inmates working in incentive wage jobs which pay from forty cents to one dollar a day. Their jobs are like those of most library aides or assistants. They check media in and out, process books and materials, and perform routine maintenance.

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The philosophical concepts of any media center are as varied as the clientele it serves. Cameron Morrison's objectives are as follows:

1. To serve the educational needs of residents based on their individual goals.
2. To strengthen and support the rehabilitative needs.
3. To serve the leisure or recreational needs of its residents by providing them an escape from

the routine of prison life through the magic of media.

As a result of funding by LSCA Title I Grants (through the North Carolina State Library) and state funds, meeting these objectives is possible.

Thus, we may conclude that the media center is the "heart" of the campus and that its "beat" is loud and clear, and would be a welcome addition to any correctional facility anywhere.



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