

# County Graphic

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## Library Snapshot Day provides information, voice for corrections libraries

The American Library Association's "Library Snapshot Day" provides a way for libraries of all types across a state, region, system or community to show what happens in a single day in their libraries. On January 11, Library Snapshot Day for the Washington State Library branches in correctional facilities and psychiatric hospitals (Western State Hospital and Eastern State Hospital) was held.

How many books are checked out? How many inmates get help with their release plans? How many patients use the library as part of their treatment plan? Statistics, photos and stories were collected all on this one day to show the value of the institution libraries to decision-makers and to increase public awareness. A brief survey was taken of library patrons which also provided room for personal comments.

At Coyote Ridge Corrections Center (CRCC) Melisa Gilbert, Branch Librarian with the Washington State Library In-

stitution Library Services, commented, "So much of what the prison libraries do is not accessible to the public. This is a way to show people." At CRCC she stated about 80 to 90 percent of inmates have library accounts. On Library Snapshot Day this number increased with four new inmate accounts created. Snapshot Day at CRCC looked a bit like this: 199 inmates visited the library along with five Department of Corrections Staff, 138 reference questions were asked with 45 library use only reference books utilized. A total of 661 items were checked out that day.

Throughout Washington State the day looked like: A total of 1,287 patients/inmates and 156 staff members visit the library on January 11. This resulted in 868 reference questions, 4,623 items circulated, and 352 reference materials used. 54 inmates/patients were registered as new patrons and 15 staff members also joined the ranks of library patrons.

Gilbert commented

that, "with all the budget cuts inmates latched onto this as an advocacy thing, to keep their library going." Many of the comments generated at CRCC focused on the need for the library and its benefits.

Overall, comments throughout the state were the same highlighting how the library offers a sense of grounding, normality in an otherwise abnormal environment. The library provides the inmates with ways to help them become better citizens and how it opens worlds to them through the books that they otherwise had not known, classics, etc.

The information gathered through the Library Snapshot Day has been shared with the public via Facebook, the Washington State Library blog, and the American Library Association website. If you are on facebook you can read more at: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/ILS-Library-Snapshot-Day/113371795396559>