This essay will ask how the processes and concepts of collection development and collection management in 2020 will be unrecognisable from those used in the late 1990s, with a focus on prison libraries in England and Wales. Governmental, international and local authority guidelines and policy frameworks are analysed, as these are the most reliable and detailed sources available on collection development and management in this particular sector of LIS. The key developments and the impacts of changes in prison libraries over a 20 year period from 1999 to 2019 will be examined, with a summary on what we might expect to see in prison library collection policies in the future. It is necessary to disclose that based on the findings outlined in this essay, the way each individual prison conducts their affairs internally is usually kept within the prison and not published; in part for security reasons, but also because there is no legal requirement to do so. Consequently, this essay does include some personal anecdotes from the authors time working at an organisation that provided books and moderators for Prison Reading Groups (PRG). This has been occasionally necessary in order to give weight to statements about what might limit collection development and management, in what can sometimes be an obscure and impenetrable LIS sector.

Principles of collection development in prison libraries have made great strides in the last three decades since the 1980s. Bramley (1978) states that “severe censorship of reading material has often taken place, and books have been excluded from the institution for the most arbitrary of reasons.” Since then, we have seen the publication of Her Majesty's Prison Service (HMPS) PSO6710 in 2000, replaced by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) PSI45/2011 in 2011, then
superseded by the latest amendment, a Policy Framework published by the Ministry of Justice in 2019.

Moving through the decades, these documents increasingly call - either explicitly or indirectly - for less censorship and more diversity in titles, reflecting the ever-changing needs of our prison populations. For example, in the 1990s the only direct title recommendations were the Bible and two legal texts. Over the next twenty years, these recommendations changed and expanded; firstly, they are now mandatory, and secondly, they include far more types of texts and resources, including: educational textbooks (to support in-house education providers); a larger range of religious texts other than the Bible; another mandatory legal text and a further three recommended legal texts including the Human Rights Act; foreign language books (aimed at inmates for whom English is not their first language); and titles suitable for those with low levels of literacy (very common in prison populations (Moss, 2017)). This is relevant because censorship, and learning or research needs specific to incarcerated persons, affect collection development and management policies.

However, although attitudes have come a long way from the 1990s, there is still a lot of work to be done. Mahmood (2017) suggests that “it is not enough to ensure a stock of books - prisons must also make sure that stock is kept up to date and diverse … it is clear that the quality of prison libraries varies from prison to prison.” This is in response to several conversations Mahmood had with ex-prisoners, who confirmed that in some prisons, the library provision was certainly excellent - but in others it was virtually non-existent. In the experience of this essay author in facilitating reading groups at multiple English prisons, this can be confirmed - some (usually the private prisons, with bigger budgets) are well-stocked, well-staffed and well-maintained; others are small back rooms with no internet access, low stock levels with what does exist being out of date, and no separate budget line.
Service Provision

Responsibility for the delivery of prison library services in the 117 prisons across England and Wales differ depending on a number of factors, including whether it is a private- or state-run prison; the needs of each individual prison population; whether it is a local remand prison (remand populations are largely transient as they ‘take in’ on a temporary basis from the local courts while the inmate awaits sentencing, thus there is usually an emphasis on shorter fiction and legal textbooks); the percentage of foreign nationals held there (influencing how many foreign language books are in the collection); and the Governor of each prison (the ultimate decision as to whether a title or aspect of service is suitable, falls to the Governor). Collection development and management are thus affected by the context they operate in.

Reviewing all the available literature, it is clear that while there is an overall centralised policy framework for the running of prison libraries in England and Wales (Ministry of Justice, 2019a), official inspections only take place once every five years, and there are variables that affect to what degree each prison will honour the requirements within. This is despite the fact that the 2019 policy framework mentioned previously includes a mandatory library section that governors are compelled to abide to (explored in more detail further on).

Service provision is usually the responsibility of the local authority (LA). Most prisons in England and Wales have Service Level Agreements with their LA; as of 2011, sixty-four LA’s in England and Wales were responsible for prison library service delivery to their local prison/s (Bowe, 2011). For the fourteen prisons run by private entities such as G4S, Sodexo and Serco (Ministry of Justice, 2019b), the librarians purchase stock from their own budget direct from publishers, instead of through the official acquisition process of the LA they are located in. In libraries provided by an LA, the budget for stock acquisition is provided as a line within the main prison budget, but administered by the LA and chief, sometimes only, librarian.
Collection Development

The philosophy of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA, 2005) is: “An incarcerated person has not relinquished the right to learn and access information ... restrictions on the access to library materials and information should be imposed only when such access is known to present a danger to prison security.” The guidelines this statement sits in are not enshrined by law, nor are prison governors or librarians compelled to adhere to them. Some may not even know that they exist at all. However, they are informed by an accepted wisdom that access to reading and information for prisoners should be as close as possible to that of ‘free’ citizens, and therefore collection development will be affected, as given that prison library budgets can be inadequate (since 2010 Local Authorities have seen their budgets cut across England and Wales by 26% (Full Fact, 2017)), librarians tend to err on the side of caution when deciding which books to acquire. Only when faced with an opportunity to accept donations might they be more likely to consider titles that could fall into the grey area of ‘incendiary’ or ‘dangerous’.

There is no official list of banned books that prisons in England and Wales must observe, because each prison is given the individual responsibility to decide on its own terms, on a title-by-title and prisoner-by-prisoner basis, what publications they deem suitable. These decisions are not reported on publicly, therefore no examples could be found. However, a high security Category A prison such as HMP Belmarsh, for example, with a higher percentage of violent crime sentences being served, might have stricter oversight on titles depicting violent crime than a Category D open prison would.

There are a select list of titles that are extremely popular, and librarians in correctional facilities across England and Wales are known to place orders for multiple copies of the same books due to reviews of check-out records confirming their popularity. Some authors widely read in
prisons are: Martina Cole, Cormac McCarthy, Truman Capote, Anthony Horowitz, Paolo Coelho, Stephen King and Roald Dahl (Prison Reading Groups, 2016; 2019).

IFLA also calls for each prison library to develop and publish written policies for the library’s mission and goals, including their budget, funding sources, opening hours, material selection, cataloguing, donations, circulation and access, and weeding procedures. They recommend that each prison library develop and implement a long-range plan of 3-5 years (IFLA, 2005). However, it was not possible to find any published accounts from prison libraries that have acted on this advice, though this does not mean that they have not.

Lastly, IFLA calls for a specific and concrete number for the size of the collection: “...at least one hundred (100) popular and current books or two (2) books per prisoner (whichever is greater). This collection shall be changed at least once per month. Each prisoner should be able to browse and select at least two (2) titles per week from the deposit collection,” with a specific number for new stock: that the budget be enough to replace 10% of the collection annually (IFLA, 2005). However, just four years later in 2009, recommendations from CILIP’s Special Interest Prison Libraries Group laid out a funding formula for a much larger provision: “ten items of stock per prisoner, with prisons having fewer than 200 prisoners holding a minimum stock of 2,000 items” (2009, quoted in Bowe, 2011). This could be seen as ambitious, given that both the physical space allocated for a prison library, and the amount of funding ring-fenced for stock acquisition, can vary wildly depending on the facility. On the other hand, this could give any prison librarian seeking to have their budget confirmed or increased a good basis for recommending their collection size and securing the necessary funds to make that possible.

Again, none of the recommendations laid out above are legislation, nor are they legally compelling. However, they did in part inform the Prison Library Service 2014, a governmental public sector information (PSI) publication by the National Offender Management Service. This lays
out mandatory actions for prison governors, including ones pertaining directly to stock acquisition and management, such as mandatory titles that each library must stock, and the range of materials that must be available in order to meet the needs of the prison population.

Given that 42% of adult prisoners report having been permanently excluded from school, almost a third identify as having a learning difficulty or disability (Ministry of Justice, 2016), and “half of the 85,000 people currently incarcerated have a reading age of 11 or lower” (Moss, 2017), it follows that collections in prison libraries should reflect the diversity of abilities, stocking materials suitable for all reading ages. Between 2001 and 2011, the number of foreign nationals held in English and Welsh prisons doubled, representing 14% of the prison population - therefore, a need for more foreign language literature will have increased also, and changed how collections are developed - especially in London prisons, which hold the largest number of foreign-born residents of any UK city. These statistics will affect how a librarian decides what resources will be acquired for the collection.

When considering educational textbooks for course materials, or technical literature for vocational qualifications, it is recommended within a 2019 update to the 2014 PSI that, if supported by the education provider an inmate is enrolled with, and if their sentence lasts beyond the end date of the education program, it is permissible to purchase these, or acquire them through inter-library loans if the library and/or education providers budget will not permit. However, textbooks and technical literature can be expensive, and multiple sources online, including ex-prisoners and service providers themselves, claim that permission for these texts is very difficult to obtain, with education courses being held up or curtailed entirely as a result. In the event of these book requests being successful, an attempt was made to find out whether the length of borrowing period differed from a standard item such as a fiction novel; and whether inmates could take these back to their cells or only use them as reference from within the library, but it was not possible to find any material dealing with this specifically. However, it is likely that in each individual prison, borrowing
rules are enforced in line with those specific to the LA in charge of the prison library, or the library management staff within the prison if it is a private entity.

Donations can greatly affect collection development and management in prison libraries. For a number of years, there have been several schemes designed to get multiple copies of the same book into prisons, including English PEN, who send authors in to do readings with a box of books; Give A Book (via Prison Reading Groups); Haven Distribution (who supply educational textbooks that prisoners are encouraged to leave behind in the library on release); and Dog Section Press, who have a selection of specific titles that they receive free from publishers. It is difficult for libraries in any sector to rely on donations, as they are not guaranteed, so this may cause issues around budget lines, though records of publicly filed prison library budgets were unavailable for corroboration.

**Collection Management**

With regards to how long loans are for, how many items each prisoner is permitted to have in their cell, how to retrieve overdue items from cells, and when to pull an item from the shelves - these considerations appear to be largely up to each individual prison librarian, perhaps acknowledging their general LA policies on these matters; no record could be found specifying these collection management considerations for any individual prison.

In an update to the National Offender Management Service PSI of 2015, issued in 2019, there is a ‘Mandatory’ section which compels governors, by law, to enact the requirements within. The actions in this list which directly affect collection development and management are:

- 1.18 Decisions to proscribe materials in compliance with the Public Protection Manual need to be linked with the management of offending behaviour or maintaining good order and discipline. All decisions on public safety, good order and offending behaviour are matters
for prison staff and ultimately the Governor. Such decisions should not be made by library staff.

- 1.19 Governors must ensure, working with their library service providers, that an asset catalogue specific to the prison is maintained and reviewed annually. It should record stock levels and losses, and patterns of borrowing.

- 1.21 Governors must ensure that their library service providers have access to inter-library loans; and that all prisoners have access to that service.

- 3.2 Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights includes the requirement that individuals must be afforded enough time and facilities to prepare their defence. While this does not place a requirement on all prison libraries to stock all legal resources which a prisoner might need, it is important to ensure that prisoners have reasonable access to legal publications.

On the subject of mandatory publications, the only resources that all prison libraries are mandated to stock (and keep up to date) are certain legal textbooks that assist in the building of an inmates defence. It is crucially important that they are updated regularly due to how often the law is liable to change. Annex D of the Mandatory Publications List lists the following three titles:

- Archbold's Criminal Pleading, Evidence and Practice
- The Civil Procedure Rules
- Extant Prison Service Instructions (PSI) and Prison Service Orders (PSO)

Also listed within, but as Recommended Publications (not mandatory), are:

- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
Annex C of the same document also has sections relating directly to the development and management of collections. In ‘Baseline Requirements’, it states that there must not be any 18-rated certificate items, racist material, or material that encourages violence or may present security concerns. It also requires that there be specific provision within the library stock for ethnic minorities, the visually impaired, the educationally disadvantaged, and foreign national prisoners. Finally, it recommends that the final decision to refuse or grant access to material lies with the Governor (National Offender Management Service: Annexes C & D, 2014).

Access and staffing also matters. Without librarians, the library is obsolete; without users being able to access the library, the library is again obsolete. In such a situation, collection development and management cannot exist. In a country-wide inspection conducted between 2016 and 2019 by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons, it was found that in some libraries, the legal textbooks were out of date; in many others, warden and officer shortages meant there was no one to escort inmates to their time slots in the library; and several prison libraries had been closed for up to half of the hours that they were meant to be open (Mahmood, 2017). In response, the Ministry of Justice published a policy framework in 2019 legally compelling prison governors to mandatorily “ensure - as a minimum - that a prisoner’s statutory entitlement to library provision is met.” This is the first time in the twenty year period this essay examines, that library-specific, legally compelling instruction has been issued. This is promising for the future development of prison library collections, because when access increases, so does usage - and when usage increases, so does budget, and therefore stock acquisition and service provision. In the years preceding this, according to many testimonies by librarians and prisoners alike, access to libraries within prisons was very poor for the majority of inmates. Indeed, from personal anecdotal memory, the author of this essay recalls regularly receiving calls from prison reading group volunteer convenors stating that they had not been allowed in on arrival to the gate, because there was a shortage in wardens able to escort the inmates from cell to library, and other prison services had to take priority.
Digital Library Resources & The Future

Since the advent of digital library resources in the late 1990s, online library catalogue development and stock management has been greatly limited for prison librarians in a way that it is not for library service providers in the 'free' world. Online catalogues are not available for use by the inmates themselves, this access being reserved for librarians only, who can perform catalogue searches based on reference requests from an inmate, linked only to the other catalogues in the computerised online management system of their local authority, wherever this facility is available (National Offender Management Service, 2014). Unfortunately, due to budgeting and security reasons, not all prison librarians have internet access from inside (Bowe, 2011, p.443), and in these cases it is unclear how inter-library loans might be facilitated, or reference questions from inmates fulfilled.

In the early nineties, UNESCO and IFLA (1994) published a manifesto stating: “All age groups must find material relevant to their needs. Collections and services have to include all types of appropriate media and modern technologies ... high quality and relevance to local needs and conditions are fundamental.” Following on from the idea of ‘appropriate media and modern technologies’, and taking into consideration both budgetary constraints and internet access restrictions placed on inmates, as of 2016 (when the author of this essay left post at Prison Reading Groups (PRG)), there was still no e-reader access permitted. PRG would often receive enquiries from people and organisations wishing to donate such devices, and had to turn them down.

It is reasonable to expect that the conversation around access to e-readers may find a resurgence in the coming months or years, with a real possibility of introducing this technology to inmates in the future. This would of course affect the size of physical and print collections, and thus the development and management policies pertaining to those, as fewer titles would be checked out if inmates had access to hundreds of books at the click of a button. But if the prison library sits within
the wider objective of prisoner rehabilitation and reform, as many claim it does, it should arguably support the introduction of e-readers to prison populations. Access to reading improves literacy levels, which in turn improves chances of employment on release; enables self reflection; relieves frustration and boredom; and widens perspectives (Prison Reading Groups, 2016; 2018).

Rechargeable devices are currently banned items, due to security concerns around chargers being used for illegal mobile phones or fashioned into weapons. However, an e-reader could be charged at a central power bank within the physical library. Cost would be a contentious issue for taxpayers, unless it could be presented as a saving elsewhere in the library service. Security is always, understandably, a pressing and paramount consideration in prisons; such devices would need to be impossible to hack, and unable to connect to any sort of internet or wireless channel. This would also require I.T. maintenance contracts, which would be another cost consideration to factor in. Lastly, librarians themselves could curate and upload a regular update of new titles each time an inmate comes into the library to charge the device, giving them some say, still, over the collection in their ‘library’.

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In conclusion, while it is now abundantly clear that for the majority of LIS professions the explosion in ebooks, eresources and online databases and journals has made processes of collection development and management largely unrecognisable from what they were in the late 1990s, this appears to have not translated for prison libraries. As explained, this is in part attributable to security concerns, but also attributable to the unlikely event of public funding being approved for e-reading devices, which is informed by a reticence by UK taxpayers to fund something that is generally viewed as a luxury.

Given that it has been shown that that some prison libraries still do not even have basic internet access, relying instead on card cataloguing systems and paper borrower records, and taking into
consideration that even though there are legally compelling governmental policies and instructions to governors, they are often not upheld by some. Therefore, it seems unlikely that the processes of collection development and management will change at the same rate as they do for other types of libraries in the ‘free’ world. In reality and in practice, it can be difficult to consider introducing new suggestions for improved and increased access to books for inmates when current instructions are not upheld. However, it may still be worth exploring the potential for e-readers to be introduced to prison libraries, heralding a sea change in the way prisoners are rehabilitated and educated in prisons in England and Wales.

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