

Will Eisner Graphic Novel Grant for Libraries

Application Cover Sheet

(Please complete this form & return it with your project proposal)

Date Submitted: February 8, 2019

Applying for (check one): Growth Grant Innovation Grant

Project Title: **“Doing Time” doesn’t have to mean “Behind the Times” –: using non-fiction graphic novels to boost visual literacy in a non-Internet/ no smart phones community**

Organization / individual Applying: **Jerilynne Stewart (member) on behalf of SCI Mahanoy Library**

Contact e-mail: jeristewar@pa.gov ; jerilynne.stewart@gmail.com

Telephone: **work (570)773-2158 and cell (484)475-4797**

Address: **301 Morea Road; Frackville PA 17932**

ALA Member Number: **2085073**

Brief Summary of Project (2 or 3 sentences):

Pennsylvania inmates have no access to the Internet, smart phones, social media or most of the “normal” sources that help develop visual literacy.

Recognizing that inmates who reenter society already face discrimination in employment and socially, the corrections library seeks to promote visual literacy through non-fiction graphic novels, along with the other benefits of promoting reading and vocabulary development.

(“SCI” is State Correctional Institution. SCI Mahanoy is a medium security state prison for adult males.)

Our Community

SCI Mahanoy is a medium security state correctional institution for adult males. Our community is staff and inmates. The inmate population represents a diverse spread of age, ethnicity, nationality, education level, binary/non-binary orientation, preferred language, and reading habits. Inmates entering prison without a high school diploma or equivalent are offered GED courses. Those with the equivalent of a high school diploma can pursue college courses and vocational training, some of it free of charge, some of it at their own expense.

Our Library

The library is a combination of public, school, academic, law, and special library, all rolled into one. We are open 7 days a week, morning and afternoon, plus an additional three evenings. Staff is limited to two full-time permanent positions: a librarian and a library assistant. There are also up to 14 inmate workers.

The library has two sections: Recreation and Law. Access to the law library is a constitutional right and access to it is arranged separately from access to Rec Library. Most inmates have access to Rec Library three times a week. Holdings include 15 newspapers, 40 magazines, over 10,000 books (about 1% of them graphic novels), and various CD-ROM based resources

Our graphic novel collection is small, relatively new, and entirely fiction. The collection is heavily used and constantly in circulation. Out of 114 titles, they are nearly equally divided between manga and more traditional graphic novels. About half were donated in the past by inmates, of the other half, only 4 were purchased last year; the rest we purchased in January. Every single new title has circulated at least three times during the one month of ownership.

Our Innovation Proposal

After collection development and teacher training, inmate students will use graphic novels to prepare for the GED and to improve their performance in vocational training while non-student inmates will take part in Reading Challenges designed to achieve the same goals.

We would like to develop a non-fiction graphic novel/manga collection which can be used in two ways: to support the Education Department and to widen the audience for graphic novels.

For the Education Department, we envision using graphic novels in the classroom to promote visual literacy. Inmates do not have the social media/smart phone/internet based access that other people do, putting them behind the curve for developing comfort with visual intelligence. Having everyone using the same graphic novel would promote comfort with this format while providing a valid means of studying literature, analyzing information, and offering discussion topics. Graphic novels can also be used as additional resources for those students who are reluctant readers, have poor vocabulary, or are simply visual learners.

For Recreation Library, we would like to have a non-fiction collection to support our readers' interest in the sciences, biography, history, social/civic justice, and language learning. We believe those readers who prefer non-fiction could be tempted to read graphic versions of books on these topics, even if they do not currently enjoy the fiction counterparts we have. Those who do enjoy graphic novels may be persuaded to read more non-fiction if it is available in graphic format.

Programs and Events in Support of this New Direction

The first program would be training for the teachers. We would work with a local university instructor who would come in and offer a training for our teachers and librarian on how to effectively incorporate graphic novels into lesson plans and make effective use of this format. We expect at least a full day training.

For the Rec Library aspect, we would incorporate this into our special events. Our first "reading challenge" was held in 2018, whereby inmates who read 25 books from a list of 100 (PBS' Great American Read) received a prize. For 2019, we anticipate a similar challenge using non-fiction books, newspapers, and magazines. If we are able to develop a non-fiction graphic collection, we would include those titles in this new challenge

We would also like to develop, over the course of 1-2 years, a guided program to result in an inmate-developed non-fiction graphic novels on topics of their choosing. However, genre guides and a guide to legal research for the incarcerated are topics we have in mind. A graphic novel version may provide a valuable service to other inmates while benefitting those who work on the project with not only team building skills but a career pathway in the arts and writing.

BUDGET

\$1000 - The grant money allocated for outreach / programs / events is \$1000. We envision using the entire amount for training for the teachers and librarian; the training to cover history and development of graphic novels and how to use non-fiction and literature graphic novels in the classroom and library cost. We will work with an academic from a local university and negotiate a fixed price to include fees, travel and materials. As this is an innovation for us as a state correctional institute, we need the training to make the best use of the collection we will develop, and there are enough local colleges with education and library science departments that we are confident of finding an educator willing to work with us at this price.

\$500 - The Reading Challenge for inmates (read x books, answer get a prize) is likely to cost \$500 for candy bars and admin costs for printing, paper and the like. This cost will be covered by the library's budget unless the training costs less than \$1000. FYI – the current Reading Challenge has been running for five months and over 100 inmates have completed it already.

Undetermined – the “Write your own non-fiction graphic novel” is a program to be developed for inmates after we see the success of the program described in this grant. It is mentioned here as a point of interest but is not part of this grant's budget.

TIMELINE

January-February	Write grant
February-June	Win grant
February-June	Continue work on collection development
June	Go to ALA, collect \$
June-July	Work with appointed vendor to order first batch of NFGN (non-fiction graphic novels); take pictures for possible use in recognition ceremony, ALA presentation, other PR
June-July	Work with local university to develop a one day training program
August-September	Hold training
August-September	Teachers & librarian to develop lesson plans to incorporate NFGN into class/bibliographic instruction
September	Order more books, now that we have a better idea of how we can use them
? June-September	Receive and catalog the Will Eisner Library and the books from the Will Eisner Awards at Comic-Con International take pictures for possible use in recognition ceremony, ALA presentation, other PR
September-October	Launch inmate Non-Fiction Reading Challenge to run for 6-9 months
December-January	Three months later, launch GN fiction and nonfiction, and using the Will Eisner Library and Will Eisner Awards collections as well as currently held titles and manga to run for six months, concurrent with NFGN challenge
December-January	Poll teachers on experience so far with using NFGN in the classroom
May-June	Evaluate inmate involvement: circulation statistics from inmate rec library to determine circulation, participation in reading challenges, survey inmates
May – June	Evaluate effectiveness of graphic novels in the classroom and bibliographic

	instruction by surveying teachers and librarian
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