

# Creating an Academic Library in a Women's Prison

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## Background:

Freedom Education Project Puget Sound (FEPPS) is a nonprofit organization that provides college classes leading to an Associate of Arts and Sciences degree at the Washington Corrections Center for Women in Gig Harbor, WA. Classes are taught by faculty from local colleges and universities, and their academic expectations are the same as they would be in a typical college setting. Students work hard to meet and exceed these expectations, but they have limited resources available to support their studies.



To address this resource gap, FEPPS began collecting donated books on a variety of subjects from friends and colleagues and through book drives on area campuses. They were granted use of a space at the prison, and the books were hauled in, accumulating on shelves and in boxes on the floor. **Our task has been to turn these piles of donated books into a functioning academic library.**

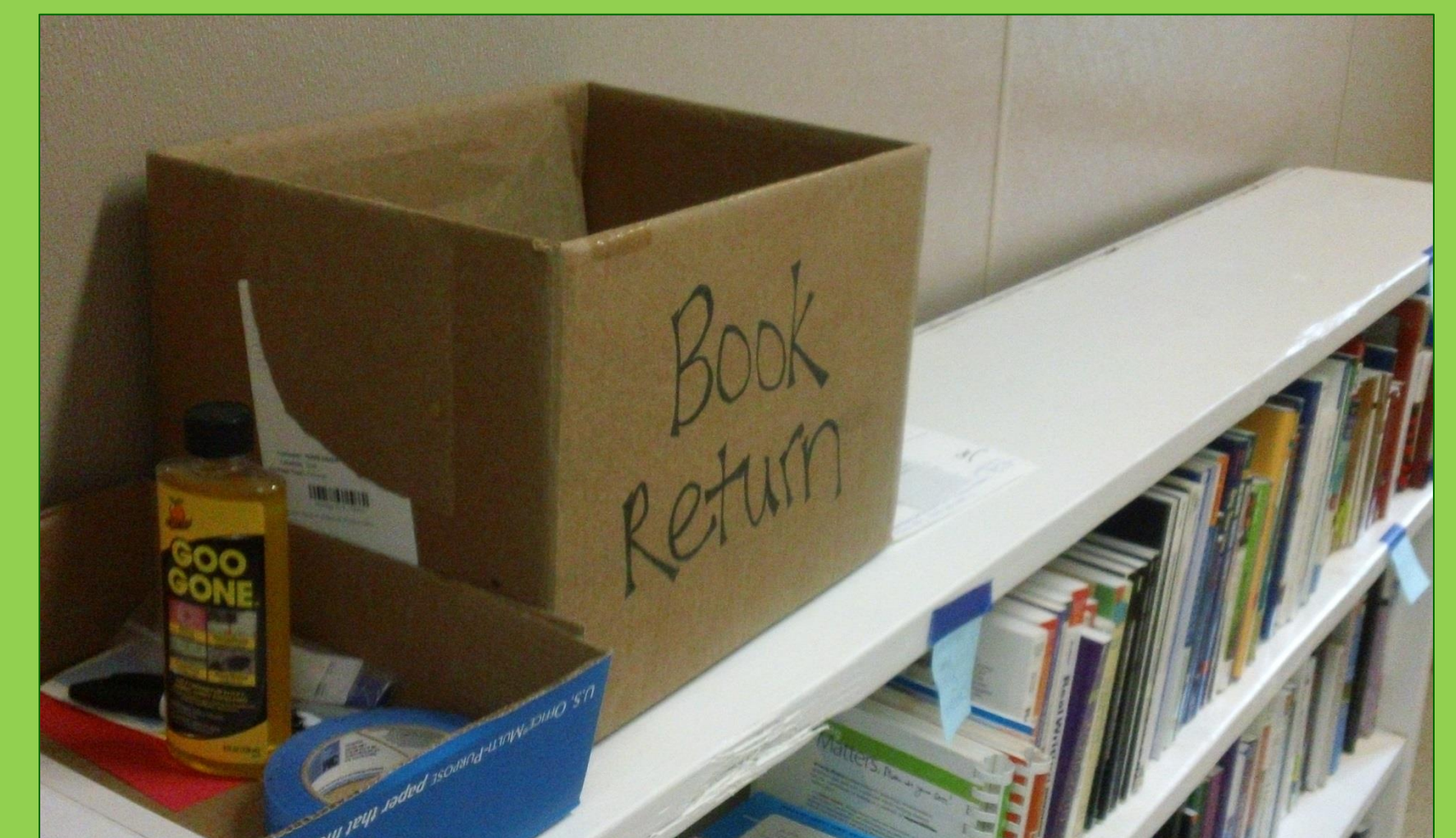
## Cataloging:

- Created basic catalog records for nearly 1,000 circulating books
- Established a system for tracking FEPPS textbooks alongside the general catalog
- Set standards for data entry
- Documented cataloging process for future volunteers

## Circulation:

- Established systems for tracking checked-out books and due dates in the catalog
- Received permission to have a designated book return box built and placed in a convenient location for students
- Documented policies and procedures for future volunteers

*How do you  
create an  
academic library  
with no internet  
and no acquisitions  
budget?*



## Collection Development:

- Developed and implemented standards for assessing new donations and weeding current collection
- Consulted with similar organizations and librarians regarding strategies and essential texts
- Evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the current collection relative to course requirements and student needs
- Documented guidelines for future volunteers



## Next Steps:

- Upgrade to a more robust catalog and circulation system
- Continue to build and refine the collection, implementing the established collection development guidelines
- Seek ways to expand library access for FEPPS students and eventually extend access to others in the prison
- Look for additional ways to provide access to scholarly resources, perhaps in partnership with a local university

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