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Abstract

The Radzinowicz Library is the specialist criminology library of the Institute of Criminology, a research and teaching department of the University of Cambridge. It is the premier academic criminology collection in the United Kingdom, and one of the major collections worldwide. The library primarily serves the Institute and the University but also the wider community of criminal justice researchers, many of whom are regular visitors. In common with other libraries, financial pressures are a continuing concern, especially because of the interdisciplinary nature of the subject. Outreach and engagement with organisations outside academia add to the distinctive characteristics of the library.

Stuart Stone is the Librarian of the Radzinowicz Library, where he has worked since 1999.

2030 words

Collecting Criminology: An Introduction to the Radzinowicz Library of Criminology

The Radzinowicz Library is the library of the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge. It houses the University's specialist criminological collection and is generally regarded as the premier academic criminology collection in the United Kingdom, and one of the major collections worldwide. The collection comprises around 65,000 books, a little over 500 periodical titles, and around 20,000 pamphlets. Included in the book stock is a large collection of government publications, mainly from the UK but covering many other territories too, official and NGO reports and inquiries, and much other grey literature. Of the periodicals, around 200 are current subscriptions, almost all online but we do carry a significant legacy collection of older print titles, in English and a range of other languages, that are unique holdings in the UK.

The Institute is a postgraduate teaching and research department housing 40 full-time M.Phil. students, 50 Ph.D. students, 50 academic and research staff, plus a fluctuating population of visiting scholars. The largest group of students is the 180 strong cohort of M.St. students on the Policing and Penology courses. They are senior practitioners working in the field, studying as distance learners with short residential study periods in Cambridge three times a year. These students are functioning under very different circumstances to the full-time M.Phils; they are in demanding jobs with little time to dedicate to academic pursuits, usually fitting their study around both professional and family lives. Supporting their work can be logistically difficult, not least because many live overseas: current M.St. students are based in Denmark, Sweden, Australia, India, the USA, and the Caribbean, as well as the UK. The Institute has no undergraduate students of its own but academic staff teach criminological courses for both the Faculty of Human, Social, and Political Science and the Law Faculty. The library serves the needs of these courses too. Beyond Cambridge, the library is internationally known as a world-class criminal justice collection and forms an important resource for the global research community, many of whom are regular visitors to both the Institute and the library.

As a research library of international standing, we try to ensure that our collections reflect the development of the subject, not only the academic or teaching interests of our staff and students at any particular point in time. As such, it is part of our mission to represent the broadest possible spread of criminological research and to safeguard future access to this knowledge. As a strongly interdisciplinary library in a time of shrinking resources, this is difficult.

The interdisciplinary nature of the subject is a source of both fertility and tension. There is, of course, an obvious sense in which criminology exists as an academic subject in its own right, with a corpus of theory and knowledge, and a history arising from the nineteenth century's twin fixations with taxonomic and social order. But there is also a sense in which it is a meeting ground for other disciplines when their attention turns to rule-breaking. Its core interests of crime and deviance stand as the foundation for the field but are also sites of legitimate and necessary study for many other disciplines. With justification, Ronnie Lippens and Don Crewe recently wrote, "Since its inception, criminology has had trouble answering the question of what it is about"¹. Being interdisciplinary is a great strain on budgets because it means that we need to collect in a range of areas: psychology, psychiatry, sociology, philosophy, policing, prisons, criminal law, sentencing, politics (to cover

¹ Crewe, D. and Lippens, R. 2015 *What Is Criminology About?*, Abingdon, Routledge.

terrorism, for example), as well as the bread and butter material, such as criminological research and theory, social research methods, and the like. Balancing the needs of these diverse fields, along with providing material for both teaching and research requirements, means that resources can sometimes be spread thinly. Looking through publishers' catalogues is always an exercise in listing Essentials and Desirables, and there is always a tug when you must leave behind Desirables in one subject so that you can afford the Essentials in another.

We collect internationally, too, because a lot of criminological research is comparative, and many of our staff and students come to us from overseas. Because crime and deviance research is mature and widespread in the UK, it makes us a good comparator for other jurisdictions. Scandinavia, the United States, Australia, and Japan all have well-developed and long-standing criminological research histories, although crime and justice statistics are increasingly easily available from many more countries and territories across the world. Comparative work also applies to more than just what is criminal in the UK at any one time. The recent history of UK legislation on sexuality is a case in point: from legalisation to same-sex marriage, via equalisation of the age of consent and civil partnerships, in five decades is a strong record to measure against other jurisdictions where attitudes and legislation are repressive or slipping backwards.

The Institute of Criminology is a multilingual community, with around 65% of our students and many academic and research staff, originating from overseas. Apart from specific requests from staff or students, however, we only buy stock written in English, simply as a way to limit expenditure. A steady stream of donations from our international visitors, with whom we often form long-lasting relationships, and from other organisations across the world, means that we do have a small but continuous inflow of current material in other languages.

Like any other subject, criminology is a moving target. New fields of study open up in addition to the existing ones. A few years ago, for instance, in the wake of September 11, criminologists began to engage more widely with the subject of terrorism. With the exception of some interest in and research on the IRA, terrorism had, until then, been very largely the preserve of Political Science. With so much of the public and political conversation about these matters, though, it became clear to criminologists that we already knew a lot about the issues that were on everyone's minds. The basis of terrorism, of course, is fear of crime and that has been a subject of criminological interest and research for a long time. Violent crime, social exclusion, and the policing of minority ethnic communities are also evident areas of expertise. But there are less obvious ones too, which have contributed to a growing understanding. The extortion and black markets used to fund terrorism are an example, where terrorist networks cross over into drug markets and become comparable to organised crime bodies. Much of the early intensity of that time has passed in the years since but some aspects have stayed live and become embedded in the subject. The issue of religious radicalisation in prisons is still very current, for example. New perspectives come about and older ones evolve. Biological criminology goes quiet for a while then resurfaces as neurological criminology, perhaps more closely aligned with forensic psychiatry. How important and prolific will green criminology be in the future? And there's the debate over whether we should be studying crime and deviance or whether we should be studying harm.

In Cambridge, we are lucky to work in a broader environment of library and information provision. The university has over 40 departmental and faculty libraries, plus the University Library itself, a legal deposit library with approximately 8 million items that adds 100,000 more each year. The 31 colleges each have working libraries which, whilst being generalist rather than subject specialist, provide material for a great many courses across the university.

Most colleges, too, house special collections of early printed books and manuscripts, invaluable to scholarly research. Until relatively recently, purchase of journals was done individually, library by library, each dealing with different agents and publishers. Over the last few years, as journals have moved almost entirely online, periodical budgets and purchasing have been centralised, eliminating duplication and giving us all immediate access to a vastly broader range of titles. We no longer need to send our forensic psychiatrists on a bus ride to the other end of the city, in search of journal articles from the Medical Library. We do, however, need to keep a close eye on the book stock of our sibling libraries in related fields, to ensure that duplication is kept to a necessary minimum.

We are lucky, too, to have a close relationship with so many of our readers. Donald West, a former Director of the Institute, wrote in 2009, “from its earliest days, the library has always been for me, and I suspect for many others, the heart of the Institute²”. Supporting the work of postgraduate students, project staff and academics, many of them early career researchers, means that library staff can get to know the interests and workloads of readers in some depth: our involvement goes far beyond the quick issue-and-return transactions common in fast-turnover teaching libraries. Much of the research carried out by our readers involves offenders, especially prisoners, and the library reflects this in some of our own outreach relationships. In particular, the library holds and displays an extensive collection of artworks. Most are works made by offenders and other people in places of confinement, purchased through the Koestler Trust³. This is a charity that works with prisoners, patients in secure hospitals, and other detainees, to provide opportunities to participate and achieve in the arts. The Koestler Trust holds an exhibition of these artworks each autumn, with categories covering visual arts, crafts, music, poetry and prose; anthologies of the writing are published each year. Of the prisoners and patients who enter a piece of work, around one in four wins a cash prize. Where artworks are sold, half the cost goes to the artist and half is shared equally by the Koestler Trust and Victim Support. We buy these works from library fines, so the delinquency of our own readers helps to contribute to the rehabilitation of others. To make a successful piece of art – a picture, a pot, a poem – means to make something that communicates directly with other people. The only way to do that is to be honest, about yourself and with yourself. In turn, that requires the courage to face shaming truths. That can be the start of an extremely important process of recovery and rehabilitation. It may not be that painting pictures will save anyone’s life but learning to paint honest pictures can help someone start to build a healthier life.

Our involvement with the Koestler Trust has changed the library too. It has become a more distinctive place, both visually and in the quality of our working practice. It is part of the library’s continuing engagement with aspects of the criminal justice system outside the academic estate and beyond the usual profile of our readership. The artworks also stand as a clear visual marker of the choices that we make. Readers will almost never ask me why I choose to buy a particular book for the library stock; they trust that the decision arises from professional knowledge and experience. But, in the few weeks after each new piece of art goes on display in the library, there is at least one conversation about the process of choice each day. In the nicest possible way, and always asked from genuine curiosity, people want to know, what were you thinking when you bought this?

Writing about the ethics of library classification, Jens-Erik Mai noted that libraries present

2 Walston, C. 2009 *Challenging Crime*, London: Third Millennium

3 <http://www.koestlertrust.org.uk/>

themselves as "neutral and independent spaces for intellectual and personal inquiry"⁴. As working librarians, ethical abstractions are rarely our most immediate concern and so our presentation of this image can often be unreflective and habitual. But libraries are formed and stewarded by people with their own histories and beliefs, assumptions, hopes and intentions, and specifically through the choices those people make – consciously or not. Part of the purpose of our art collection is to remind our readers and ourselves that the library is not an institution. It is a continuous enterprise, a collaboration between staff and readers that requires conscious and purposeful engagement. Our library is not a place, or a series of collections in a place, it is an ongoing human endeavour that belongs to everyone who takes part in it.

⁴ Mai, J-E. 2013 Ethics, Values and Morality in Contemporary Library Classifications, Knowledge Organization 40: 242-253