



DC BOOKS TO PRISONS

A busy 2025 at DC Books to Prisons!

We accomplished a lot at DC Books to Prisons this past year, sending more than 6,500 bundles of books (an average of 3 books per bundle) in response to individual written requests from people in federal and state prisons across the country

To increase our reach within the prisons we serve, in October we cut the time people must wait to request books from us from five months to four.

We met and exceeded our fundraising goal in 2025 thanks to the hard work of our volunteers and the support of all of our generous donors! This will allow us to handle the increase in letters we anticipate for the coming year.

And not including training sessions, we had over 100 different people volunteer with DC Books to Prisons in 2025.

Check out our newsletter and see all that we did in 2025!



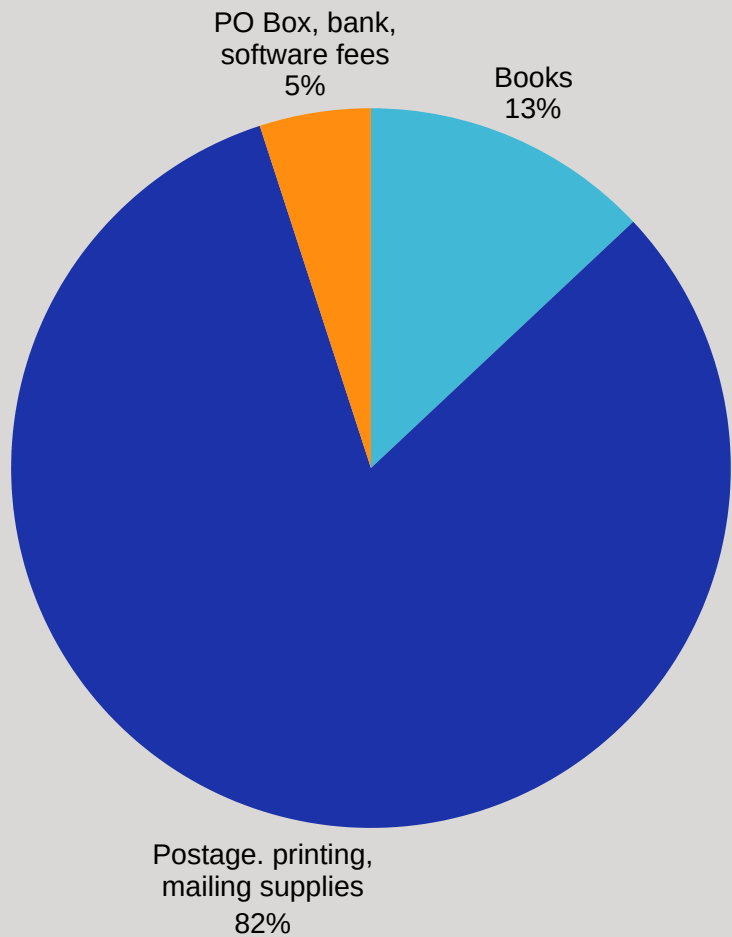
Mission Statement

DC Books to Prisons works to provide a wide variety of informative, educational and enjoyable reading material, free of charge, to inmates in US prisons. We prioritize inmates in underserved regions and respond to individual inmates' requests, whenever possible including short personal notes (which are sometimes as important as the books we send). Efforts include selected secondary projects to address the gap in resources and access to reading material.

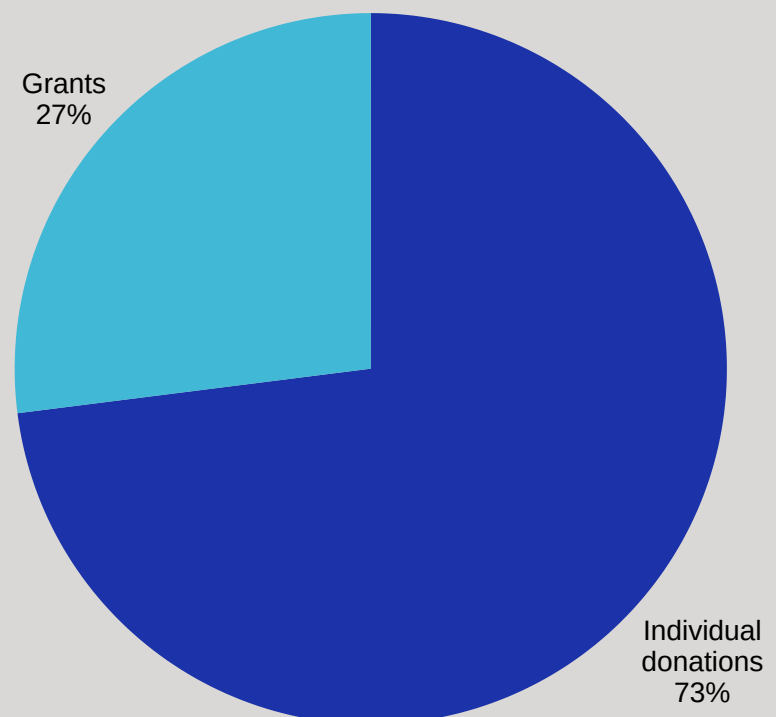
We believe that books can change lives. They can change the way people view the world, other people, and themselves, provide an education, provide a vocabulary, and open minds to new possibilities.

Expenses

Workspace donated by The Foundry United Methodist Church, all staff unpaid volunteers



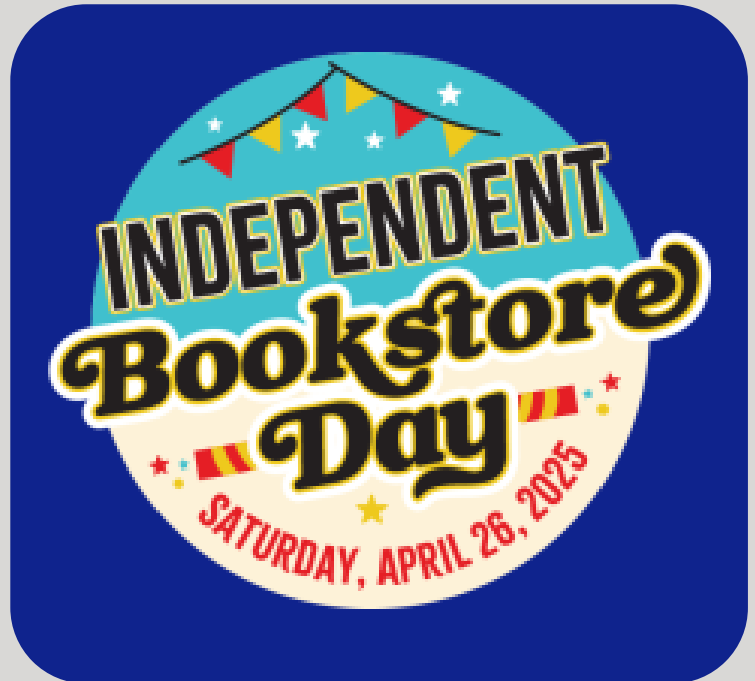
Donations



Independent Bookstore Day book drive and fundraiser

From April 21-May 5, we once again held a book drive in conjunction with Independent Bookstore Day on April 26. Along with the book drive, a donor matched the purchase price of all books with a cash donation. Over 200 books were donated off our [Politics and Prose](#) and [bookshop.org](#) independent bookstore wishlists!

Keep an eye out for our 2026 Independent Bookstore Day book drive in April!



Copaganda

Author Alec Karakatsanis of [Civil Rights Corps](#) donated 50 copies of his recent book *Copaganda: How Police and the Media Manipulate Our News*, a very provocative work that clearly shows the link media, security forces, universities, and “liberal” politicians have in growing the increasingly repressive security state and ensuring unequal justice. We sent 36 to the prison book clubs we support, and the rest went on our shelves to fulfill individual requests.




BOOK DRIVE

INSPIRED BY [PUBLIC DEFENDER](#), A FILM BY AWARD-WINNING DIRECTOR, ANDREA KALIN
SCREENING AT 7:00 PM ON [JANUARY 9, 2025](#) AT THE [MLK MEMORIAL LIBRARY](#)

GOT A SPARE OR GENTLY USED PAPERBACK BOOK?
Bring it to our **FREE** Public Defender screening where your donation will make a difference in the life of an incarcerated person. All donations will go to [DC Books to Prisons](#).

WE'RE LOOKING FOR:

- Career and Personal Development Books i.e. Dictionaries and GED Preparation
- History, Culture, and Language Books i.e. Biographies and Language-Learning
- Recent Fiction i.e. Westerns and Comics





Public Defender book drive

The producers of the documentary [Public Defender](#), along with screenings of their film, have been holding book drives across the country for organizations like ours, and on January 16 we were the beneficiaries of their work for the second time.

Thank you for the service you provide to inmates around the country. The gift of books and knowledge is priceless.

– Daniel from Maryland



Banned Books Week book drive and fundraiser

Prisons and jails ban more books than all public schools and libraries across the country combined, and the bans keep expanding. Reasons given include format, condition, content, size, quantity, source, or the made-up fear they are all dipped in fentanyl. In order to bring awareness to this problem, and help serve those we can, the annual Banned Books Week Book Drive and Fundraiser was held from October 5-11. Expanding our book store partners, with Solid State Books in DC and People's Book in Takoma Park joining us, the campaign brought in 406 new books filling important needs, for our most successful book drive yet. In addition, a donor gave us a matching donation equal to the price of the books. We also spent an afternoon tabling at Solid State Books, joining the Penguin/Random House Banned Wagon to bring further awareness to this issue and our organization.



Supporting book clubs

In 2025, with help from our Independent Bookstore and Banned Books Week book drives and donations off our book club wish list, we sent 272 books in total to the prison book clubs we support in three states. Copies of *Catcher in the Rye*, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, *The Light Between Oceans*, *All About Love*, *The Four Agreements*, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, and 14 others were sent out this year.

Life in Colors

Most days are gray with more of the same, a concrete box built on a steel frame. Waking in darkness a world gone black, a ray of sunlight shines through the crack. The toilet is metal and so is the sink, a pot to piss in below a faucet to drink. The cell doors open the cell doors close, into the dayroom dressed in all white clothes. Sitting at a silver table shaped like a square, a blank sheet of paper mirrors a blank state. I don't want today to be like all the others, want to live a life filled with colors.

Catching redfish off the South Jetty on 4th of July, blinking lights in the channel guide ships passing by. Magical memories with my son and daughter, dazzling fireworks reflect off the water. Night sky illuminated with a thousand flares, ice cold drinks and fold-up chairs. A Coleman cooler with a matching tent, a beachside view with free rent. An ocean breeze calms a long burning desire, driftwood embers glow deep in the fire.

Autumn arrives as daylight dies, bronze leaves fall below tangerine skies. Kids in costumes roam the streets, plotting their tricks while searching for treats. The dead come crawling from deep underground, spirits of lost souls longing to be found. Artists grotesquely transform pumpkins, into ghastly ghouls with gruesome grins. Rewards are sweet if you can handle the scene, the creepy candy carnival of Halloween.

Sunshine sparkles through light showers, glistening meadows of golden flowers. Harmonious honey bees merry melodies canaries sing, soaking in the soothing symphonies of spring. A good book with a glass of lemonade, a poolside umbrella sharing some shade. Homecooked dinner alongside a handpicked bouquet, the perfect present for Mother's Day. A moonlit evening under a chandelier of stars, a cityscape of electric lightning bugs in jars.

Green lights signal it's time to go, a world beyond where wild things grow. Stray from the path to destinations unknown, off the grid yet never alone. Chameleon like creatures blended into the trees, emerald eyes the outside never sees. Beef jerky, trail mix, and bottle of Mountain Dew, clouds clearing on the horizon bring twin peaks into view. Hours of hiking allows the weight on my shoulders to cease, after years of struggle I finally find peace.

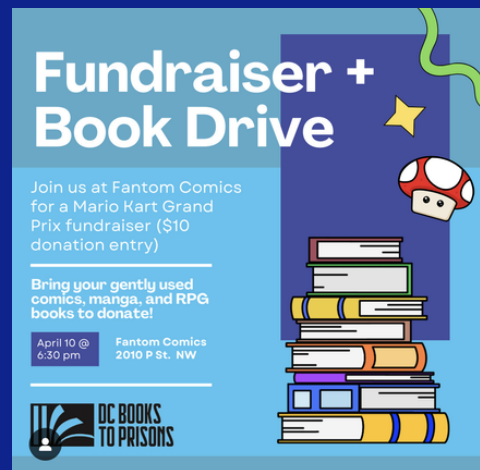
Drifting across an endless sea... my past, present, and future surround me. A blue marlin drowns in sorrow and becomes a shark, a two-faced hurricane floods a town in the dark. Rivers of fire water lead happy people to madness, trapped water lead happy people to madness, trapped under ice forever frozen in sadness. Although we all fall have hope and be brave, it takes courage and patience to get back on that wave. I'm ready to change my life and live for something more, the surf rises with the tide and carries me back to shore.

Theater curtains open to my daughter's dance recital, Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory is this years' title. Her elegant dress shimmers under a violet light, the stage displays my life's most beautiful sight. A basketball tournament takes me to a gym, shots and players flying above the rim. Just as I'm thinking this can't get any sweeter, my son steps back for a game-winning buzzer beater. There's no place like home whether in Oz or Kansas, a colorful life awaits me in Port Arkansas.

- Brian from Texas (used with permission)

The book is perfect and I cannot express in words how grateful I am to you, I could not have asked for more. God bless you. I wish there were more people in this world like you. I know each and everyone of us have kind hearts, some of us are just too tough (scared) to let them shine. Again, thank you from the bottom of my heart. It's truly a wonderful feeling to have people I have never met care for me, you are a light for us all.

- P. from Arizona

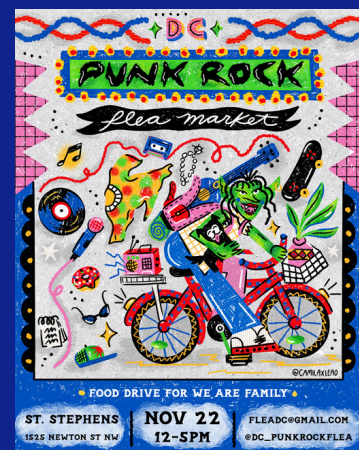


Gamer night fundraising and book drive

Comics, Manga, and RPGs are very popular requests from those we serve. On April 10 our friends at Fantom Comics in DC hosted a Mario Kart Grand Prix fundraiser and book drive that helped stock our shelves and raise money to send them off.

DC Punk Rock Flea Market

For the second year in a row we tabled at the DC Punk Rock Flea Market, which was packed with people eager to hear about us and what we do. Zines were sold, names were added to our email list (maybe yours!), and some signed up to be trained!



[illegible]

If you have yet to be trained as a volunteer and would like to, please email us at bttopdc@gmail.com to be added to our orientation wait list. Those on the wait list will be notified via email when training times become available.

Forgotten Treasures



"I want you to keep this letter and read it in times of difficulty." This sentence appears near the end of a deeply moving letter of love and support. Was it a letter from a volunteer to a prisoner? No. Was it a letter from a prisoner to a volunteer? Also no.

The letter was sent to a person who did not, as far as we know, have any connection to anyone in prison. The person apparently treasured the letter, keeping it flat within the pages of a book. Unfortunately, the letter was forgotten when the book was later given away.



We find similar items in used books almost every week. Some appear to have been placed in books for safekeeping, while others were clearly being used as bookmarks. Items have included a child's artwork, family photos, two prescriptions from an gastroenterologist for controlled substances, pressed flowers, a tax form (complete with enough information to steal the recipient's identity), a lottery ticket, dollar bills, business cards, a membership card for a golf club, and airplane boarding passes. Recently, a volunteer learned about purchases her spouse had made when she discovered three of his credit card receipts in a book.

We check books carefully before sending them, both to protect the privacy of book donors and to prevent the incarcerated recipients of books from getting in trouble for possessing "contraband". However, we are seldom able to reunite the misplaced treasures found within books with their rightful owners.

Every Wednesday, people find their way to our room carrying used books to donate to us. Some arrive wearing bicycle helmets, lugging only as many books as they can fit in their backpacks. Others come by car, bringing two boxes filled with books. People with larger donations are encouraged to email us at btopdc@gmail.com to make arrangements. But, if you plan to donate books to us, please flip through them first and remove any items you find. You might find something you may want to keep.



Eaton DC

We're thrilled to thank Eaton DC for their generous sponsorship during their Season of Giving! Their book drive brought in boxes of dictionaries (still our most requested book!) and many other donations. Eaton DC is not your typical hotel and a co-working space - they take their connection to the community and mission-driven hospitality very seriously.



DCivitas

DCivitas is a pro bono nonprofit consulting organization made up of Georgetown U. students that each school year choose local DC non-profits to help on issues such as data analysis, outreach, marketing and other growth initiatives. For 2025-26, they chose DC Books to Prisons as one of the groups they would help. We are excited to work with these students as they bring their ideas on improving our organization both behind the scenes and before the public.

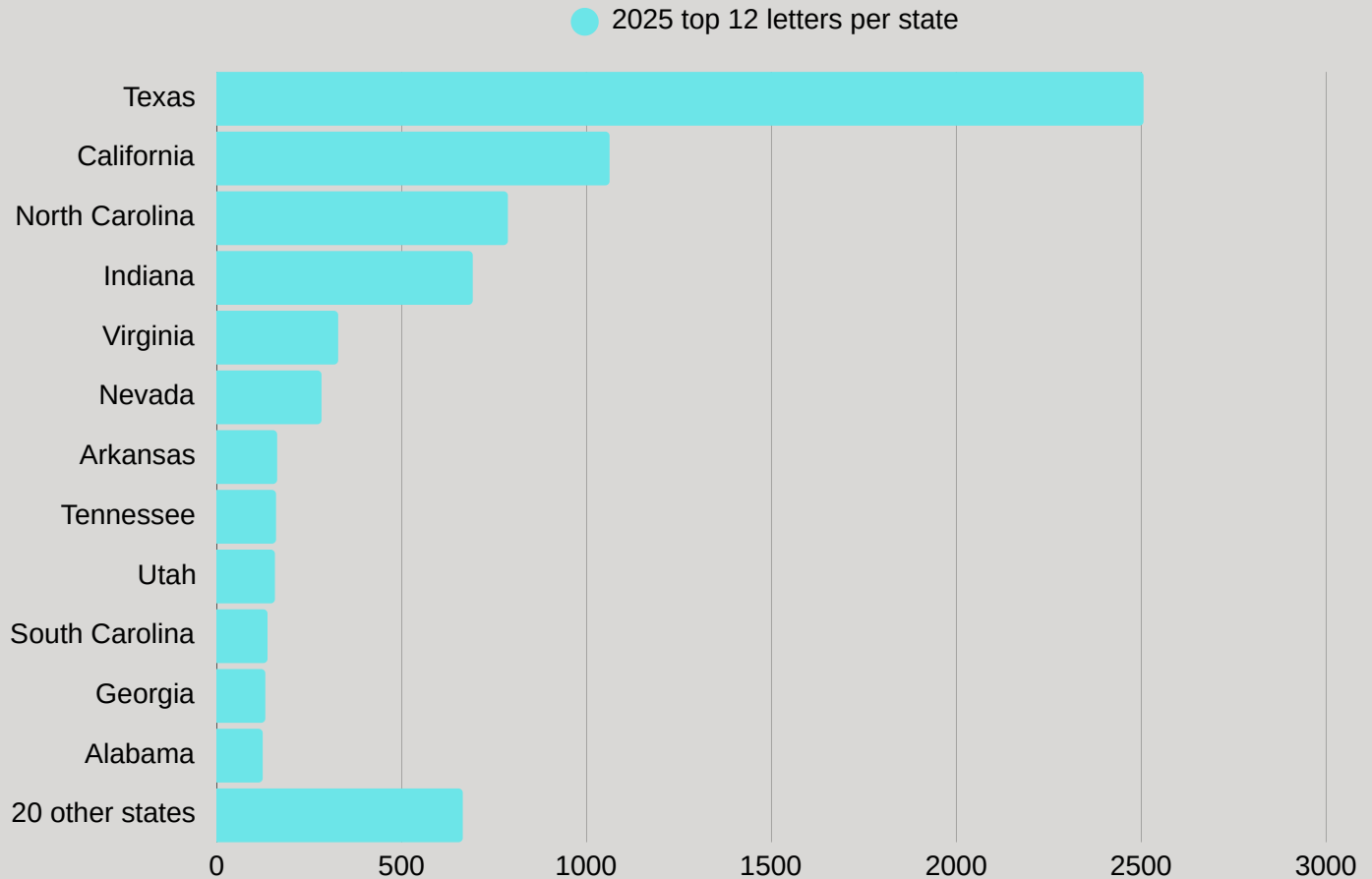


Georgetown Day School

We again hosted students from the GDS Summer Policy Institute in June who chose to focus on studying the criminal justice system. Visiting our room at The Foundry, they learned about the work we do to serve the incarcerated and answered some letters themselves.

"Here's hoping you had a wonderful holiday. My season lasted all year because of the many thoughtfully selected books you've sent throughout 2025"

- Thomas from North Carolina



My Son's Biggest Fear

My prison sentence is almost over and the time to go home is almost near.
 My family is getting anxious and my son begins to fear.
 "Will he really be there or was it all a lie?"
 Hearing my little man say this makes me want to cry.
 I want so bad to hold him and for him to hear me say,
 I will be there for him each and every day.
 Right now I cannot be there but I want so bad to be,
 But I'll guarantee to show him the proof he wants to see.
 I'll be there for the good and be there through the bad,
 And although it will hurt to see it, I'll be there when he's sad.
 He says he does not know me because I have been absent all these years,
 And all I have ever done was cause him a tremendous amount of tears.
 I cannot really blame him for how he really feels,
 But thinking of life without my son gives me all sorts of chills.
 So I will do what I've got to, to prove to him I'll be there,
 I'll be the perfect Dad and show him how much I care.

- Stephen from West Virginia (used with permission)



Book Wrapping for Christmas

Twice in the month before Christmas our friends at Solid State Books on H St. let us set up a table and wrap books for their customers. While the wrapping was free, there were plenty of donations for our work and multiple people signed up for volunteer training as we spread the word about DC BtP!

Book Drive for Mental Health Awareness Month



Many people in prison have limited access to books and educational material. Yet, many want to better themselves and improve their mental health through reading, learning, and journaling.

Purchase a book or journal for our DC Books to Prisons collection box and receive 5% off your total purchase.* DC Books to Prisons will send the book directly to someone incarcerated in the United States.

Founded in 1999, DC Books to Prisons provides free books to individuals in prison and works to develop and support prison libraries. DC Books to Prisons is a fully volunteer run 501(c)(3) nonprofit located in Washington DC.

Each year, we send more than 7,000 book packages to people incarcerated in over 600 prisons in the United States.

Visit dcbookstoprisoners.org to learn more.

*Discount is available on shop merchandise and snacks. Ticketing and memberships excluded.

Mental Health Book Drive

For the month of May the President Lincoln's Cottage Museum held a book drive for much needed books on mental health.

More news!

In 2025 BtP volunteers brought 15 boxes holding more than 500 children's and YA books to the library at the Residential Institution for Children & Adolescents in Baltimore. In addition, volunteers sent holiday cards for the kids to use for art or to write notes to their friends and facility staff.

Every two months, the St. John Norwood Episcopal Church community in Chevy Chase donates at least 8 boxes full of great books!

American University students and staff are great supporters, with regular book drives by various student organizations, including law students and AU's Zero Waste project, bringing in books that have been rescued from professors and students' vacated premises!

The Cleveland Park DC Public Library regularly gives us carefully chosen books, plus whatever we want from their book sales!

The books you send us warms our minds and imaginations and the love you include by offering up your time and effort selecting the books warms our hearts. I do not have words strong enough to express my gratitude and appreciation for you.

- Ronald from Arkansas

Support us!

As an entirely volunteer-run organization working from a donated space, every dime we raise is spent fulfilling our mission as an organization. You can support our work with a monetary donation through [this Paypal link](#) or the QR code below. You can also send a check to -
DC Books to Prisons
PO Box 34190
Washington DC 20043-4190.



What to come in 2026...

We will continue to seek out ways to expand our reach within the prison populations we serve. In February we will start stamping the inside covers of most of the books we send, so that when they are passed around to others they can learn about us.

We will continue to seek out new and build upon existing collaborations with local independent book stores.

We will seek out new opportunities to participate in community events to bring greater awareness of our work

We will start the year increasing the number of new volunteer training sessions to two a month.

And we will continue to answer individual requests for books from the incarcerated across the country.

You have no idea the relief those donated books brings to some of us. No idea at all. Thank you for your kindness.

- Eugenio from Texas