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READING ROOM

Clearinghouse for Offender Literacy Programs

Final Report  
1974 - 1975

# FINAL REPORT

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## CLEARINGHOUSE FOR OFFENDER LITERACY PROGRAMS

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**AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION**

**CLEARINGHOUSE FOR OFFENDER LITERACY PROGRAMS**

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The American Bar Association's Clearinghouse for Offender Literacy, funded through the National Institute of Corrections, LEAA, and cosponsored by the American Correctional Association and the National Association for Public Continuing and Adult Education completed its thirteen month effort as of October 31, 1975. Focusing on literacy training and student oriented publications, the Clearinghouse had two major objectives:

- To train correctional educators in methods and techniques of teaching reading to functionally illiterate offenders.
- To train correctional educators in methods of recruiting, training, and evaluating volunteers.

It has been toward these objectives that the Clearinghouse has operated. Following is a specific account of the activities, goals and accomplishments of the past year.

#### **TRAINING CONFERENCES**

Five regional training conferences were held between November, 1974 and April, 1975. A total of 602 correctional educators representing 48 states participated in these conferences.

##### **Region A Conference**

A total of 103 correctional educators met in Chicago, Illinois on November 20-21, 1974. The states represented at this workshop were Illinois, Missouri, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Indiana, Ohio and Michigan.

##### **Region B Conference**

A total of 137 correctional educators met in Washington, D.C. on December 5-6, 1974. The states represented at this workshop were Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware, New York, Maryland, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Jersey and the District of Columbia.

### Region C Conference

A total of 138 correctional educators met in Atlanta, Georgia on January 30-31, 1975. The states represented at this workshop were Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina, Mississippi and Kentucky.

### Region D Conference

A total of 120 correctional educators met in San Francisco, California on February 27-28, 1975. The states represented at this workshop were Alaska, Arizona, California, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington.

### Region E Conference

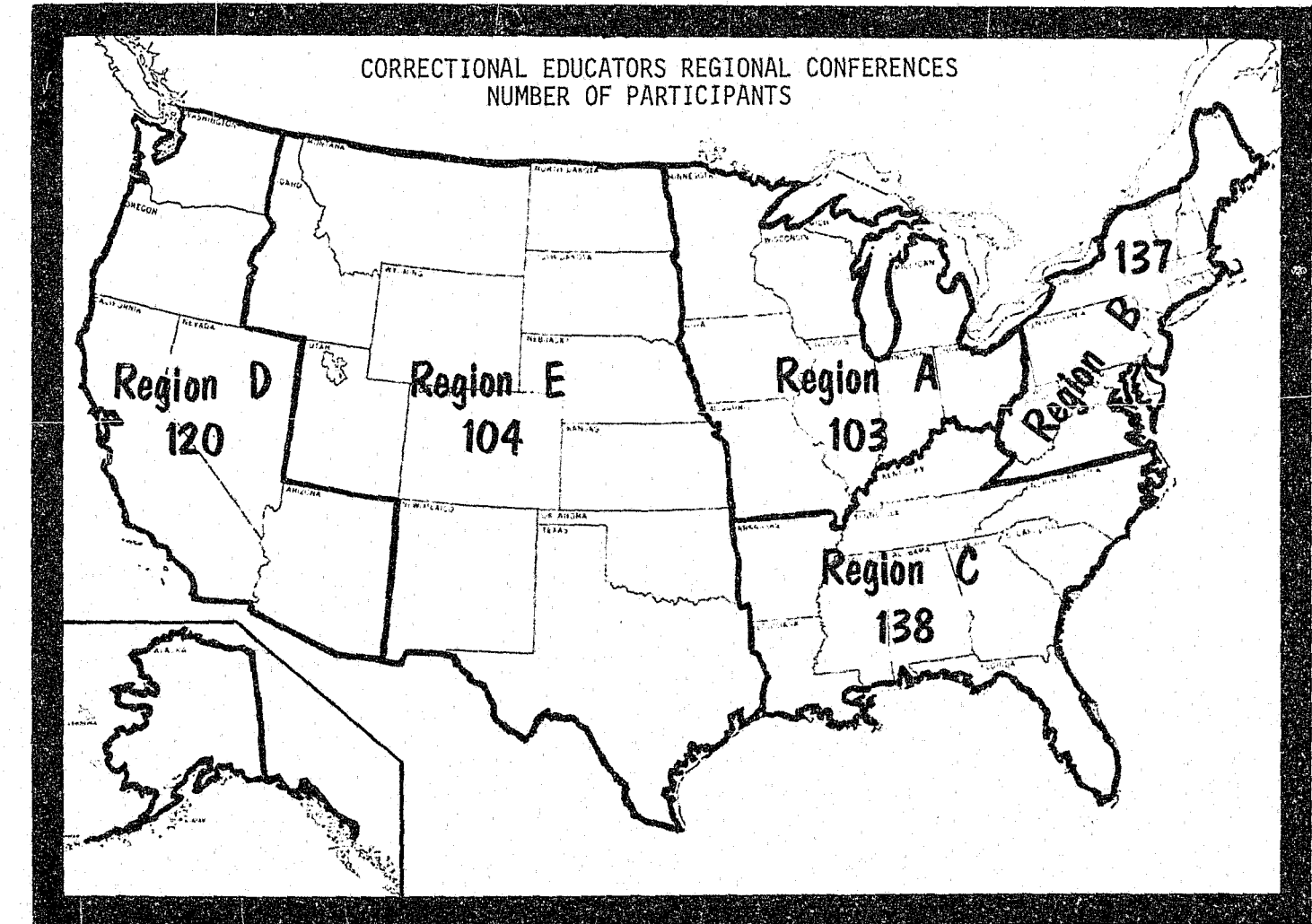
A total of 104 correctional educators met in Denver, Colorado on April 17-18, 1975. The states represented at this workshop were Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Utah, North Dakota, Nebraska and Montana.

The organization of regional conferences throughout the nation is illustrated on page 3.

### Conference Format

The major objectives of each conference focused on training volunteers and teaching functional illiterates. Sessions devoted to the "volunteer" component stressed the following: How and where to recruit volunteers; How much and what type of training volunteers need; How to evaluate volunteers; and, Presentations by successful volunteer coordinators.

Those sessions devoted to the "literacy" component stressed comprehension techniques taught through music, survival packages, comics and games; and major approaches to teaching the functional illiterate such as the language experience approach and word attack techniques. Opportunities were provided for brainstorming activities and question-answer sessions as well as an information session on funding sources for correctional education.



Participants at each conference had the opportunity to evaluate the conference. These evaluations were used by the Clearinghouse staff in organizing the next conference. Additionally three "outside" evaluators attended the conferences in San Francisco and Denver. Overall conference strengths, as indicated by the evaluators, were: A high degree of participant involvement; An emphasis on practical ideas; Good use of media and audio-visual aids; and A high degree of expertise and efficiency exhibited by the Clearinghouse staff in planning and conducting the conferences.

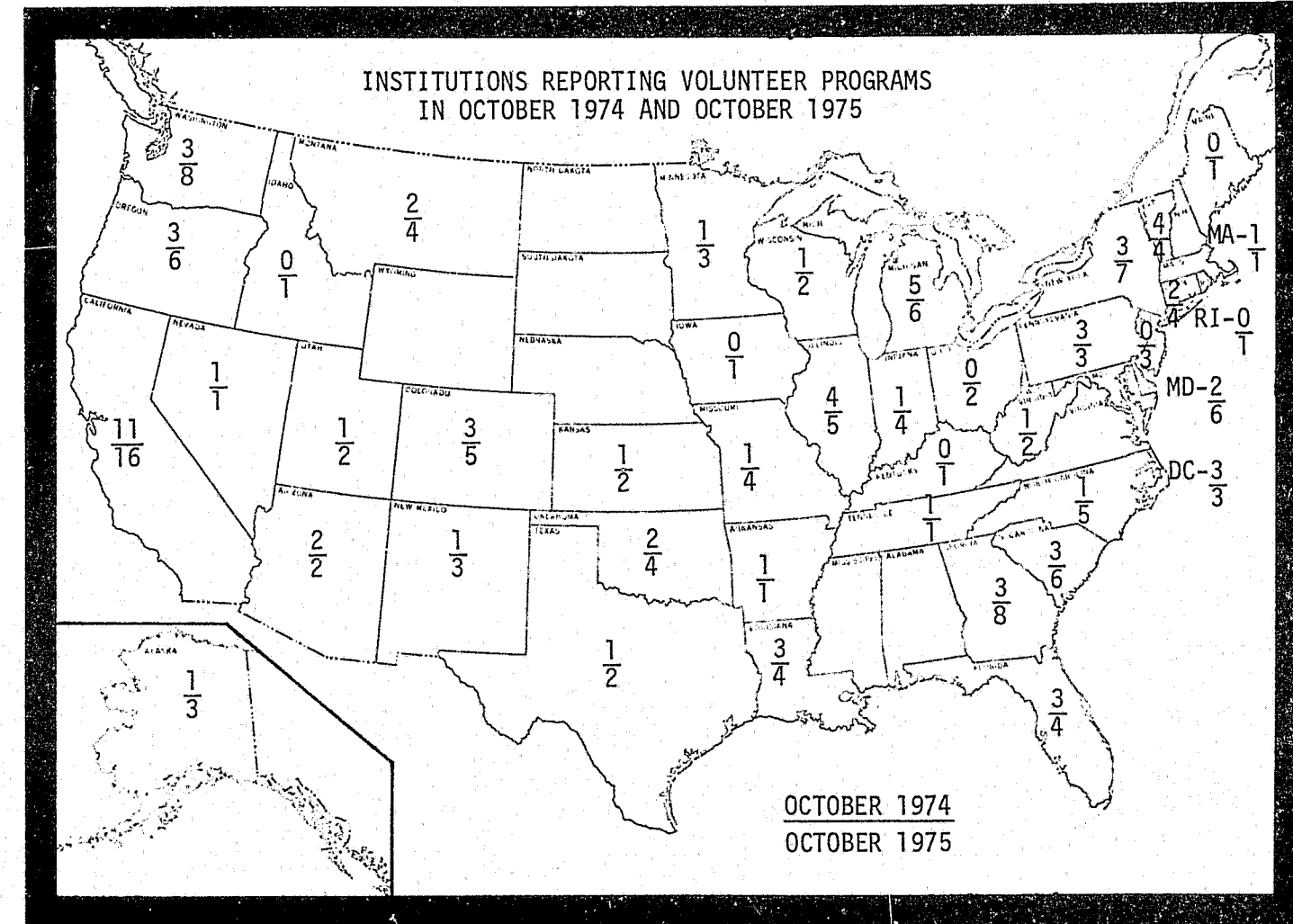
### Volunteer Training Component

All conference participants were trained in using volunteers within correctional institutions. Prior to the Clearinghouse conferences a small number of correctional institutions utilized volunteers. Most of the volunteers were from "outside" the institution, yet a few institutions used inmate volunteers.

A survey was sent to all institutions which had correctional educators in attendance at a Clearinghouse training conference. A total of 256 institutions representing 46 states responded to the survey. Of these 256 institutions, 151 have developed volunteer programs as a result of the Clearinghouse conferences. See illustration on page 5. Specifically, 29% of the 256 institutions had no volunteer program prior to October 1974 but have instituted volunteer programs prior to October 1975. Of the 256 institutions, 30% had volunteer programs prior to October 1974 and have continued and expanded these programs. A number of institutions (41%) have not been affected by their involvement in the training conferences. Three of these institutions indicated that volunteers were *not* permitted in their institutions.

### Volunteers Trained

Since November 1, 1974 a total of 1,025 volunteers have been trained to work in correctional education programs. Of these 1,025, 270 are inmate volunteers and 755 are from the outside. The average volunteer works with 7 inmates a week for 10 hours per week. These figures are based on the aforementioned survey of 256 institutions. A breakdown of this data by sex and age is illustrated on page 6.



VOLUNTEERS IN CORRECTIONS				
	VOLUNTEERS TRAINED IN CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION		AVERAGE HOURS PER WEEK SPENT TUTORING	AVERAGE NUMBER OF INMATES TUTORED PER VOLUNTEER
	INMATE VOLUNTEERS	OUTSIDE VOLUNTEERS		
JUVENILE MALE INSTITUTIONS	35	207	8	6.47
JUVENILE FEMALE INSTITUTIONS	6	48	7.16	4.66
JUVENILE CO-EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS	5	77	10.83	6.15
ADULT MALE INSTITUTIONS	201	337	14.85	9.68
ADULT FEMALE INSTITUTIONS	3	31	9.66	11.16
ADULT CO-EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS	20	55	10.8	6.05

### FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY AMONG THE CORRECTIONAL POPULATION

Since the major focus of the Clearinghouse workshops was on literacy training an account of how many functional illiterates there are among the nation's correctional institutions was undertaken. For the purposes of this survey, *functional illiteracy* is defined as not being able to read above the fifth grade level. Translated into everyday life, this means that a person labeled "functionally illiterate" cannot read most newspapers and magazines, road signs, package directions, job applications, forms and agreements. This person is *unable* to function in a literate society.

Institutions from 46 states responded to a survey that asked what percentage of their respective populations is functionally illiterate. Since each institution uses different diagnostic instruments to assess reading ability it is almost impossible to assign an average reading level to the correctional population. Subsequently, each institution reported the percentage of functional illiterates as assessed by instruments within that institution.

The data indicate that 34% of the juvenile population is functionally illiterate with a range from 8% to 81%. Among the adult population 20% are functionally illiterate with a range from 6% to 60%. These figures are based on a total reporting correctional population of 93,284. A breakdown of this population by sex follows.

- Within adult male institutions 23% of the population is functionally illiterate.
- Within adult female institutions 12% of the population is functionally illiterate.
- Within the adult coeducational institutions 25% of the population is functionally illiterate.
- Within female juvenile institutions 32% of the population is functionally illiterate.
- Within male juvenile institutions 36% of the population is functionally illiterate.
- Within juvenile coeducational institutions 35% of the population is functionally illiterate.



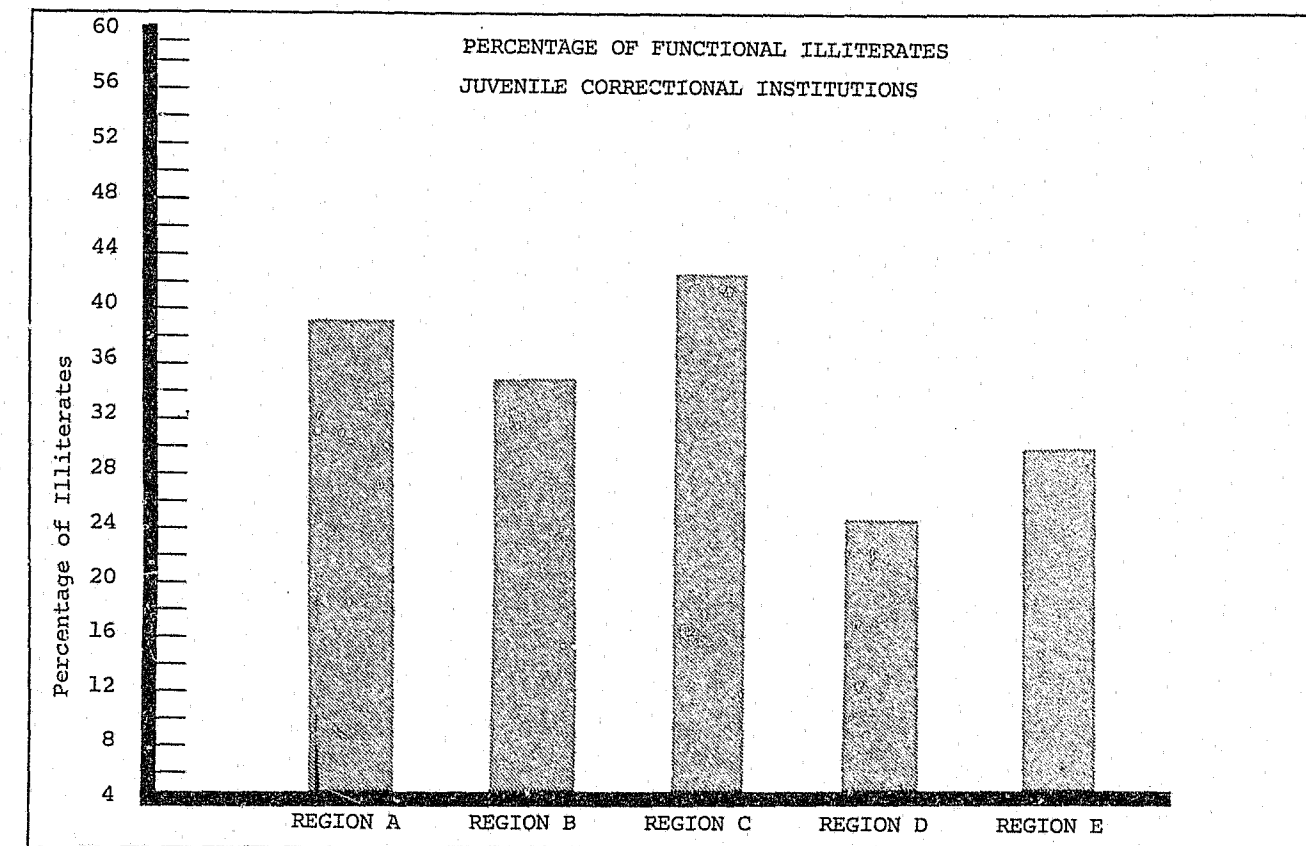
A regional breakdown for the juvenile population is indicated by the graph on page 9. The institutions in Region A indicate a functionally illiterate population of 39%; Region B—35%; Region C—43%; Region D—25%; and Region E—30%.

Among the adult institutions reporting, those in Region A indicate a functionally illiterate population of 24%; in Region B—22%; Region C—27%; Region D—15%; and Region E—16%. This breakdown is represented by the graph on page 10. Implications for further study in the field of literacy and corrections are: Standardization of diagnostic instruments and, an indication of potential of those being tested.

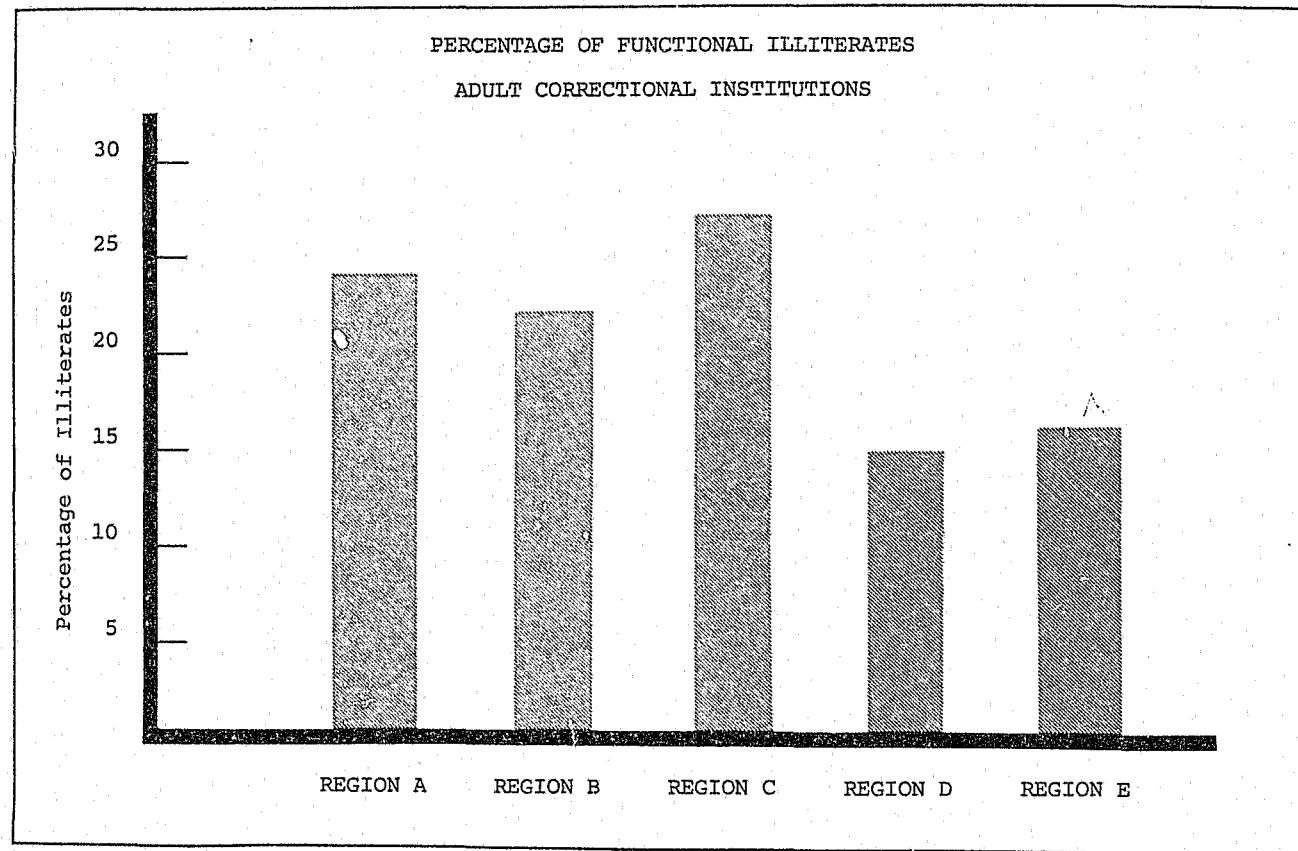
## PUBLICATIONS

An attempt was made to produce material for correctional educators to use in the teaching of reading and the language arts. The following publications are a result of that effort.

- A series of learning packets for individualized use among the inmate population. These packets focused on vocabulary development and comprehension skills necessary in applying for *Food Stamps*, establishing a *Checking Account*, and completing a *Loan Application*.
- A profile on the *Sybil Brand Institute* and its unique educational opportunities for women offenders.
- Curriculum for Improving Communication Skills, A Language Arts Handbook* with 20 sample lessons designed specifically for offenders.
- A series of *News Notes*, a publication with practical ideas for correctional educators.
- Literacy: Problems and Solutions, a Resource Handbook for Correctional Educators*, including diagnostic material, a review of commercially prepared material, a review of volunteers in corrections, and sample methods and techniques for teaching reading.







## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES

The Clearinghouse staff provided three general types of services:

1. *On-site follow-up workshops* for correctional educators who attended the initial regional conferences and requested "back-home" assistance.
2. *Information* in the form of research, reviews, letters and phone calls provided to any correctional educators requesting same.
3. *Mailing Clearinghouse publications* to any correctional institution requesting them, in addition to the 2,000 listings on the Clearinghouse mailing list.

Following is an account of the activities within each of these three areas.

### On-site Visits

A total of nine follow-up workshops were held. Two of these were for single institutions, the Warrendale Youth Center in Pennsylvania, and a Halfway House in Washington, D.C. Both of these institutions involved their total faculties in designing new educational programs. The remaining seven workshops were statewide efforts, organized by the respective state's correctional personnel and usually involving one or more teachers from every correctional institution within the state. Workshops offering additional methods and techniques in the teaching of reading to correctional educators were offered in the following states.

1. Stockton, California—for all the Northern California Youth Institutions.
2. Baton Rouge, Louisiana—for all correctional institutions.
3. Atlanta, Georgia—for adult institutions in Florida and Georgia.
4. Columbus, Ohio—for all juvenile institutions.

5. Geneva, Illinois—for all juvenile institutions.
6. Hartford, Connecticut—for the Connecticut Correctional School District.
7. Bordentown, New Jersey—for the New Jersey Correctional School District.

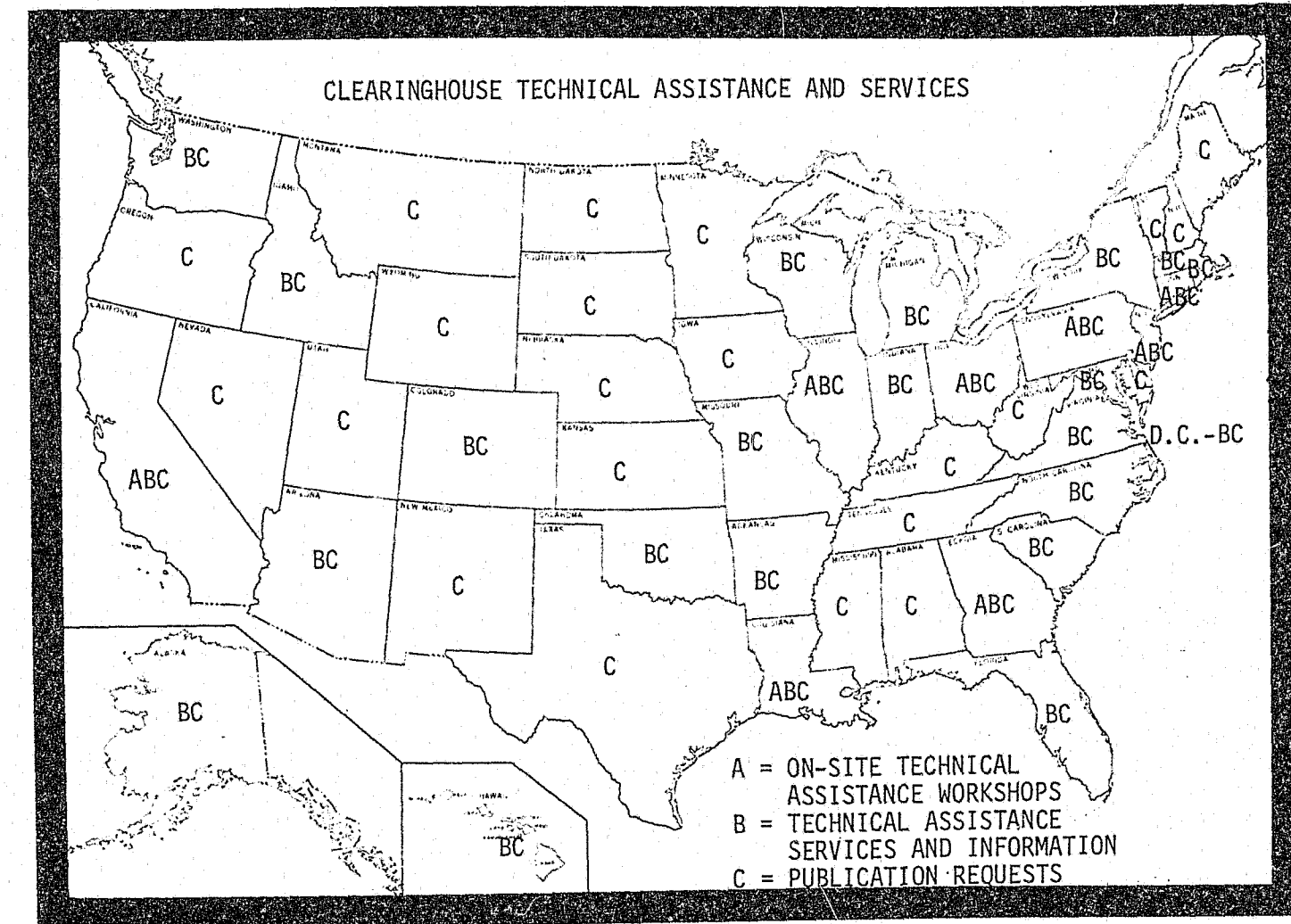
### Technical Services and Information

Thirty-eight major requests for information and services were filled. Among these were endorsement of projects, job placements of teachers in correctional institutions, vocational aid, volunteer referrals, material dissemination, involving minority volunteers in corrections, employment of ex-offenders, funding resource agencies, volunteer training and answering prisoner help letters.

### Publication Requests

A total of 17,500 publications were mailed to all 50 states. Of these 12,460 were complimentary mailings to all correctional institutions on the Clearinghouse mailing list which totals approximately 2,000. A total of 822 requests (in addition to the complimentary mailings) were filled; 580 to correctional institutions, and 242 to non-correctional institutions, organizations, and individuals. From these 822 requests, 4,780 publications were mailed.

The map on page 13 indicates the type of technical assistance each state received from the Clearinghouse.



## COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

Members of the Clearinghouse staff have served other related projects throughout the year. These efforts helped to strengthen support for improved correctional education. Some of these activities included:

- a. Serving on the Board of Directors for the Education Commission of the States Corrections Project.
- b. Serving on the Board of Directors for the National Association for Public Continuing and Adult Education.
- c. Serving on the Board of Directors for the College Reading Association.
- d. Speaking to the Washington Educational Press Association.
- e. Speaking at the Western Correctional Association's Annual Conference.
- f. Speaking at the National Conference on Female Correctional Programming.
- g. Participating in three national radio programs on correctional education.
- h. Working with the ABA Resource Center on Women Offenders to conduct a survey of educational opportunities for female offenders, and to publish and disseminate this information throughout the country.

## IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

An in-kind matching factor of total project costs was derived from conference/workshop trainee compensated time in the amount of \$50,000 from 602 regional conference participants and 250 follow-up workshop participants.

Additionally the Clearinghouse received numerous contributions of free resource material that accompanied the *Learning Packet* publications. Over 2,000 copies of each of the following was received:

- a. Job applications from McDonald's.
- b. *How to Get a Job* from the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped.
- c. *Merchandising Your Job Talents* from the U.S. Department of Labor.
- d. Food Stamp applications and booklets from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- e. Loan applications from the Security Pacific Bank of Los Angeles, California.
- f. A series of booklets on buying on credit from the National Credit Union.

Additionally the Clearinghouse participated in the work-study program of Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School for three weeks.

## SUMMARY

The major objectives of the Clearinghouse for Offender Literacy have been successfully met. Correctional educators throughout the nation have learned new techniques for teaching reading to functional illiterates, volunteers are at work in hundreds of correctional institutions, materials to help teach reading are in the hands of thousands of correctional educators, and the general public is more cognizant of the need to improve correctional education. While there are many hurdles to overcome in correctional education, the staff of the Clearinghouse feels confident that much of the groundwork for improvement has been laid by its efforts this past year.

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