

# Books. Knowledge. Change.

2023 Newsletter

Hello friends!

Every day, our mail carrier drops a stack of letters through our door. Each letter contains a handwritten request from an incarcerated person: “I’m interested in fantasy and off-grid living.” “Would you send me any gay-bisexual and transgender novels you may have? There are several of us who are ravenous readers and share all our books.” “I’m writing to request puzzle books please.”

Over the course of a month, these daily stacks total about 500 letters. Three times a week, our volunteers gather to carefully read each letter, comb through our library of donated books to find the perfect match, and then pack the books up along with a personalized note of goodwill.

We’re reminded of the value of this work every time we receive a thank you letter. As one person formerly incarcerated in New Jersey wrote this year, “Your program made life ‘on the inside’ just a little better, for which I thank you immensely. I hope you continue to share this gift with other inmates, as it truly makes a difference!”

So far this year we’ve received over 5,000 requests, and by the time 2023 closes another 1,000 letters will have passed through our hands. Your generosity makes this work possible – thank you! Our donors keep the lights on over our library of donated books and cover postage to send books over prison walls. If you’d like to donate, you can send a check in the enclosed envelope, or donate online at [www.booksthroughbars.org/donate](http://www.booksthroughbars.org/donate).

On the following page, you’ll find more information about our work this year and how you can get involved. This work takes many hands and we appreciate your ongoing support.

In solidarity,

Books Through Bars



*Left to right: BTB volunteers at our first annual Labor Day Packathon, Campus Curlz on a group volunteer afternoon, service-dog-in-training Professor volunteers for a day.*









# 2023 Year in Review

## Top requests

Genre	Number requests*
1. Thriller/Mystery	967
2. Fantasy	724
3. Business	586
4. Dictionary	548
5. Horror	514
6. Hobbies	471
7. Art	406
8. Law	395
9. History	383
10. Sci-fi	379

\* Most letters include requests for multiple genres

## Origin of requests in 2023

State	Number letters
 Pennsylvania	4,504
 Virginia	565
 New York	277
 New Jersey	134
 Maryland	55
 Delaware	12

## A few of our favorite thank yous

“Thank you very much for the 3 books and 2 magazines you sent me. They are excellent. The ‘Mushrooms Guide’ and ‘The Last Winter’ will provide excellent sources for our Science ‘Nerd’ Discussion Group. The magazines and drawing book will really help my artwork.”

“1st of all thank you so much for what y’all do! Unsung heroes!! There’s 40 of us in my dorm here so the books get read 10x over. :)”

“I wanted to thank whomever I should of your program because it really was incredible to me what I got. I was surprised you came through and the quality of the dictionary is great! ... Also surprising was a Tupac music magazine which I didn’t request and can’t believe because I am a big 2Pac fan! ... So thank you so much and you made the rest of my bid – keep doing what you’re doing. I’m getting out in July 2023 and you helped a lot.”

“I was thinking about the book request I asked you for, and suddenly I had an idea and thought concerning how lucky I am that there are people out there like you. Very few people fully understand what the mental pressures are for guys like myself (on the inside). So an idea that someone takes the time, makes the effort to do what they can to make it just a little easier, is something that shouldn’t be taken lightly, or overlooked.”

**18,220 lbs**

weight of books we sent this year  
(that’s nine tons!)

Interested in donating books? Our work wouldn’t be possible without book donations from our community! Check out [www.booksthroughbars.org/donate-books](http://www.booksthroughbars.org/donate-books) for the latest information on what we need and how to donate.

**460**

new volunteers we welcomed this year

We’re proud to be a volunteer-run organization. We’re always welcoming new folks — if you’re interested in volunteering or bringing a group to BTB, visit [www.booksthroughbars.org/volunteer](http://www.booksthroughbars.org/volunteer) for more information.

*All figures represent Calendar Year 2023 through the end of November*

