

Ithaca S+R

Adequate Access: The Role of the Law Library in Serving System Impacted Communities

1. Project Justification

Ithaca S+R requests \$305,229 for a 24 month applied research grant that will examine the national landscape of access to legal information for people who are incarcerated, and the current state of the field of law librarianship in facilitating access to the law for the justice impacted population. Previous research conducted by Ithaca S+R has indicated that access to legal information is a crucial need for the incarcerated population, yet little comprehensive data exists regarding how that information is provided, or about the quality of that service provision. Further, while anecdotal evidence suggests that law librarians are playing a crucial role in bridging this service gap, little is known nationally about best practices and models for this provision of service, or about the state of the profession's capacity to meet the incarcerated population's need for access to legal information. This National Leadership Grant will advance Goal 2, Objective 1 by exploring the following research questions: **1)** What service models have Departments of Corrections (DOCs) used to comply with their statutory obligation to provide access to legal information to incarcerated persons? **2)** How do these models compare, and which are most effective? **3)** How are law librarians currently facilitating access to the law for system impacted individuals and communities? **4)** What training and resources are needed to support law librarians in providing effective and equitable services?

Statement of Need:

The United States incarcerates more people than any other country in the world. For individuals impacted by the legal system, access to the law is of critical importance. A series of Supreme Court rulings, notably *Bounds vs. Smith* (1977) and *Lewis vs. Casey* (1996), have established a limited right for people in prison to access the law, but did not define standards or means of access, leading DOCs to adopt a patchwork of approaches to provision. Most, however, have sought to meet these legal requirements by providing incarcerated persons with some form of access to a *law library*.

Through research Ithaca S+R has conducted under its current IMLS funded planning grant, it has become clear that access to the law is a topic of high priority. Our interviews and focus groups with current and formerly incarcerated persons have revealed a variety of service models (and gaps) by which people in prison are provided access to legal information: e.g. in-house law libraries, reference by mail to county law libraries, hiring professional law librarians, and "train the trainer" models which seek to train incarcerated individuals themselves as legal reference clerks. Not surprisingly, these diverse efforts are supported by a variety of funding models with significant implications for access, quality, and equity. Despite this variety, we know little about the efficacy of these models. Likewise, the law librarian profession itself has shown wide variation in its awareness and knowledge of best practices to provide high quality services to this particular patron group. Given the variety of approaches, lack of research identifying effective models and practices, as well as the importance of access to legal information for system impacted communities, the time is ripe for addressing these critical questions.

Target Groups:

The project is designed to increase equitable access to legal information and services for individuals who are incarcerated (the beneficiaries), but to do so we must target for study and intervention the groups that structure and provide access to law law libraries and related services. The complex tapestry of service provision necessitates addressing several identified target groups:

- Department of corrections personnel
- Law librarians
- Legal aid organizations

- External public, research, or volunteer librarians who coordinate services and provide legal texts
- Incarcerated individuals, who may serve as arbiters of information in formal and informal roles

In order to understand the benefits, drawbacks, and best practices of different law librarianship service models, we will need to substantively engage with each of these groups. According to the most recent estimate from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are roughly 363,250 people employed as correctional officers and jailers in the US.¹ The American Association of Law Librarians reports its membership numbers annually and by their count in August of 2023, there were 3,472 members in the organization.² It is not possible to offer a reasonable estimate of the population of two of the target groups: personnel and volunteers in legal aid organizations, who work in a related capacity, and non-law librarians, who may coordinate services to enable or enhance access to legal information. Estimating the number of people involved in providing relevant legal aid is complicated by the fact that both civil and criminal legal aid organizations exist and aid is provided through both a unified federal network and a patchwork of state-based organizations throughout the US. Likewise, providing population estimates for librarians who coordinate services for people who are incarcerated is made a near impossibility by the lack of any centralized organization and the fact that many service provision arrangements occur through volunteer or minimally formalized relationships between a variety of libraries, external organizations, and prisons.³ While it is difficult to provide an accurate number of librarians who coordinate relevant services, Ithaka S+R has already cultivated contacts in, and a relationship with this community through our work on the IMLS funded project, “Expanding Public, State, Law, Prison, and Academic Library Collaboration to Serve Library Patrons Behind Bars.” Finally, the most important target group are people who are incarcerated, and we will (a) gather their direct input during the project and (b) guide deliverables to ensure that they are the ultimate – if not always the immediate – beneficiaries of the project itself. This population is also by far the largest, estimated by the Prison Policy Initiative at roughly 1,870,000 people in March of 2023, including all people incarcerated in prisons, jails, youth facilities, and detention centers.⁴

Beneficiaries:

Several target groups and/or sub-groups within the target groups will make up the primary beneficiaries of the project. It is important to note that the key beneficiaries of the project are people who are incarcerated: the ultimate goal is to increase for this group the quality, consistency, and ease of access and use of law libraries and legal information. The systems and structures that confine individuals who are incarcerated and create barriers to their equitable access to and use of law libraries, legal literature, and related information necessitate reaching these beneficiaries by understanding the best practices of the groups that coordinate and provide access to relevant services. So, in order to surface and promote best practices and offer guidance for shaping service structures and coordination that best serve people who are incarcerated,

¹ “33-3012 Correctional Officers and Jailers.” United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wages May 2022*.

[https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes333012.htm#\(1\)](https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes333012.htm#(1)). The Bureau of Labor Statistics does not provide employment estimates disaggregated by role, so it is not possible to determine how many of these individuals directly or indirectly affect law library service provision or access.

² “By the Numbers.” AALL. <https://www.aallnet.org/community/membership/by-the-numbers/>. As the major national professional organization for law librarians, the American Association of Law Librarians will also provide a valuable resource for reaching this target population.

³ For more on how difficult it is to see the full picture regarding library service coordination see: Chelsea Jordan-Makely and Dr. Jeanie Austin’s “Outside and In: Services for People Impacted by Incarceration,” *Library Journal*, 08 September 2021, <https://www.libraryjournal.com/story/Outside-and-In-Services-for-People-Impacted-By-Incarceration>.

⁴ Wendy Sawyer and Peter Wagner. “Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2023.” *Prison Policy Initiative*. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2023.html>

this project will provide benefits to law librarians as a group of practitioners; prison librarians, library assistants, jailhouse lawyers, and legal aids.

In the short term, several of the target groups noted above will also be beneficiaries of the research, but looking long-term the benefits should flow outward from individuals who are incarcerated to the broader communities that they come from and return to. If the project succeeds in first identifying best practices and most effective service provision and coordination models for law library services, then the knock on effects will be tremendous. It is worth noting, however, three possible barriers to the sustainability of the impacts of the work beyond the grant period: namely, the overlapping systems and structures, diffuse target groups, and lack of a means of centralized communication among. These facts of the carceral and service space mean that the dissemination of project results dissemination, and the policy change they seek to effect, will need to be both carefully targeted and broadly aimed. We address these barriers and the efforts we will make to overcome them in more detail below in the Project Results section of the narrative.

Building Upon Existing Theory, Scholarship, and Practice:

To better understand the challenges libraries face in collaborating to provide services to people who are incarcerated, Ithaka S+R, with support from IMLS (LG-252298-OLS-22), undertook an exploratory research project to document the different types of libraries involved in providing services to incarcerated patrons, as well as the service models and missions those libraries are advancing, the challenges of working both with other libraries, and in collaborating with DOCs, as well as opportunities and priorities for providing new, augmented, or wrap around services.

When Ithaka S+R began this research, law libraries were among the first providers that we sought information from. From the research and interviews we conducted over the course of this planning grant, we found that not only were law libraries extremely limited in terms of the partnerships they could enter into, they were also limited by the resources and accessibility that they could offer to their patrons inside prison facilities. As far as services, interviews with librarians inside prison revealed that their libraries had computers with LexisNexis installed or a bookshelf with legal books. Some of them explained that they were also able to send emails to law libraries outside of the facility for a given patron. Many of the librarians we spoke to informed us that either their entire library or sections had been closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic and these spaces hadn't entirely resumed operations as recently Fall 2023. Law librarians outside whom we interviewed were often located within community courthouses and hours were limited to hours of operation and not easily accessible to the general public. We interviewed some university librarians who shared that they had legal documents and books that were available for the campus community to access.

We also found that law librarians were eager to receive the suggestions and information we provided them based on the initial research we had conducted. One great success we experienced was with a law librarian from Louisiana who reached out to us after her initial interview. In addition to the interview she had done with us, she had been able to listen to a panel at the ALA Summer 2023 conference that shared experiences of being incarcerated. She informed us that because of the information they had received, her institution chose to eliminate charges for documents and forms.

The patrons we interviewed (all of whom were formerly incarcerated) provided us with similar information. They also explained that often, hours and access to library spaces were limited, forcing them to resort to other patrons inside to provide the legal information they were looking for. The cost of processing legal forms and documents, a crucial service for incarcerated patrons, also presented a barrier to individuals inside, as access to money is severely limited. Many individuals who are incarcerated are employed but are not typically paid or if they are, their wages amount to less than a dollar a day.

Through our research we found that information on law library services themselves was limited, and departments of correction rarely shared information on their library services available.

Our findings from the planning grant indicated that access to legal information was not only a pressing need for the incarcerated population: data on *how* the population is currently provided statutory access is sorely lacking. The applied research project we are proposing here is therefore scoped around this crux: what role are law librarians playing in bridging this service gap, and how can we develop more robust and nimble service offerings to meet the needs of incarcerated patrons.

2. Applied Research Questions

The following applied research questions will govern our inquiry, via the phases of work and methodologies spelled out below in the project work plan.

- What access to legal services and the law do individuals who are incarcerated currently have? Are these services accessible? What policies are in place that allow for access to the law for people in prisons?
- What are the benefits and costs of increasing access to the law for persons who are incarcerated and their communities?
- What role do institutions play when providing or allowing access to the law for individuals incarcerated? How do policies and practices in place disrupt or create accessibility?
- How do we design services and model solutions to the barriers that incorporate the best practices?

3. Project Work Plan

This project will be implemented along three main research phases, with opportunities for public engagement throughout, as well as a final synthesis and dissemination phase. We expect the project to take 24 months in total. The phases outlined below align to the following methods of research and data collection: **1)** desk research, including a **policy scan** of the DOC directives across the country that establish how access to legal information is provided; **2) semi-structured interviews** with a range of stakeholders recruited from across the country on the question of access to legal information for incarcerated individual to determine variations between policy and practice: stakeholder groups include people who are currently or formerly incarcerated, representatives from legal aid groups, and members of departments of corrections; **3) semi-structured interviews** and a national **survey** of law librarians to benchmark the capacity of the field to provide services to the justice impacted population, and document the need for professional development and training resources to do so.

Phase 1: Project Launch and Preliminary Research (6 months)

Ithaka S+R will begin by assembling a project advisory committee of 6 experts, comprising representatives of the law librarian, justice impacted, corrections, and scholarly communities. Diane Rodriguez, former president of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), and Darnell Epps, a [formerly incarcerated advocate](#) and Yale Law student, have both agreed to join the committee, and to assist with the recruitment of additional members. We will endeavor to recruit additional members representing the communities we are seeking to learn more about in this project, including law librarians providing services to incarcerated persons, DOC representatives, and legal experts. The advisory committee will also support recruitment of project participants for subsequent phases of work from the stakeholder groups identified above, and review all research instruments and project outputs.

Under the guidance of the project PI, Ithaka S+R analysts will also during this phase begin conducting desk research to surface and synthesize the publicly available information regarding access to legal information and services for people in prison. This landscape review will include a scan of the 50 state DOC directives that establish law library services in their jurisdictions, “inmate handbooks” that may provide more detail regarding individual access and terms of use, as well as relevant articles and white papers. Based on the landscape review, we will publish an **interim report** detailing the range of models by which DOCs provide access to the law.

Desk research will consist of two major phases: first, a thorough scan of scholarly research, white papers, and gray literature on the topic; and second, a 50 state policy scan of department of corrections directives and state codes addressing law library access. Considered together, this will provide us with a picture of research views and studies in the field of how state policy governs and regulates law library access. To qualitatively and quantitatively assess the state policies, we will use Dedoose, a coding platform for mixed methods research coding and analysis. Using Dedoose will allow project staff to accurately compare information between various directives and to track quantitatively how frequently similar terms, clauses, or policies arise within and across policy documents. Our findings from this desk research will also be used to inform the structure and design of our semi-structured interviews in phase 2.

Phase 2: Semi-Structured Interviews (8 months)

Understanding the difference between policy and practice, as well as what contributes to or thwarts the effectiveness of different models of service provision, will be essential to the success of this project. To document existing practices, and to gather perspectives on what is currently working, Ithaka S+R will leverage its extensive networks in the justice impacted, advocacy, and corrections communities to recruit (ca. 30) subjects from across the country to participate in a series of semi-structured interviews. Recruitment will be conducted by project staff, supervised by the project PI, and in consultation with the project’s advisory committee.

We expect to recruit semi-structured interview participants from the following stakeholder groups: **1)** currently or formerly incarcerated persons, especially those who served as law library clerks, or less formally as “jailhouse lawyers;” **2)** representatives from legal aid and advocacy groups; **3)** law librarians employed by the DOC, and other relevant DOC staff. Though DOC staff can be reluctant to speak with researchers, Ithaka S+R has successfully engaged this professional community in our justice related projects; we will leverage contacts, past experience, and trust established through our work in the sector to recruit participants from this population.⁵ The preceding list is designed to ensure that our project is able to address the multiple dimensions of the question of access. Ithaka S+R will develop interview protocols tailored to each stakeholder group (and reviewed by advisory committee members) to facilitate guided conversation. We anticipate these protocols will focus on the following topics, with differing emphasis, central to legal service provision: **1)** the logistics and costs of accessing the law library; **2)** the quality of legal information provided; **3)** the adequacy of access to training or legal professionals; **4)** the availability of specialty assistance (e.g. for persons with disabilities, limited English proficiency, etc.); **5)** the overall level of satisfaction with the service.

The semi-structured interviews will be necessary as we understand that the existing scholarship on the topic discovered through desk research will, by design, likely prioritize the perspectives of researchers,

⁵ Pokornowski, Ess. "Technology in Higher Education in Prison Programs: A Report on Survey Findings." Ithaka S+R. Last Modified 7 September 2023. <https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.319583>; Pokornowski, Ess, Kurtis Tanaka, and Darnell Epps. "Security and Censorship: A Comparative Analysis of State Department of Corrections Media Review Policies." Ithaka S+R. Last Modified 20 April 2023. <https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.318751>.

legislators, and state bodies. Using a semi-structured design for the interview phase will allow us to ensure that individuals and groups whose voices are often less represented in scholarship, research, and policy have a voice in the design and outputs of this project. This is especially important from a diversity, equity, and inclusion perspective, and from an ethical perspective, as the groups targeted in our semi-structured interviews are key research targets and primary beneficiaries of the project and its interventions.

Semi-structured interviews are the ideal qualitative method to use for this portion of the study because they allow researchers to ask specific questions while also permitting interviewees the space to answer in their own voice. This structure provides flexibility for both the researcher, who may ask follow-up questions based on interviewee responses, and the interviewee, who may expand on questions and offer relevant information not directly sought. Ithaka S+R staff, in consultation with the project advisory committee, will develop interview protocols to guide these sessions, topics of which are spelled out above. This is particularly important given the iterative design of this project, which will allow us to use information from phase 1 findings to structure the interview guides, but allow for the fact that the voices of the groups we will be speaking with are underrepresented in existing research on the topic. The flexibility of the semi-structured approach will allow participants to expand on topics not previously discovered in desk research, which will be integral to shaping the survey instrument in Phase 3 and to the presentation of findings in the final webinars.

Interviews for the project will only be conducted with users aged 18 or over, and will take place remotely over a video platform such as WebEx. Ithaka S+R will recruit subjects to participate in a 60-minute interview, using best practices, including recruiting more individuals than needed to prepare for attrition, soliciting informed consent from participants, and providing clear communication of interview time, purpose, and expectations. Data gathered in the form of interviewer notes and transcripts will be analyzed using a qualitative coding method. The analysis will categorize and compile common themes, experiences, and perspectives.

Following the completion of interviews and analysis, Ithaka S+R will synthesize and publish these findings in a **companion report**, to be reviewed by the project advisory committee, and publicize these findings through internally produced **webinars** and presentations at the annual conferences of the American Library Association (ALA), the American Association of Law Librarians (AALL), and the American Correctional Association (ACA).

Phase 3: Survey of Law Librarians, Semi-Structured Interviews, and Dissemination (10 months)

Law libraries and librarians play a critical role in providing the broader public with access to legal information, yet the extent to which these professionals are equipped and empowered to serve persons and communities impacted by the criminal justice system is unclear. The project's final research phase will expand its focus to include the perspectives of the broader field, not just those currently providing services to persons in prison. In doing so, we hope to document the broader profession's positions on a series of basic questions: **1)** general awareness of impacted individuals and communities' needs; **2)** knowledge of best practices and service models for serving impacted populations; **3)** what training and resources are needed to support effective and equitable service delivery. Ithaka S+R will field a **survey of law librarians**, distributed through AALL's channels and advertised across additional, relevant professional networks, to explore these questions. AALL currently boasts 3680 members. In coordination with our advisory committee we expect to build a contact list of association members and non-member practicing law librarians of approximately 4000-5000 members. Based on previous surveys of similar scope, we would expect a response rate of between 10-20%.

Ithaka S+R will develop the survey instrument through an iterative process with our project advisory committee, and tailor a communication strategy to facilitate distribution and impact – including survey

announcements and updates published on our website, and custom invitation and reminder messaging originating from recognizable signatories. We will also establish a dedicated help email address, monitored by project staff during the administration period in order to provide further guidance to respondents and to answer questions. The survey will be administered via Qualtrics.

Prior to the survey launch, Ithaca S+R will conduct cognitive interviews (CI) to test the instrument for barriers to understanding and engagement, and for consistency in the interpretation of questions across the survey population. Ithaca S+R will invite 5-8 diverse and representative members of the target population (as determined by demographic criteria, and institutional affiliation) to conduct a CI. CI participants will take the survey and meet with a member of the Ithaca S+R project team to discuss their survey taking experience and to provide feedback. The project team, in consultation with the advisory committee, will revise the instrument accordingly.

All survey data will be analyzed using a statistical software package such as SPSS or STATA and will include aggregate analysis of all user responses and, where possible, and depending on response numbers, disaggregated analysis of user subsets. Data will be analyzed using descriptive and bivariate analysis.

We will also conduct (ca. 15) semi-structured follow up interviews with law librarians, including leadership at AALL, for added depth and nuance. The interviews will be conducted following the same methodology spelled out above, and a separate interview protocol will be developed in consultation with the project advisory committee to guide these conversations. In documenting the broader field's position on the questions, rather than just those already doing the work, we aim to map the untapped potential in the broader field for providing access to the law to impacted communities, as well as the challenges and resources needed to provide such services. Findings will be published in a **capstone report** and presented at **conferences** and **webinars**.

Deliverables

The above phases of work will result in the following project deliverables:

- Policy Scan and accompanying Interim Report (Phase 1)
- Access to the law stakeholder Interview Protocols (Phase 2)
- Report summarizing interview findings with accompanying webinar sharing out high level insights (Phase 2)
- Additional report components or blog posts contextualizing and packaging findings for target groups based on webinar feedback (Phase 2)
- Survey instrument (Phase 3)
- Law Librarian Interview Protocols (Phase 3)
- Capstone Report summarizing results of survey findings and law librarian interviews, with insights from previous phases of work (Phase 3)
- Conference presentations to disseminate findings from the interim report (phase 2) and the capstone report (Phase 3)
- Final Webinar (Phase 3)
- Additional report components or blog posts contextualizing and packaging findings for target groups based on webinar feedback (Phase 3)

4. Diversity Plan

The project we are proposing reflects a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, through its design and anticipated results. We will prioritize the inclusion of justice impacted voices in every project activity,

from the assembly of our advisory committee, to the recruitment of our interview subjects. By laying the groundwork to facilitate *access to the law* for incarcerated patrons, our project will meet a crucial equity *and* legal standard for an often neglected population of library users.

The primary goal within this project is to expand and ensure that individuals who are incarcerated and the communities that they are eventually released into have adequate access to the law. By expanding and providing this access to these individuals, we will be empowering them to better equip themselves in a variety of ways. Some of these results include, but are not limited to: expanded law library services and hours within prison facilities and public spaces, decreased or elimination of monetary charges involved in gaining access to forms and documents, and an increased knowledge of the law and their rights for individuals who are incarcerated and their communities.

While we can anticipate who the intended beneficiaries of this work are, we understand that there are various partners, organizations, institutions, and participants who will have varied perspectives and practices and including their experiences will be necessary in order for our research to be successful. We will be intentional about ensuring our methods of research are inclusive and sensitive to the various communities involved in this project. The research that we will initially be conducting will include examining policies and practices that currently exist and we will be diligent in researching non-traditional spaces to locate this information. While conducting interviews and focus groups, we will be sensitive to the language and formalities that are involved and will work to create a space that is welcoming and transparent. Hosting webinars that are open to the public and widely advertised, we will ensure that a variety of communities are able to have access to the research we are doing and will have the ability to share their own experiences. Sharing our research at various conferences will allow us to reach a wider audience.

To ensure that these various communities are going to participate in this project, we will work with the existing relationships we have established in order to build the trust that will be valuable to this project. For individuals who are or have been incarcerated, trust is something that is often lost and we will work to maintain and build this trust and appreciate how fragile this process can be. We also understand that the larger institutions, such as the department of corrections, are doing their work from a different perspective, and we will work to build trust within these relationships.

5. Project Results

Ultimately, this project seeks to improve access to the law and legal information among people who are incarcerated, and communities impacted by the legal system. It will accomplish this through two primary interventions: **First** by identifying the main challenges, barriers, and models for providing this access in prisons; **Second**, by assessing the current state of the field of law librarianship related to providing access to the law to impacted communities, and by surfacing the training and resource needs of law librarians. Considered together, these two approaches will produce information on best practices and outcomes regarding **1)** structural models for accessing and using legal information and resources and **2)** coordinating services and training to maximize equity in access and use. The iterative design of the project will enable us to fold insights gained in each phase of the project into the design of subsequent phases, and the interim report will ensure that we are making information publicly available as it is learned.

Public outputs to be produced by the project include:

- Interim report detailing findings from desk research, including DOC policy scans
- Report detailing findings from semi-structured interviews with access to the law stakeholder groups

- Capstone report detailing findings from the survey of law librarians and semi-structured follow-up interviews with law librarians
- Webinars and conference presentations to share out findings from each report
- Additional report components or blog posts contextualizing and packaging findings from reports for target groups, based on webinar feedback

The potential impacts and scope of the project are expansive: however, deliverables and information distribution have been designed to ensure that project results are not just broadly available, but aimed directly at target groups in practical and accessible forms. The webinar format used to deliver the findings from the interim and capstone report will allow us to hold open, dialogic calls with community members to disseminate findings, and receive feedback. In the past, in addition to traditional research outputs, Ithaka S+R has designed frameworks, model policy, and playbooks to make research findings more legible, accessible, and practically useful to their target groups. This approach will build on that iterative method by producing research reports, taking their findings and recommendations to target communities for feedback, and where needed, producing short, digestible additional deliverables in the form of future report components or blog posts. In this way, the project design ensures that knowledge generated will be broadly accessible and delivered directly to the communities poised to use it. This will ensure that project funds are well-spent and serve the communities targeted.

Given the scope of the project – which will examine policy, service models, best practices, and barriers to access – its findings will be of use to several different constituencies. Policymakers and advocates will be able to make good use of the policy scan and the discovery of practical barriers to access. Librarians, jailhouse lawyers, prison librarians and library assistants, and law librarians may all be interested in the best practices and barriers to access, and we intend to reach out to these groups in both the information gathering and findings dissemination.

Ultimately, though, the goal of the project is to increase the quality of access and quality of use of law library collections and services for individuals who are incarcerated. While we can expect some trickle down of results to the community through adoption or recalibration of practices, the project itself must also reach out directly to individuals who are incarcerated to help make them aware of our findings. We will do this by ensuring that deliverables are disseminated in two spaces: **1)** among the Resources on the [Research Community for Higher Education in Prison](#) website; **2)** on a variety of related listservs, and directly to contacts at the American Association of Law Librarians, Prison Policy Initiative, PEN America, and other organizations working in the carceral space. We will also explore the possibility of publishing deliverables in collections made available through the [JSTOR Access in Prisons initiative](#), a content platform accessed by more than 250,000 incarcerated individuals.

Project benefits will come in several stages. Researchers, practitioners, and advocates will benefit from the knowledge and information that we collect and make available. Practitioners, policymakers, and advocates will be able to incorporate findings to adjust their own practices and policies – a benefit that will likely move at uneven speed across different institutions, and will take months or years to fully unfold in policy. Finally, the practical impacts of the research should be felt both as individuals who are incarcerated gain broader access to the information itself, and gain more (and better quality) access to the law. There may also be unforeseen benefits as well, seeing as this project focuses on a single institutional overlap – law librarianship in the carceral context. These may include adoption of findings to create blueprints for future research and exploration of best practices for the provision of other services in the carceral context, including healthcare, mental health, communication technology, education, employment training, reentry programming, among others.

Digital Products Plan: Adequate Access: The Role of the Law Library in Serving System Impacted Communities

1. **Type:** What types of digital products will you create?

Ithaka S+R will create an interim report, interview protocols, a companion report to the interview phase of the project, a survey instrument, a capstone report summarizing results of survey findings and phase 3 interviews, and webinar and conference presentations accompanying the 2nd and 3rd phases of the project. These deliverables will be created using applications such as Microsoft Office, Google Suite products, and Adobe Acrobat. The reports will be public-facing deliverables that will be available as digital downloads in .pdf or .doc format with full text presented in HTML. The webinars will be hosted via GoTo Meeting.

2. **Availability :** How will you make your digital products openly available (as appropriate)?

The publicly available digital products produced during the course of the project will be made available on the Ithaka S+R website under a Creative Commons 4.0 CC-BY license. This is an open access website which will allow any interested audience to view the materials and is accessible through any standard web browser.

3. **Access :** What rights will you assert over your digital products, and what limitations, if any, will you place on their use? Will your products implicate privacy concerns or cultural sensitivities, and if so, how will you address them?

Ithaka S+R will assert attribution rights per Creative Commons 4.0 CC-BY. Interviewees across the project phases will not be identified in the findings and any recruiting and invitation materials will communicate this. No data that would allow attendees from interviews, webinars, or survey participation to be individually identified will be released. All data in the public deliverables will be anonymized and aggregated.

Notes taken from interviews will not be publicly available to ensure privacy. Ithaka S+R will internally archive the notes for future analytical purposes on our secure cloud storage system. Published reports generated through the notes data will only be reported in the aggregate or through anonymous quotations.

4. **Sustainability :** How will you ensure the sustainability of your digital products?

The publications resulting from the project will be maintained through the Ithaka S+R website and its secure cloud storage system during and after the award period.

Data Management Plan: Adequate Access: The Role of the Law Library in Serving System Impacted Communities

- 1. Identify the type(s) and estimated amount of data you plan to collect or generate, and the purpose or intended use(s) to which you expect them to be put. Describe the method(s) you will use, the proposed scope and scale, and the approximate dates or intervals at which you will collect or generate data.**

Ithaka S+R will conduct desk research to desk research to surface and synthesize the publicly available information regarding access to legal information and services for people in prison. This will include a scan of the 50 state DOC directives that establish law library services in their jurisdictions, “inmate handbooks” that may provide more detail regarding individual access and terms of use, as well as relevant articles and white papers. The literature review will help Ithaka S+R summarize existing research and policy and provide insights on how DOCs are complying with access to legal information statutes. The desk research will be compiled in .doc format.

Ithaka S+R will conduct semi-structured interviews with a set of target groups to document existing practices, and to gather perspectives on what models of legal access provision are currently working. We anticipate recruiting approximately 50 subjects to participate in semi-structured interviews, 30 during phase 2 of the project, 15 follow up interviews to be conducted during phase 3, and 5 cognitive interviews to test the survey instrument to be deployed during phase 3. Notes will be collected during these interviews. We will also collect identifiable information such as names, email addresses, and organizational affiliations from participants. Notes will be manually created in writing and transcribed in .doc format.

Ithaka S+R will conduct a survey of law librarians to be administered via qualtrics. Data collected through the survey will be analyzed using a statistical software package such as STATA or SSPS, and analysis of survey data will be created and stored in .doc and .xlsx formats in Ithaka S+R’s internal secure cloud storage system.

The goal of the desk research, interviews, and survey will be to collect data that will contribute to deliverables throughout the phases of the project. These are the interim, companion, and final report, as well as webinar and conference presentations of findings. The data collection will be spread across August 2024 and July 2026.

- 2. Will you collect any sensitive information? This may include personally identifiable information (PII), confidential information (e.g., trade secrets), or proprietary information. If so, detail the specific steps you will take to protect the information while you prepare it for public release (e.g., anonymizing individual identifiers, data aggregation). If the data will not be released publicly, explain why the data cannot be shared due to the protection of privacy, confidentiality, security, intellectual property, and other rights or requirements.**

We will collect personally identifiable information such as names, email addresses, and organizational affiliations from semi-structured interview subjects and webinar participants. All attendees will be only U.S. based individuals. For the interviews, we will inform participants that we will maintain their privacy and will not identify them in any public outputs without their consent. The interview notes will be stored in Ithaka S+R’s internal secure cloud storage system. Public outputs that draw on data collected from interviews will only be reported in the aggregate or through anonymous quotations.

3. **What technical (hardware and/or software) requirements or dependencies would be necessary for understanding retrieving, displaying, processing, or otherwise reusing the data? How can these tools be accessed (e.g., open-source and freely available, commercially available, available from your research team)?**

The desk research and interview notes will be processed using widely available softwares and applications such as Microsoft Office, Google Suite products, Adobe Acrobat. Survey responses will be collected via Qualtrics, and data will be analyzed using a statistical software package such as STATA or SPSS.

4. **What documentation (e.g., consent agreements, data documentation, codebooks, metadata, and analytical and procedural information) will you capture or create along with the data? Where will the documentation be stored and in what format(s)? How will you permanently associate and manage the documentation with the data it describes to enable future reuse?**

Ithaka S+R will give notice to participants in interviews that we will take notes during these sessions in order to develop a public-facing report, but all data will be anonymized and reported in aggregate. We will also notify participants that all documentation created and collected during the data collection and analysis will be stored in Ithaka S+R's internal secure cloud storage system. Documentation will be stored alongside data to ensure association and enable future reuse.

5. **What is your plan for managing, disseminating, and preserving data after the completion of the award-funded project? If relevant, identify the repository where you will deposit your data. When and for how long will data be made available to other users?**

After the completion of the project, the data may be used by the project team for future analysis, but it will not be distributed beyond project personnel. The data will be stored by Ithaka S+R through its secure cloud storage.

6. **When and how frequently will you review your Data Management Plan? How will the implementation be monitored?**

The data management plan will be reviewed periodically during the lifetime of the project and its implementation will be monitored by Ithaka S+R.