Topics

- Introduce the IJI Project
- Incarceration Issues
- Consideration of Local Links
- Opportunities for Libraries
- Q&A
Information Justice Institute (IJI) Overview

- The Information Justice Institute (IJI) is a project that brings together librarians and community partners to explore critical issues; and to develop resources and strategies to serve diverse populations facing onerous information access and engagement limitations entangled with challenges such as poverty, violence, and incarceration.
- IJI is hosted at Chicago State University (CSU) and supported by a planning grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).
- A Way In and ECCSC are project partners.
- Our project website is under construction. It is available at: [https://infojusticeinstitute.wordpress.com](https://infojusticeinstitute.wordpress.com)
Context

- **Community Inquiry**
- Share our experience based on this project so far
  - Conversations
  - Concepts
  - Initial research and preliminary results
- Identify some common issues, and layers to inform possibilities for moving toward more effective practices

https://chipbruce.net/resources/inquiry-based-learning/the-inquiry-cycle
How many people are locked up in the United States?

The U.S. locks up more people per capita than any other nation, at the staggering rate of 573 per 100,000 residents. But to end mass incarceration, we must first consider where and why 1.9 million people are confined nationwide.

[Diagram showing the breakdown of incarcerated individuals by type of crime and facility.]
Juvenile Detention

Illinois has 16 county-operated juvenile detention facilities (Adams, Champaign, Cook, Franklin, Kane, Knox, Lake, LaSalle, Madison, McLean, Peoria, Sangamon, St. Clair, Vermilion, Will and Winnebago).

● How do libraries support incarcerated community members and their networks of support?
● How do libraries support successful reentry?
● How can we do better?
Some Initial Survey Findings

An online survey developed to better understand library programs and services in order to augment effective practice was distributed in May, 2021. A link was shared via ALA Connect. A total of 71 responses were received from librarians and library workers in the US - from 24 states (spanning the continent). Distribution across location types (city, town, suburb, rural) was pretty even.

- The majority of respondents (55) identify as librarians. Other roles included library director (11), library staff (10), family member of someone is/was incarcerated (5). These categories are not mutually exclusive.

- The majority of respondents are affiliated with public libraries (51), along with academic (10), special (6), and school (4).
Survey Questions and Responses I

How familiar are you with providing library programs and services to individuals who are incarcerated?

How familiar are you with providing library programs and services to individuals who have recently been incarcerated?
Does your library offer programs and/or services to support individuals who are currently incarcerated?

If yes: library services to people in jails, prisons, and JDCs; reference and research by mail services; book delivery; provide recreational reading; legal reading; educational reading; reading programs; outreach; support prison education programs; library accounts; facilitate book donations; lending services; workshops; provide family literacy; sponsor book discussion groups.

Some services have been suspended due to COVID.
Survey Questions and Sample Responses III

Does your library offer programs and/or services to support individuals who have recently been incarcerated?

If yes: library card sign-up service upon release; outreach to parole and other reentry events; specific job support (maintain a list of potential employers); tech literacy; resume building; help finding family/friends; produce and distribute a reentry guide; provide information on free community services; poetry program; designated web pages; help with expungement; collaborative services with local writers group, access to social workers and a lawyer; programs to access basic services - ID, food, clothing, shelter, education, jobs, mental health services, legal aid.
Survey Questions and Sample Responses IV

What additional types of library programs and/or services would you like to see?

Book donations and resources to local jail; Early literacy programs; GED support; Book clubs; Discussion groups; Parent reading programs; Cooperation with authorities/parole officers; Reentry focused resources and connections; Research support; NGO involvement; Bookmobile services; More programs; Legal clinics; Sponsor a citizen circle to provide support; Computer classes; Job training; financial advice; social workers; Community-building (through meals and culture talks); Outreach with the business community; Publishing platform for incarcerated writers and artists; Trauma-informed programs; Arts programming; I don’t know; More staff training; User needs survey; at least have a brochure!
Some Concepts for Additional Consideration

- The Prison Industrial Complex
- The School-to-Prison Pipeline; and the Prison-to-School Pipeline
- (Hyper)-surveillance
- Systemic Inequity and Resource Distribution
- Collateral Damage
- Intersectionality
- Out of Sight, Out of Mind, Out of Funds, Out of Services
- Abolition
- Dynamic Forces and Opportunities for Engagement in Many Realms

What’s your context? What concepts are most relevant? Where do your community and library services/strategic focus fit? What do you need to learn more about; do more of, less of, differently…? What other programs/services exist? Who are potential collaborators? Whose voices are loudest? represented? missing?
Foreword, by Kathleen de la Peña McCook

Acknowledgments

Introduction

Chapter 1: Philosophical Approaches
Chapter 2: Carceral Histories in the United States
Chapter 3: Forms of Incarceration
Chapter 4: Information and Incarceration
Information Interstices: Technologies and Flows of Power
Chapter 5: Models of Direct Service
Chapter 6: Models of Indirect Service
Chapter 7: Reentry Support and Programming
Chapter 8: Building Institutional Support and Getting Started

Conclusion
Appendix A: Library Literature on Adult Incarceration, 1992-2019
Appendix B: Library Literature on Youth Incarceration, 1992-2019

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What next? How can we create positive change?

- Can we reimage ourselves?
- Explore existing models/effective practices
  - IJI website preliminary groupings:
    IJI 101; Professional reading; Organizations; Prison Ed; Local initiatives
- Ask questions
- Work together
- Develop better policies
- Extend our reach/improve services and practice
- What ideas does the group have?
Q&A / Thank you!

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