

Chapter 2: Carceral Histories in the United States

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Library Services and Incarceration: Recognizing Barriers, Strengthening Access (working title)

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CHAPTER 2

CARCERAL HISTORIES IN THE UNITED STATES

The previous chapter discussed the limitations presented by conceptualizing trends in carceral philosophies as swinging between punitive and rehabilitative logics (and being limited to these two poles). Fortunately, researchers have examined the constraints of these models, mapping out connections between the control of specific groups of people in the historical formation of American incarceration and current forms and practices of incarceration in the United States. In order to better understand the current state of library services to people who are incarcerated, this chapter traces direct and indirect lines through the philosophies that informed carceral practices and librarianship, highlighting a history of library services to incarcerated people.

The purpose of this endeavor is twofold. First, specific tools are needed to begin to reassess the nature and impetus of incarceration in the United States. There is arguably a different ethos in imaging prison as a necessary part of the social fabric from recognizing that incarceration in the United State mimicked and enlarged practices similar to those during slavery, and that the high rates of incarceration for Black and Indigenous people and people of color reflect colonial and other logics of control, assimilation, or containment. These urgently needed histories are placed first and foremost in this chapter in part to maintain a timeline. Through historical research and critical examination, they also provide a framework for assessing how information, and the control of information, may have always been central to incarceration in the United States.

It may seem that turning to critical theories of incarceration is quite far afield from the everyday practice of library and information science. Yet, research into the history of library services to incarcerated people (and, somewhat, public library services more broadly) reveals

that many of the practical aspects of service have been repeated over time, with little structural change toward examining information access for incarcerated people at a large scale. The repetition of themes found in literature about library services to incarcerated people from the early 1900s to the present stands as a testament to the inefficacy of focusing only (or even primarily) on the immediately pragmatic aspects of information provision. Time and time again, librarians have repeated the need for funds, reiterated ideas of the library's role as aligning with either punitive or rehabilitative logics of carceral institutions, and cited the particularities of library services in carceral facilities. Despite the ongoing efforts of librarians to open a larger discussion of library services to incarcerated people within the field (no matter the argument made), there has been little ground gained in positioning library services to incarcerated people as a central aspect of LIS.

Examining histories of incarceration alongside histories of library services to incarcerated people provides a method to identify and work against the biases within library science that have further reinforced systems of oppression. The control of information, to specific types of information, and the valuation of certain knowledges and experiences over others all come into focus when identifying points of overlap between philosophies that have informed types of incarceration in the United States and forms of library service to the public. Information is central to current practices of policing and incarceration just as it is central to librarianship. To this end, the use of information, as a tool of control, as a means for rewriting behavior, and as a threat will be highlighted throughout this chapter.

In an effort to look for new ways of moving outside of narratives of punishment and rehabilitation, this chapter also highlights the efforts of communities, incarcerated people, and librarians who have pushed against the control of information, have advocated for increased

information access, or have facilitated the exchange of information between people who are incarcerated and people who are not. These moments of change, negotiation, and recognition of the need for information access can inform how librarians and information professionals might develop new rubrics for assessing the need for increased information access as an aftereffect of current practices of incarceration.

Of course, no one historical perspective is complete and no manifestation of one point in history directly echoes in the next shape it takes. Historical practices may not necessarily reveal the ways in which information control currently manifests. This chapter closes by turning to current practices of information access and containment as they take place within policing and incarceration. This final turn reveals a stark reality in our current moment—that the prison wall is also a barrier between individuals and the information that might sustain them. Chapter four provides an in-depth examination of the role of information in the lives of people who are incarcerated and the lasting impacts that difficulty accessing information can have on individuals and their communities.

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON INCARCERATION IN THE U.S.

Looking at the history of incarceration in the United States requires an assessment of the reach and scope of policing and incarceration and an examination of who gets to make, or keep, the true record of the purposes and conduct of carceral facilities (Curtin, 2013). Historians, criminal race scholars, investigative journalists, and incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people have repeatedly made claims to an urgently needed reassessment of who defines the ordering logic of policing and incarceration. These philosophical problems arise in holding individual accounts against state accounts and are muddled by the way that power, situated in the hands of the state, allows for a very specific telling and retelling of the role of incarceration in American life. To

tell against the official narrative, which normalizes incarceration as either a form of punishment or an opportunity for personal transformation, requires an ethical stake in deeply assessing how, who, and why certain individuals, groups, and acts have come to be viewed as criminal over time. As Curtis states, histories of incarceration that deviate from the official account are often undervalued because “prisoners are still stigmatized, even by their own families, and prison reformers—and historians—can easily be mischaracterized as the naïve defendants of guilty criminals” (2013, 33). Stepping back with a broad view of what constitutes a carceral practice allows for the possibility that criminality itself can be a suspect category, even when “crime” involves harms against individuals and communities.

Interrogating criminality involves looking through enduring connections between power and oppression and into the murkier depths of everyday acts that constitute the enforcement of, resistance to, or are (at least in part) effects of constraints put in place through institutional forces. Taking a fast and loose view of the histories of power, control, and containment in the United States does not necessarily reveal straight lines of cause and effect. Rather, it delineates some of the exemplar forces that have shaped incarceration as it now exists, revealing a multitude of maneuvers, goals, and effects that are shored up within the current system.

A slightly piecemeal approach to histories of incarceration in the United States also serves as a response to cautions within the field of criminology about making specific claims to racism and racialized oppression (Gottschalk, 2015). While race and racism are evidenced in, and reconstituted by, the histories briefly noted here, they are also tools used to further the effects of neoliberalism, scarcity, austerity, and the marketability of and capitalization upon the sheer scale of incarceration at the present moment. In other words, racism and white supremacy are often viewed in this moment as the reason for disparities between the numbers of white,

Black, Indigenous and other people of color who are incarcerated, but this well-justified approach does not always include analyses about the experience of incarceration, the conditions of carceral facilities, and the systems in place that prioritize or minimize the value of specific individuals or communities (Gottschalk, 2015). Nor does it necessarily lead to questions that are of specific import to librarians and information professionals that will work with the public—specifically to how forms of policing and incarceration shape the composition of the public that is able to easily access information, and how a continuous barrier between individuals and the information they desire might further skew information to best suit a group of people who has easy access, bolstering up an idea of the public that is quietly defined by absence.

It is no shock to find that a discussion of the historical antecedents to the current carceral system involves a discussion of violence, categorization, legal mandate, knowledge, and exclusion (Foucault, 1995). Cacho discusses this ongoing process as rooted in “the ways in which law works to affix assumptions of behavior onto bodies. Historically, law has criminalized the recreational activities, survival economies, and intimate relationships of people of color so that the status of ‘being of color’ was inseparable from conduct assumed to be “criminal” (2012, 40). This chapter includes a few instances of the historical precedence of this ongoing merger of how racialization and criminal status are constructed through processes that serve to further privilege whiteness.

While the majority of the historical review in this chapter will focus on Progressive Era ideological conceptions of the prison, the uses of information and categorization, and library science’s own alignment with Progressive Era ideologies, it serves to note that processes of racializing groups, practicing containment, and establishing institutionalization as a mode of control are evident in early colonial practices within what is now known as America. Prior to

colonization in California, “[b]y all accounts, Native peoples in California rarely used corporal punishment or other means of physical force to socialize or reprimand the young for breaking rules” (Chavez-Garcia, 2012, 21). Spanish colonization in the state depended on disrupting forms of social cohesion through forced relocation, removal from families, and the use of carceral facilities. As Hernández notes, “[o]ne of the first structures these colonists built was a jail,” which was then used to incarcerate Indigenous people (of the Tongva-Gabrielino Tribe, in what is now known as Los Angeles) (2017, 4). Soon, information use and access became a crux used by colonizers to divide themselves from the Native people. Native people’s clothing, comportment, religion, and language were all wielded by colonizers to justify their violent treatment toward Indigenous peoples while simultaneously situating their own knowledges and ways of being as morally right and justified. During this period, the jail existed, but corporal punishment prevailed. It was at the closure of Spanish colonialism and the onset of Mexican rule in the area that incarceration became a form of control utilized to both contain racialized groups and groups viewed as either Other or as a threat to the ordering social aegis. In the 1820s in Los Angeles, as now throughout America, “[p]ublic order charges, such as vagrancy, disorderly conduct, and public drunkenness, systematically penalize the landless, homeless, and underemployed. Those who live their lives in public—sleeping, eating, arguing, loving, drinking, playing, etc.—are the most vulnerable to public order arrests, which effectively imprison them for living, as so much of their lives are lived in public” (Hernández, 2017).

American conquest of California involved a unique bent of containment and control. In 1850, white adults were granted the legal right to own young Native people, with the supposed permission of adults in their lives. This legal right to access the bodies and labor of Native children led to forced relocations, kidnappings, and other forms of containment (Chavez-Garcia,

2012). While not centralized within a physical institution, these practices stand alongside practices of slavery to speak to the possibility that carceral systems exist not only in buildings but can exist as disbursed systems of control that are based on process of white supremacy, racism, and racialization.

Across the country, there is no doubt that a set of similar maneuvers against Native peoples had also played out in earlier forms of American colonization of the Eastern portion of the continent, as evidenced in other forms of forced removal, relocation, cultural assimilation, and violence. In this same period, the control of information proliferated throughout white American practices of slavery. Literacy laws and regulations were ostensibly placed in reaction to uprisings and acts of resistance to enslavement and hinged largely on the racist ideology that African people enslaved in America were unequipped to handle the influence of reading. Literacy practices of African people who were enslaved and their descendants were grounds that were heavily policed, feared, and punished by white people in the United States (Cornelius, 1983; Rasmussen, 2010). Available evidence of the inability of white people to maintain their control over information through the regulation of literacy point to differences between the North and the South in the maintenance of access to literacy as a means of maintaining power and continuing oppression (Bly, 2008).

As with colonization in California, the bodies of people who were enslaved were also read *as* information, with whiteness maintained through the regulations related to movement and gestures, gender, and dress, and also through physically invasive practices (Browne, 2015; Snorton, 2015). Information about race was instantiated not only in the physical bodies of individuals, but also was traced through their familial lines in legal discourse that declared racialized status through blood quantum and similar vagaries. This argument is central to the

early roots of Critical Race Theory, where Cheryl Harris utilized a legal examination of how race and racialization became codified into American law in ways that bolstered the economic well-being of white people (1993).

This brief historical review concerns logics of incarceration that may take myriad forms, from colonization to enslavement to systems of surveillance that have limited people's movement or places them into publics where they are more and more likely to experience regulation, policing, and other forms of punishment. Here, it makes sense to turn to some of the actual historical practices of information regulation in American instantiations of formal incarceration. In keeping with many of the conceptions of the function of reading, early processes of containment within the American colonies incorporated disciplinary reading practices that were utilized to judge individual's tendency toward or willingness to engage in (explicitly Christian) reformation (Schorb, 2014). By the late 1700s, white prisoners who read for penitence and engaged in confession while incarcerated were lauded as examples of the power of the (biblical) Word and the purposes of literacy. During this time, "the concept of early childhood literacy instruction as a deterrent to crime soon became a common refrain, as would the danger of reading novels or other diversionary materials" (Schorb, 2014, 31). Black and Indigenous people, imprisoned or not, were made subject to the colonial impulse of literacy as a way of regulating behavior through spiritual endeavor. As briefly stated above in the instance of California, missionaries and educators actively reduced access to information that maintained social ties and ways of having community and introduced Christianity and Western knowledge modes with the goal of regulating behavior. The disciplinary power of literacy and information access was part of its appeal. Toward the end of this period, the middle class ascribed to and reinforced a belief that "[r]eading honed the capacity to moderate temperament, constrain

destructive passions, and facilitate the exercise of reason—provided, of course, the right texts were read in the right way” (Schorb, 2014, 45).

The management and monitoring of information access and the surveillance of how information was utilized have been aspects of American incarceration over time. The two prominent models for the early penitentiary—the Pennsylvania and Auburn models—prioritized the control of information through regulating the amount of contact between people who were detained. This was done through the enforcement of continuous silence, the monitoring of interactions between people who were incarcerated, and the prioritization of the role of a literacy that led to adherence to Christian values (Schorb, 2014). Individuals were seen as producers and purveyors of criminal information. They were largely viewed by the penitentiary and the larger society as either in need of guidance and cultivation through performative literacy practices (that occurred under diligent guidance) or as producers of information that encouraged a milieu of criminality and violence, and thus in need of censorship. Conceptions of how information might be produced or utilized were often tied to racist ideas of the individual’s capacity to learn or to be (quite literally) redeemed.

In the early penitentiary, faith in the reformatory aspects of literacy was often coupled with advocacy for the redemptive qualities of physical toil. It is important to note here that slavery and penitentiary models, which precede current American systems of incarceration, often intersected. In a history of private prisons that extends to a historical review of labor and incarceration, Bauer states that “[p]art of what saved the penitentiary system was the phasing out of slavery in the Northeast. Whites feared a large number of free black men and the penitentiary offered a way to enforce compliance and obedience of freed African Americans. As a model of forced labor, it was more efficient than slavery, and unlike slavery, prison labor directly

benefited the state” (2018, 59). Bauer’s historical analysis links precedents of containment and control to the present, examining how modern disciplinary practices reflect racist fears and tropes that have been maintained over time despite social permutations and political shifts. Incarceration is central to the maintenance of these narratives across contexts and events.

These are brief and incomplete examples of the role of information in early and diffuse systems of control and incarceration. Before turning specifically to a history of established, formalized library services in carceral facilities, it makes sense to hone in on one more recent moment in American history—the Progressive Era.

Progressive Era ideologies of scientific rationality combined with existing narratives about the racial superiority of whiteness to create new forms of information and knowledge production that furthered the reach of incarceration in the United States. In the early 1910s, this confluence took the form of eugenics, not only as an ideology that prioritized white, middle-class belonging above other categories, but as a practice that was actively enacted by white women who were trained to use eugenic frames to assess the quality of life of youth and to make determinations about youths’ social and genetic viability. These workers were part of a system of surveillance that led to the regulation of youths’ behaviors, youths’ removal from their homes, and ultimately often led to the incarceration and at times the forced sterilization of youth of color and poor youth (Chavez-Garcia, 2012). In this nationwide project, young men of color were sorted into typologies that were heavily associated with deviance and delinquency. Youth who were believed to engage in non-normative gendered behavior, including homosexuality, were removed from their homes and sent for reformation. Young women were placed in institutional settings and ‘trained’ into proper domesticity, with white women viewed as more likely to be reformed and young women of color trained into domestic labor. Young men deemed

“defective” under the rubrics of eugenicist social outreach and this new science of social ordering were often institutionalized and sterilized. Nowhere was this procedure more common or enduring than in California, where 20,000 people underwent compulsory sterilization in the period between 1910 and the 1970s (Chavez-Garcia, 2012). It is important to note the endurance of this practice because this length of time illustrates that, once instantiated, the practices of racialization and racial categorization that were shaped by eugenics as a field of knowledge continued even as eugenics was rejected as science. This period was closely preceded by legal and political maneuvers that reinforced racial hierarchies, including the Chinese Exclusion Act and American attempts to curtail the spread of revolutionary thought, both within its borders and in Mexico (Hernández, 2017).

The Progressive Era is particularly important when looking to the overlap between library services, in general, and American incarceration. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, a number of disciplines of study became professionalized and began to take on aspects of sciences. By the 1920s, this included library science as a field of study that informed, but was differentiated from, librarianship (Richardson, 2010). The turn to science and professionalism occurred in a period when librarians have recently begun to organize their efforts toward a focus on library services for people who were incarcerated. In 1910 or 1911, librarians formed the Committee on Libraries in Federal Prisons. In 1916, the *Manual for Institution Libraries* was published by librarians affiliated with the ALA Committee on Library Work in Hospitals and Charitable and Correctional Institutions (Bailey, 2012). These works drew from the tradition of reading while incarcerated that is described above.

Throughout the Progressive Era, white women acted as colonial agents under the guise of providing more scientific, regulated, and meaningful social and political education.

Schlesselman-Tarango has traced this tradition within the field of librarianship in the archetype of the white Lady Bountiful (2016). Progressive Era white, middle-class women, who were positioned, under eugenicist constructions, near the top of chains of cultural evolution, were viewed as particularly skilled at continuing the role of the library as a site of cultural assimilation, knowledge regulation, and the moral uprightness or civility that had come to be associated with (certain types) of reading. No doubt, the specifically gendered whiteness that shaped the practice of librarianship influenced how services for people who were incarcerated were conceived and implemented.

The move toward library science involved a more thorough examination of the book's role in society and the ways in which readers engaged with books. Library science began to focus on the internal process of reading as it aligned with fields of sociology, psychology, and other social sciences (Richardson, 2010). During this period, publications on library services to people who are incarcerated began to move from prescriptive bibliographies designed to fit the environment of the institution and information about book processing to more formalized practices of assessing how library services might occur in carceral facilities. Throughout the 1900s, publications on this topic began to reflect the histories that had shaped them, at times focusing on the belief that books were central to reformation and at others positioning the library as an extension of carceral facilities. The next section briefly outlines how services to incarcerated people were discussed in library and information science publications throughout the 1900s, revealing that there were other narratives that rose out of community activism and incarcerated people's self-advocacy. Tracing this history allows readers to see how philosophies within library services to people who are incarcerated have risen out of racializing histories and

to identify points of departure that might allow for new, and much needed, approaches to these services—in carceral facilities and within the public library.

A TIMELINE OF LIBRARY SERVICES TO PEOPLE WHO ARE INCARCERATED

Library services to incarcerated people tend to be discussed within the field of LIS as newly minted or particularly of interest in a specific context or social moment. Reviewing the history of publications on this topic reveals that library services to people who are incarcerated have been a concern since soon after the 1870 National Prison Congress, as was reflected in the 1876 New York Prison Association publication on collection development and prison libraries (Sullivan, 1998). This area of interest solidified within librarianship following the 1907 initial American Library Association meeting (Richardson, 2010). State library associations formed Committees on Prison Libraries as early as 1909 (specifically, the New York Library Association, Curtis, 1918). Publications throughout the 1900s reflect not only developing fields of study and concern within the field—they also reveal continuing themes across time that have shaped how library services within carceral facilities have been conceptualized, prioritized, or disregarded within Library Science and (later) LIS. They also reflect the social and political concerns of American society and the ways in which people who were incarcerated have advocated for their own access to information.

Early publications on library services to incarcerated people reflected the tensions between the practical and theoretical that arose during a moment of professionalization and development of the field of Library Science. Throughout the 1910s, services to incarcerated people became formalized through the formation of the Committee on Libraries in Federal Prisons (1910/1911) and the ALA Committee on Library Work in Hospitals and Charitable and Correctional Organizations publication of the *Manual for Institution Libraries* (authored by

Carrie Emma Scott, 1916). The Committee on Libraries in Federal Prisons expressed concern about the lack of resources available to acquire printed materials for people inside of federal prisons and communicated directly with the Attorney-General to advocate for increased resources and the presence of librarians. Members of the Committee urged librarians to visit prisons and witness the state of library services for themselves. Their efforts led to increased concern about access, but not without reservations. A report in 1911 documenting a visit to Leavenworth prison clearly illustrates that librarians saw themselves as able to determine the appropriateness of materials in the correctional setting—in the instance described, one of the visiting librarians' first acts was to remove "objectionable books" from the scant materials available within the prison (Curtis, 1918). Published communications between the Attorney-General and Committee reflect the Committee's insistence for the need for libraries, appealing to narratives of American nationalism and the curating (and possibly disciplinary) role of librarians. For instance, a 1911 report stated, "it is a disgrace that a wealthy nation should limit the reading even of its prisoners to books that are filthy and in rags which are largely chance contributions by visitors" (cited in Curtis, 1918, 50). The Committee endeavored to increase financial support for prison libraries, discussed creating a bill to Congress for funds, and approached the American Prison Association in an effort to coordinate their advocacy. Their final report, in 1913, revealed little success in these efforts.

The *Manual for Institution Libraries* also positioned the librarian as a cultural and disciplinary curator of information. The librarian's role, according to the *Manual*, was to base book collections "on the class of inmates and the functions of the institution" (1916, 5). Regarding the role of fiction reading, the authors of the *Manual* situate censorship as a central role of the librarian. "Fiction for prisons and reform schools should be censored carefully.

Nothing should be accepted which represents vice attractively, contains sensual suggestions, or deals with crime and punishment” (1916, 7). The collection development guidelines also reflect librarians’ perceptions of themselves as a civilizing force, advocating that priority in materials selection be given to the needs of “[t]he exceptional man among the convicts” (1916, 7). Early penitentiary models of reading as a means toward redemption are reflected in the document, shifting from the necessity of spiritual piety to the idea of literacy as a means of ensuring social cohesion. The closing of the section on materials selection reads, “Let the prison library not only meet the needs of the men, but inspire them to further efforts. The reading habit once firmly fixed is one of the best safe-guards for any man” (1916, 8). Curtis’ 1918 book *Libraries of the American State and National Institutions for Defectives, Dependents and Delinquents* reiterated the role of the library in what was viewed as reformation of the incarcerated person (Sullivan, 1998). No doubt, these attitudes reflected trends toward enculturation, assimilation, and the disallowance of non-white forms of being or belonging present in the larger field during this moment.

These early, formative documents can serve another function for librarians looking back on the history of library services to people who are incarcerated. Narratives of the need for resources, the institutional aegis as shaping collection decisions, the librarian as savior, guide, or at least facilitator of a “higher” (along the lines of recapitulation theory) way of being resurface time and again in the 100 years that have passed since their publication. While an argument can be made that professionals in the field of Library Science (and later, LIS) have either engaged in critical discourse of these perspectives or have created new forms of libraries in coordination with community groups or other, non-state affiliated organizations, looking to how individuals in

the profession have discussed library services to people who are incarcerated reveals that much of the founding philosophies of these types of services still stand to be addressed.

During the period between the 1920s and 1940s, publications related to library services for incarcerated people reflect the tensions of a profession establishing its footing as a science. The turn toward scientific evaluation likely informed the administration of the 1927 National Survey of Prison Libraries, the first survey on the topic of library services in carceral facilities that took place in the United States (Greenway, 2007). Practical models for creating and implementing services were developed and distributed in the 1932 *The Prison Library Handbook* (Jones). The *Handbook*, created by the ALA Committee on Libraries in Correctional Institutions, which was partially funded by the Rockefellers' Bureau of Social Hygiene, Inc, aimed to promote this area of work and to modify existing ALA standards to prison setting. Multiple book lists specifically tailored to services in jails and prisons were published during this time, including Jones' 1933 *2500 Books for the Prison Library* and the American Prison Association Committee on Institution Libraries' 1939 *1000 Books for Prison Libraries, 1936–1939* (Methven). There was a marked increase in library services in federal prisons between the 1920s and the 1940s, which was accompanied by the creation of the American Prison Association Committee on Institutional Libraries (in 1938, MacCormick, 1950). Bibliotherapy—the belief that orchestrated and constrained practices of reflected, disciplinary reading could have internal psychological and reformatory effects—became popular in the profession throughout the 1930s (Sweeney, 2010).

Standards for library services for incarcerated people were prioritized from the 1940s and into the 1950s. Librarians and other professionals began to develop the *Objectives and Standards for Libraries in Adult Prisons and Reformatory* in 1939 (Coyle, 1987). These standards were

approved by the American Prison Association in 1943 and the American Library Association in 1944. The *Standards* situated the library as an educational space (Coyle, 1987) and highlighted the need for institutional security to be a priority in the development of library services inside of prisons (Bailey, 1972). The *Standards* were published as a chapter of the *Manual of Suggested Standards for a State Correctional System* by the American Prison Association (Bailey, 1972). A set of the *Standards*, from 1941, was included as an appendix to the *Library Manual for Correctional Institutions*. That *Manual*, published in 1950 by the American Prison Association, included chapters on the ethos for providing library services in prisons. The authors argued for the role of libraries in rehabilitation, as well as practical information regarding book purchasing, processing, and maintaining statistics (Freedman, 1950). The idea that libraries, or at least reading, played a role in individual rehabilitation was further evidenced by advocacy for bibliotherapeutic approaches among prison administration and literature throughout the 1940s and into the 1970s, though this advocacy often manifested as “monitoring prisoners’ reading and treating them as passive recipients of literary medicine” (Sweeney, 2010, p. 35).

Bailey has focused specifically on the development and implementation of standards from the 1940s through the 1960s (1972), tracing the trajectory of the new set of *Standards* and steps that led to their revisions. In Bailey’s review, the *Standards* were maintained and revised through the work of the ALA Association of Hospital and Institution Libraries (AHIL), which formed in the mid-50s. Cooperation between the American Correctional Association (formerly American Prison Association) and ALA (specifically AHIL) was formalized in the 1960s through the creation of the Joint Committee on Institution Libraries. In 1962, this Joint Committee overhauled the existing standards and included revisions that were more restrained in their tone and format than the previous standards. The 1962 revisions were published in the 1966

Manual of Correctional Standards. Writing in 1972, it was Bailey's assessment that this version of the standards, when followed, represented "quality library service in an institution on par with a public library" (262).

Bailey's words were offered as a testament to the *Standards* and not to services that were actually occurring. The ACA/ALA AHIL Joint Committee surveyed institutional libraries in 1965 and 1966 in order to evaluate their adherence to the guidelines outlined in the recent set of *Standards*. Survey results revealed that most institutions did not adhere to the standards for library service and did not otherwise prioritize library or materials access for people who were incarcerated (Bailey, 1972; LeDonne, 1974). In light of these findings, and in recognition of changes in how incarceration occurred in the United States, Bailey made a case for both a revised set of standards and for public libraries "to participate more actively in the service provided to correctional institutions" (1972, 264). This advocacy is tempered by AHIL's own embrace of bibliotherapeutic approaches to library services in carceral facilities. The 1971 AHIL publication *Bibliotherapy Methods and Materials* positioned librarians as intercessors in the psychological processes and healers of the unconscious realms of incarcerated people (Sweeney, 2010). This publication does not speak particularly highly of people who were incarcerated, nor, in hindsight, does it reflect well on librarians' own ideas of their role within carceral practices.

The structure of incarceration in the United States, and the groups targeted for surveillance and policing, shifted over the period of the 1920s through the 1960s. As changes in the structure of carceral institutions, rates of incarceration, and both violent, extralegal and Jim Crow legal practices occurred throughout this period, new concerns were introduced as sites of regulation. These included substance usage (alcohol and marijuana, primarily), movement between states, and the regulation of status crimes for people who lived their lives in public. The

1950s and 60s were marred by state repression of the long Civil Rights movement and of groups that engaged in demonstrations, resistance, and otherwise made demands that their oppression be addressed and ended. These movements were often and consistently met by police force, leaving movement leaders and participants in jails and prisons. Over the same period, incarcerated people had been writing about, and at times publishing, stories and exposés of their experiences while incarcerated. These changes were rarely noted in articles and books about library services to people who were incarcerated published during this time, but they preceded and shaped a decade in which library services to incarcerated people would receive increased attention and support.

The late 1960s and early 1970s were defined by the organizing efforts of Black and Indigenous people and other people of color, as well as poor people, homosexual and transgender people, and others as they demanded better treatment from the state and from society. This organizing did not cease after movements experienced state repression and movement leaders were imprisoned. Within prisons, groups and individuals engaged in large and small-scale forms of agitation and resistance, organizing uprisings, prison breaks, and takeovers of prisons (Bernstein, 2010; Bissonette, 2008). It is a simplistic analysis to say that prison was, in many ways, an unavoidable reality during the 1970s, but it still holds weight. The aftereffects of violent policing, the conditions of incarceration, and the cooperation between people who were incarcerated and people outside of the prisons changed American awareness about how, and in what ways, prison structured society.

The repression of social and political movements led to calls among librarians for reconfigurations of how libraries ought to function for incarcerated people. To some extent, this shift was dependent on increased funding for libraries in carceral facilities. Title IV of the 1966

Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) explicitly provided funding for carceral institution libraries. Two years after funds were made available, Wang published the results of a survey of state-affiliated libraries. Wang's findings revealed that few carceral institutions had library services coordinated under the purview of librarians (1968). For many librarians, Wang's study coupled with results from surveys that showed little adherence to library standards acted as glaring reminders of the need for increased library services in carceral facilities. This was made more possible by a revision to Title I of LSCA in 1971, which extended funding for public libraries. These funding shifts laid the ground for creating robust, statewide library systems within juvenile detention centers and adult prisons. The establishment of LSCA funds was at least partially influenced by the work of Civil Rights organizers and movements in the 1960s.

The turn in attention to and implementation of library services to incarcerated people is notable in the variety of approaches that can be identified within the field. Histories and bibliographies that provided some context for library services were published in the early 1970s, notably MacCormick's "Brief History of Libraries in American Correctional Centers," which was presented to the American Correctional Association in 1970 and published as a chapter in 1973, and Gillespie's extensive (485 entry) 1970 bibliography on prison libraries, which included publications from 1802 through the time of publication. New committees formed and ALA-affiliated groups issued calls for greater services to people who were incarcerated. Members of the Intellectual Freedom Committee expressed concerns around incarcerated peoples' rights to read in 1970s, and in 1972 the Social Responsibilities Round Table issued a request for ALA to attend to the needs of people who were incarcerated and formed a Task Force on Services to Prisoners. The Library Services to Young Adults in Institutions ad hoc Committee was formed that same year. ALA-affiliated groups were also providing training,

including a joint workshop on legal resources that was held in coordination with UC Berkeley and a two-day workshop that the Association of Hospital and Institution Libraries (AHIL) held in San Jose, CA, in 1973.

The goal of the AHIL workshop was to raise critical awareness and to create new library services inside of prisons. Workshop leaders were clear in their intent. They created a reading list that prioritized social and political aspects of library services to incarcerated people. Dalton, one of the workshop organizers, opened the workshop with a statement that the success of the workshop depended on the development of new library services in carceral facilities. Gesturing to a long history of conversations about increasing services in carceral facilities that had little results, Dalton wrote, “[s]hould there not be library service to those within prison walls just as for those without—or even better, because the prisoners have only those services that are brought to them and have little choice?” (1973, 1). This spirit was tempered by calls to the rehabilitative nature of reading and education. Dalton openly recognized that ideologies embracing rehabilitation and reform facilitated the opportunity to create new programs: “Now is the time to consider library service for there is an interest in prisons that is unprecedented by the public and by the government for improving the correctional system” (1973, 2).

Jail and prison libraries and research on library services to incarcerated people proliferated in the 1970s. LeDonne, under the UC Berkeley Institute on Library Research, conducted a two-year *Survey of Library and Information Problems in Correctional Institutions*. This project, which began in 1972 and was published in 1974, most likely represents the most recent extensive research into library services for incarcerated people. Published in four sections, it contains survey results that revealed the unequal and inconsistent provision of library services in carceral facilities. It includes information about the availability of and need for legal resources

and an overview of relevant legislation regarding legal information access, a state-by-state breakdown of library services in carceral facilities, and a bibliography of resources that positioned library services in carceral facilities within their contemporary social and political context. Due to its situated approach and multiple points of overlap with the organizing work that was being conducted by people incarcerated at the time of its creation (including increased agitation for legal resources that ultimately led to a federal mandate for access to law libraries while incarcerated), LeDonne's work reflects a trend that became apparent in the 1970s. It is during this period that librarians expressed philosophical views that resisted the narrative that the library in a carceral facility should align with either a perspective of rehabilitation (often in the form of bibliotherapy) or of punishment. Rather, LeDonne's work (and especially the bibliography), reflect a turn toward viewing incarcerated people as capable of identifying their own information needs and desires.

Other surveys were conducted during this period. In 1973, the Social Responsibilities Round Table on Services to Prisoners conducted a survey of library services in jails. A similar survey of library services in local jails was conducted in 1975 by the Maine State Library (Angelides and Berg, 1975). The Maine State Library survey, influenced by the 1974 issue of *Illinois Libraries* described below, found inconsistent access to libraries or books (and in some cases, no libraries at all). The authors of that report urged more, and more frequent, information gathering on the scope and type of services available in local jails and clearly stated that these services are necessary.

Nowhere is the desire to align library services with the information needs and requests of people who are incarcerated more apparent than in the unaffiliated publication of *Inside-Outside*. *Inside-Outside*, edited by Stout and Turitz, ran from 1974 through 1978. It was a newsletter that

acted as a mode of communication between librarians and other information providers and people who were incarcerated. It included calls for support, book reviews, librarians' missives, critical examinations of carceral facilities and of the function of incarceration in America, critiques of American imperialism, and more during its short run. It also included explicitly anti-prison illustrations that served to communicate its philosophical approach to its readers, including quotes from Eugene Debs and images of cell bars being pushed open (see Austin, 2017 for examples). Stout, one of the editors of *Inside-Outside*, was noted as a contributor to the bibliography section of LeDonne's substantial research project. Stout's efforts to communicate and act in coordination with people who were incarcerated is most likely echoed in her desire that librarians conceptualize library services to incarcerated people within a larger frame of their historical, political, and social contexts.

Increased funding, growing professional interest in library services for incarcerated people, and the organizing efforts of people who were incarcerated and people working with them outside of the prisons led to an increase in research on these types of services. Three special issues on library services to incarcerated people were published in the 1970s. These included the 1974 special issue of *Illinois Libraries*, published in response to a recent ACA/ALA joint conference; the 1977 special issue of the *Wilson Library Bulletin* titled "Breaking In: Library Services to Prisoners"; and the special issue of *Library Trends* titled "Library Services to Correctional Facilities," published that same year. These issues also addressed the incarceration of youth and adults in the United States, outlining overlaps and divergences in how juvenile detention facilities and prisons shaped library services. (The inclusion of research on juvenile detention center libraries was likely influenced by the creation of the ACA/ALA 1975 *Library Standards for Juvenile Correctional Institutions*.) While some articles in the issues contained

hints of philosophical approaches outside of the rehabilitation-or-punishment logic of American carceral institutions, the majority of the articles did not tend toward an interrogation of the function of incarceration in American society and its role in continuing existing forms of oppression.

The late 1970s and 1980s were marked by tough on crime, and later “War on Drugs,” policies that further criminalized groups that had been actively seeking to resist their oppression throughout the 1970s. While the history of incarceration as a form of racial control, ideological management, and colonization in the United States can be traced back to the establishment of diffuse carceral systems, scholars have pointed to this more recent period as the moment in which mass incarceration began (Alexander, 2010). Tough on crime and anti-drug policies overlapped with de facto modes of segregation, such as redlining, and made the increased surveillance and policing of communities of color, poor people, people who were disabled, LGBTQ people, and people who lived their lives in public part of a legal process of policing, criminalization, and incarceration. This occurred as new drugs, specifically crack cocaine, were introduced into communities that were experiencing ongoing oppression.

Use and possession of crack cocaine was criminalized at rates exorbitantly higher than the rates of policing of cocaine powder, a drug associated at the time with white, predominantly middle-class users (Alexander, 2010). Due to policing, incarceration, and the high costs of bail (which grants the ability to pay to leave the jail with the promise to return for all state-mandated proceedings and sentencing), the structure of the public began to change. As more people, primarily young Black men and men of color, were incarcerated, communities were drained of their support systems and left to rely on state services. Media reports and official state policies also worked to create narratives and ideologies that overlapped the categories of criminality and

racialization, equating being a person of color with being (always or always potentially) criminal (Cacho, 2012).

Librarians were not removed from these social and political shifts. Where in the past white public librarians had, at times, enforced the segregation of public librarians (choosing in some cases to close libraries rather than to desegregate), librarians in the 1980s were faced with a public whose composition was continuously being whitewashed through processes of criminalization and incarceration. Activity in the 1970s had generated momentum for new projects and organizing among librarians, but the tenor of librarians' passion for working with incarcerated people shifted, as did librarians' professed trend toward more rehabilitative approaches to carceral systems. Increased policing also impacted people at the community level, and jail populations swiftly increased. As more and more people were placed in jail prior to sentencing, and prison libraries had become more established in the 1970s, some librarians turned their focus to how public libraries might provide library services to people in local jails.

The Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA) began the Jail Library Services Project in 1979. This project represented a major collaboration between carceral services staff and librarians. Partners on the Higher Education Act II-B funded grant included the American Correctional Association, the National Jail Association, the National Sheriffs Association, the Fortune Society, and Sam Houston University. The two-year project resulted in one workshop and published two guides for services. The explicit goal of the Jail Library Services Project was reflected in the grant title ("Improving Jail Library Services"). The two-day workshop, coordinated by House, the project director, was preceded by an extensive information gathering project. House contacted state library systems and local-level providers to ascertain the extent of services being provided within jails and with requests to duplicate

awareness-raising projects (in one instance, a scenario in which attendees would participate in a jail simulation (correspondence, Connie House to Mary Zoller, 1979). The two-day institute was held in Huntsville, TX, in 1980. It drew attendees from across the United States.

The Jail Library Services Project published two guides in 1981. These guides positioned jail staff and administrators and librarians as partners in providing “the overall education and rehabilitation of inmates and improved jail conditions and services” (Bayley, Greenfield, and Nogueira, 1981, v). *Jail Library Service: A Guide for Librarians and Administrators* opens with a statement that professes the groups’ belief in the mutually beneficial nature of library services in local jails.

Inmates have the right to read, and quality jail library service can help them exercise this right.

Simultaneously, it aids the jail administrator and jail staff with security by giving inmates a constructive way to use their time. It provides jail staff ready access to educational and professional materials, and gives the public library the opportunity to meet the needs of a great part of its community. And it gives the public library and the city or county jail the opportunity to work together and hopefully evolve as support groups for each other (Bayley, Greenfield, and Nogueira, 1981, 1).

The companion publication produced by the Jail Library Services Project continued to expound on the need for coordination between groups similar to those involved in the grant, reflecting the narrative that, at least in this moment, the goal of both correctional staff and librarians was the coordinated and controlled rehabilitation of people who were incarcerated (Schexnaydre and Robbins, 1981).

The *Library Standards for Adult Correctional Institutions* were again revised in 1981. Librarians’ faith in the possibility of carceral institutions as rehabilitative agents likely lasted beyond the punitive turn that occurred during political and legal maneuvers that proposed to be tough on crime, but, following the publication of the *Standards*, their formal publications tapered

off during the 1980s. This change was possibly accelerated by the 1982 split between the American Library Association and the American Correctional Association (formerly the American Prison Association) over the “Resolution on Prisoners’ Right to Read”, which had been discussed since the 1970s (Conrad, 2017). The rift between ALA and ACA reflected both the social and political stance that librarians advocating for library services in carceral facilities developed during the 1970s and the ACA’s increasingly “tough on crime” approach, which mirrored the actions of the American government and similar institutions. ACA proceeded to develop its own set of standards for library service following the dissolution of its collaboration with ALA. Despite a lessening of documented activity and the separation from ACA, the ASCLA Library Services to Prisoners group formed a Speaker’s Bureau on Jails and Prisons in 1983, citing “overcrowding in U.S. prisons threatens to rule out the establishment of libraries in many facilities, making the effort timely” (ASCLA, 1983). This brief statement reflects the larger punitive turn that would enlarge the United States prison population from 158,000 people in 1978 to the 2.3 million people currently incarcerated today (Bayley, Greenfield, and Nogueira, 1981).

International interest in libraries in carceral facilities was formalized in the mid-1980s through the formation of the IFLA Working Group on Prison Libraries. Dalton, one of the organizers of the 1973 Workshop on Library and Information Services for Prison Populations, was doubtlessly part of the group’s founding. The Working Group conducted an international survey of libraries in prisons in 1985 and 1986. The Group found that “[i]n the United States, prison libraries are used more by prisoners than public libraries are used by the general public,” but that many U.S. prisons did not provide any form of library access (Dalton, 1988, 160).

Within the United States, the philosophy of the punitive turn was reflected in two publications about library services in prisons—Hartz’s *The Library in the Correctional Setting* and Coyle’s *Libraries in Prisons*. Hartz’s 1984 bibliography and analysis of library publications on prison libraries from the period of 1958-1983 offered a scathing critique of the lack of attention given to library services to people in prison, of the faith librarians had professed in the library’s role in rehabilitation, and of librarians’ calls for increased access to information for people inside of prisons. Hartz’s work reflects the effects of ongoing processes of criminalization. Nowhere is this more apparent than when discussing library patrons in the prison, asking “Did it ever occur to anyone working in corrections that maybe the criminal doesn’t want to be reformed ... these people function as true outlaws who will continue their criminal roles until the day they die, either by natural causes or other terminal misadventures” (Hartz, 1984, viii).

Where Hartz’s “law and order”-influenced small press publication may not have reached many librarians, Coyle’s 1987 *Libraries in Prisons* was widely received (and met with criticism by librarians who had advocated for library services inside of carceral facilities throughout the 1970s). Coyle openly chastised librarians for advocating for library services in prisons similar to those present in a public library, delineating prison librarianship from other forms of library service in its alignment with the (punitive) function of the prison. In Coyle’s conceptual framework, the prison library was an extension of the prison. In describing this philosophical approach, Coyle wrote

the state itself ... is the legitimizer of prison library service. Therefore, it is the state’s interests and goals, and not the interests of inmates, that should determine the kind and extent of library service to be made available in prisons. This leads directly to the question: What are the state’s interests, and to what extent does the rationale of the public library reflect those interests? (1987, 80).

It may not be difficult to discern that Coyle's answer to the final question is that the public library does not align with the state's interests.

The 1980s closed with two publications reflecting on changes in how library services to incarcerated people had been implemented over the decade. Rubin and Souza reproached Coyle's philosophical approach to library services, outlining its alignment with inconsistent and punitive practices of incarceration. Vogel, acting as editor to a 1989 *Wilson Library Bulletin* special section on prison libraries, made similar, though less specific, critiques. All authors described how changes to carceral practices, social and political understandings of the role and function of prisons, and the increasing numbers of people incarcerated had impacted possibilities for library services inside of prisons. Together, they ended the decade with an urgent request for librarians to reconsider services to incarcerated people as part of the function of libraries, rather than as a niche area of interest.

CONCLUSION

The long and incomplete overview of carceral histories and libraries presented in this chapter offers many points of entry for further exploration. Tracing through histories of incarceration, literacy practices, and librarianship reveals ongoing overlap between carceral facilities and libraries. It provides perspective on how librarians' philosophical approaches to carceral systems have shaped library services to people inside of prisons, how librarians have aligned with or deviated from the polar conceptions of carceral systems as punitive or rehabilitative (a topic introduced in chapter one), and provides some insight into how contemporary forms of policing and incarceration have shaped the ways in which "the public" served by the public library is conceptualized in library discourse.

This chapter purposely closes by looking to the early 1990s. During this period, technology became increasingly present in information access, anti-Black and criminalizing narratives of “superpredators” and “welfare queens” gained traction among people with power as communities impacted by the crack epidemic and the war on drugs were reconfigured by state practices of policing, incarceration, and surveillance, and prisons broke new ground across the nation. Within librarianship, a 1990 survey of library services in prisons preceded the 1992 ASCLA publication of the *Library Standards for Adult Correctional Institutions* (Greenway, 2007). This is the most recent version of the *Standards*.

Many of the trends that are brought to the fore in this chapter remain present in librarianship today. Some of these are practical—calls for funding libraries in carceral facilities, the need for librarians, and descriptions of the role of libraries in carceral facilities have been present for more than a century. The more theoretical themes—how patrons are conceptualized along the lines of criminality, the role of the library within a jail or prison, the tools used to lay claim to the information needs and rights of people who are incarcerated—have been and continue to be debated in the field. Despite the minimal attention given to the robust history of library services to incarcerated people, Coyle’s 1987 text is still utilized in some LIS classrooms, presenting students with a very particular approach to prison librarianship. A look to the longer history may dissuade librarians from utilizing any particular text on this topic as authoritative and solely valuable in its approach.

The next chapter disambiguates some of the institutions named in this chapter, describing their contemporary functions and the ways in which policing and incarceration occur in American society and between carceral institutions. Chapter 4 delves into the more recent history of library services to people who are incarcerated in order to describe how, and in what ways,

information and technologies are present or absent in contemporary carceral facilities. Following these, the book turns to an examination of actual and possible approaches to library services in carceral facilities.

FIGURE 2.1

LIBRARY SERVICES TO INCARCERATED PEOPLE: 1911–1992



Libraries and Personal Reformation

1918

Curtis publishes Libraries of the American State and National Institutions for Defectives, Dependents and Delinquents.

Bibliotherapy Gains Traction

1930S

The Prison Library Handbook

1932

ALA Committee on Libraries in Correctional Institutions

2500 Books for the Prison Library

1933

1000 Books for Prison Libraries

1939

American Prison Association Committee on Institution Libraries

Jones. Minneapolis, Harrison & Smith Company.

pre-print chapter

Standards Approved

1944

Objectives and Standards for Libraries in Adult Prisons and Reformatories - Approved by Am. Prison Assoc. in 1943/ALA in 1944

Joint Committee on Institution Libraries

1956 & 1957

ACA and the ALA Association of Hospital and Institution Libraries (AHIL) form joint committee

Survey of Institutional Libraries

1965 & 1966

Conducted by ACA and ALA AHIL Joint Committee

Library Services and Construction Act

1966

Title IV funds institutional libraries when matched with state funds

Prison Libraries - Bibliography

1968

Gillespie. A Citation-Entry Analysis of the Literature on Prison Libraries.

Right to Read While Incarcerated

1970

ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom expresses concern

Name Change

1954

American Prison Association becomes American Correctional Association (ACA)

Standards Revised

1962

ACA Committee on Institutional Libraries

Institutional Library Service Programs

1966

Wang. Survey of state-affiliated institutional libraries.

Historical Review

1970

MacCormick presents Brief History of Libraries in American Correctional Centers to ACA

Library Services and Construction Act

1971

Title I funds public libraries, with option for funds to be designated for institutional libraries

Request to Prioritize Services

1972

ALA Social Responsibilities Round Table Task Force on Service to Prisoners issues general request to ALA

Young Adults

1973

Library Service to Young Adults in Institutions ad hoc committee of the ALA Young Adult Services Division formed

Workshop

1973

ALA AHIL and others hold two day workshop in California on Library and Information Service for Prison Populations

Inside-Outside

1974

An unaffiliated publication between librarians and incarcerated people. Publication continued until 1978

Young Adult Standards

1975

Library Standards for Juvenile Correctional Institutions created by ACA/ALA

Bibliotherapy Methods and Materials

1971

ALA Association of Hospital and Institution Libraries

Survey of Institutional Libraries

1972

Survey of Library and Information Problems in Correctional Institutions begins under LeDonne's supervision.

Survey Results

1974

LeDonne. Correctional institution survey results published in four sections through the Institute of Library Research at UC Berkeley

Illinois Libraries

1974

Special journal issue in response to ALA/ACA joint conference

Library Trends

1977

Special issue on Library Services to Correctional Facilities

Wilson Library Bulletin

1977

Jail Library Services Project

1979 & 1980

ALA Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA), ACA, and others. Funded by Higher Education Act IIB grant

Special issue on Breaking In: Library Service to Prisoners

Institute

1980

Prisoners' Right to Read

1982

ALA Council adopts Resolution on Prisoners' Right to Read

House and ALA ASCLA hold five day institute in Texas on jail library services

ACA Disbands Collaboration

1982

ACA disbands collaboration with ALA in response to Resolution on Prisoners' Right to Read. ACA forms own standards for prison libraries

Libraries in Prisons

1987

The Challenge Continues

1989

Rubin and Souza address the increasing rate of incarceration in the United States

Coyle. Considered controversial by Coyle's peers

Wilson Library Bulletin

1989

Vogel is editor of special section on prison libraries. Issue describes changes in imprisonment



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