Forgotten and Elusive Partners: Academic Libraries and Higher Education in Prison

Rebecca Sorgert
beccasorgert@gmail.com

FORGOTTEN AND ELUSIVE PARTNERS: ACADEMIC LIBRARIES AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRISON

REBECCA SORGERT*

I. INTRODUCTION

Partnerships between academic libraries and education programs are essential for student success. The need for academic libraries is accentuated when students are incarcerated. Librarian Curt Asher states that "[f]or a uniquely underserved population of students–those in prison–access to academic materials can make the difference between positive accomplishment in college course work and failure."[1] In the era of mass incarceration and America as a carceral state,[2] academic librarians have an ethical duty to their profession and students behind bars to be partners with higher education programs in prisons.[3] When beginning to conduct research for this essay, I thought I would find that when students behind bars had access to Pell Grants, academic libraries may have been more likely to see the students as patrons. I assumed that academic libraries would resist serving incarcerated patrons post-1994 (passing of the Omnibus Crime Bill) as a direct result of the growing cultural tendency to criminalize and dehumanize people behind bars.[4] To my

1. Curt Asher, *Interlibrary Loan Outreach to a Prison: Access Inside*, 16 J. INTERLIBR. LOAN DOCUMENT DELIVERY & ELEC. RES. 27, 32 (2006).

2. *See* MICHELLE ALEXANDER, THE NEW JIM CROW: MASS INCARCERATION IN THE AGE OF COLORBLINDNESS 4 (2010).

3. *See Prisoners' Right to Read: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights*, INTELL. FREEDOM MANUAL, http://www.ifmanual.org/prisoners (last visited May 22, 2014) (supplementing ALA OFF. FOR INTELL. FREEDOM, INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM MANUAL (8th ed. 2010)).

4. *See* Richard C. McCorkle, *Research Note: Punish and Rehabilitate? Public Attitudes Toward Six Common Crimes*, 39 CRIME & DELINQ. 240, 240 (1993).

surprise, I could not even begin to measure this hypothesis because of the lack of librarians publishing on the topic of incarceration pre- and post-1994.[5]

My initial focus on academic librarians partnering with higher education programs inside prisons that operate their own special academic library did not come to fruition. Instead, I found that this practice is not always the preferred method; academic libraries and prison libraries often partner to serve students within the higher education program, with only one library operating within the prison.[6] Adding prison libraries as intermediates between the academic library and higher education programs became a necessary addition in the discussion on how to serve students.

As such, this article serves a dual purpose as both a literature review and a professional call to action for librarians to foster and improve partnerships with the education programs in prisons that are in geographically proximity to their academic institution. The 1994 Omnibus Crime bill banned students behind bars from receiving Pell Grants.[7] At about this same time, 50 percent of state prisons reduced educational programming.[8] Unable to afford tuition or not having educational programming, students behind bars also lost access to services that those paying tuition can receive, including the library. As we approach the twenty-year anniversary of the 1994 bill, librarians and education programs must ask not only how the lack of partnerships affects student success, but what political and cultural ramifications arise that align with isolating students who seek knowledge and the promise of a better future.

II. LIBRARY SERVICES ON THE INSIDE

There are three models of libraries for students behind bars. The first model is a library built by the higher educational program.[9] This library is often restricted to the program's students only, has its own space inside the prison, and receives materials through faculty and community donations or when the program budget allows. The second is the correctional facility's

---

5. For examples of librarians who have published on the topic, see generally SUSAN POTTER & SANDRA HUGHES BOYD, EXTENDING LIBRARY SERVICES TO REMOTE SITES: REGIS UNIVERSITY AS CASE STUDY (1992); Asher, *supra* note 1; Julia Bauder, *Using VuFind, XAMPP, and Flash Drives to Build an Offline Library Catalog for Use in a Liberal Arts in Prison Program*, CODE4LIB J., no. 16, Feb. 3, 2012, *available at* http://journal.code4lib.org/articles/6225.

6. *See* David W. Wilhelmus, *A New Emphasis for Correctional Facilities' Libraries*, 25 J. ACAD. LIBRARIANSHIP 114, 114 (1999).

7. Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 § 20411, 20 U.S.C. § 1070a(b)(6) (2012); Michele F. Welsch, *The Effects of the Elimination of Pell Grant Eligibility for State Prison Inmates*, 53 J. CORR. EDUC. 154, 154 (2002).

8. Welsch, *supra* note 7, at 154.

9. *See* Asher, *supra* note 1, at 29.

library.[10] These libraries fill the needs of all residents at the facility and materials are obtained by the facility when budgets are available. The College Library Resource Center (CLRC), which was built to "resembl[e] a small college library," is the third and most unique model.[11] The CLRC "is autonomously governed by an inmate board of directors and does not come under the direct control of the institutional administration. Nor is the CLRC affiliated with either of the two colleges which offer classes to inmates at the facility. Rather, it is specifically intended to enable students from both colleges to conduct research in an environment resembling a small college library."[12]

While the CLRC model allows students to conduct research in many disciplines, the program reflects that their collection "cannot equal a completely furnished library."[13] Accordingly, "a small research library like the CLRC, though helpful, is no substitute for the resources available to students on campus."[14] Furthermore, the guidelines contend that "[r]esources on this order could only be made available to incarcerated students if an entire correctional facility or existing campus were devoted to postsecondary education for prisoners."[15] While all three models differ in their operations, each would benefit from a partnership with an academic library.

As the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) was updating its guidelines for the Library Serving Disadvantaged Persons (LSDP) in 2003, the following suggestions were outlined for "those countries where the prison authority itself employs education and library staff, collaboration with public and academic libraries":

- Interlibrary loan arrangements;

- Access to union catalogs and bibliographic databases for cataloging;

- Training for prison library staff in information technology;

- Joint publications;

- Providing staff and expertise for prison library programs and special events;

- Solicitation of books to the prison.[16]

Further elaborating on the recommendations of the IFLA, the subsequent work in this section provides a discussion of the needs of incarcerated students and how libraries have approached reference services, collection development,

---

10. *See id.* at 28–29.

11. Edward A. Parker & Dana R. Schwertfeger, *A College Library and Research Center in a Correctional Facility*, 17 J. OFFENDER REHABILITATION 167, 169 (1991).

12. *Id.*

13. *Id.* at 174.

14. *Id.* at 178.

15. *Id.*

16. Vibeke Lehmann, *Planning and Implementing Prison Libraries: Strategies and Resources*, 29 IFLA J. 301, 303 (2003).

access to the academic library's catalog, interlibrary loans, program liaisons, and working with the general population prison library.

On-campus students benefit greatly because of their access to reference and subject librarians.[17] Joseph Travaglini, author of the 1984 article "Instructional Delivery in a Prison Education Program," attests to the state of reference services that Central Michigan University offered in 1984:

> The reference service is available on a WATS telephone line at no charge to students. Prison students who need to prepare papers or perform research required in their courses have access to a Campus Reference Librarian and receive the books and reference materials through the mail. Prison officials have not objected to having reference materials sent in; however they are skittish about hard-bound volumes at the potential they provide for smuggling.[18]

Access to a librarian to navigate the research process would be a resource that students could utilize to increase their academic success. Telephone and email questions (through correctional email systems such as JPay) are venues through which a reference interaction could take place if a librarian could not physically visit the prison. Librarians do need to be aware of the high costs of telephone and email use for their students, and they need to strategize to offer the most effective reference interview taking into consideration the limitations on length or frequency of telephone calls or email interaction.[19]

Academic libraries aiding in collection development can be a large source of content building for prison higher education programs that maintain their own library. Academic libraries have been able to purchase books, periodicals, and reference materials that served as a satellite library on current class topics for students behind bars.[20] If shared funding is not an option, discarded or duplicate books need to be considered as a donation to the education program prior to selling items at library book sale. When access to library materials is achieved, students need to be able to search and find what is available to them.

Libraries depend on catalogs. Technology inside prisons varies from state to state and within a state's department of corrections, which demand libraries to find security-safe methods for patrons to access digital information.[21] Some patrons are able to utilize the Internet to access the academic library's catalog, but "[a]t the prisons, where [an online catalog] is not available directly to

---

17. *See* Margaret Feetham, *The Subject Specialist in Higher Education – A Review of the Literature*, *in* SUBJECT LIBRARIANS: ENGAGING WITH THE LEARNING & TEACHING ENVIRONMENT 3, 3–14 (Penny Dale et al. eds., 2006).

18. JOSEPH TRAVAGLINI, INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY IN A PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAM 9–10 (1984).

19. *See* PRISON PHONE JUST., http://www.prisonphonejustice.org (last visited May 22, 2014) (explaining the costs associated with prison phone communication).

20. *See* TRAVAGLINI, *supra* note 18, at 9.

21. *See* Bauder, *supra* note 5, at 1.

patrons due to security issues, print copies of selected indexes have been provided."[22]

Julie Bauder led the way in troubleshooting security concerns with incoming technology by creating an offline catalogue when Grinnell College's prison education program expanded and had no Internet access.[23] In the article titled, "Using VuFind, XAMPP, and Flash Drives to Build an Offline Library Catalog for Use in a Liberal Arts in Prison Program," Bauder argues for creating a usable catalogue, stating "[l]ibraries needed to find some way of providing the incarcerated students with an authentic library research experience that did not rely on online databases, online library catalogs, or visits to the College's physical libraries."[24] Bauder shares the process of finding the appropriate venue to give access to students:

> Replicating the online library catalog in an offline environment, and then delivering books from the Libraries to the prison on request, seemed like the most feasible option. Copyright law and licensing terms would have prevented us from creating offline facsimiles of our subscription databases, but the library catalog, full of records that we owned and could reuse in another environment, was fair game legally, and, with the many free and open-source options available, replicating it offline was plausible technologically and financially.[25]

This quote shows Bauder's thoroughness, for her work is an excellent example of what the field is in need of. Bauder not only states and solves the problem facing her patron base, but she additionally provides readers a detailed description of the process engaged in aiding libraries in making their own catalog accessible off-line for their incarcerated students.[26]

As off-line catalogs develop, the next step for librarians is to work toward providing access to scholarly article databases. Prison librarians and educators are seeing that "[t]he lack of Internet access hinders the inmate student's ability to conduct library research and obtain articles electronically . . . [and] inmate-students are particularly in need of resources for their research papers."[27] Academic librarians should be instigators that advocate for off-line article databases. While librarians advocate for and develop prison-secure databases, Interlibrary Loan services can cater to information needs left unfulfilled by the library collection students behind bars have direct access to.

---

22. POTTER & BOYD, *supra* note 5, at 4 (explaining the Colorado Alliance for Research Libraries (CARL) catalog system).

23. *See* Bauder, *supra* note 5, at 1.

24. *Id.*

25. *Id.*

26. *See id.* at 2–5.

27. Asher, *supra* note 1, at 30.

Interlibrary Loan Coordinator at California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB) Curt Asher's article "Interlibrary Loan Outreach to a Prison: Access Inside" is, to-date, the most comprehensive piece on loaning items to prison education programs.[28] Asher believes that the development of "simple interlibrary lending programs with correctional facilities, college and university libraries can help student inmates overcome some of the access issues they face . . . with little additional work for library staff . . . ."[29] The program's success came from "a carefully negotiated agreement between the two institutions and a willingness by the correctional institution to actively intermediate for its patrons."[30] One item the agreement navigated was the loaning institution's "concern[] about impacting services to its primary constituency"; the solution was to "establish[] limits on the number of books the prison could check out and [give] CSUB the right to opt out of the relationship at any time."[31] The loaning institution created a library account specifically for the prison and not for individual students.[32]

In 1992, Susan Potter and Sandra Hughes Boyd of Regis University reported on serving students behind bars as part of serving students in remote sites.[33] Their model consisted of "traveling collections" that supported topics covered in curriculum.[34] This model of interlibrary loans will work well as older editions of encyclopedias are removed from academic libraries' reference collections and replaced with newer editions. Past editions that have been weeded from on-campus reference sections could reside in a reference collection in an education program's designated library. Academic librarians could update their catalog record stating the new location with the opportunity for on-campus patrons to request the item if necessary and have a librarian make the decision if the item should be returned to campus. To prevent academic librarians from feeling overwhelmed during the partnership, program liaisons can be created.

Programming liaisons are essential to partnership success. These roles can be fulfilled by a librarian or library staff, an educational program staff, or by a prison staff such as the prison librarian. These roles aid in the navigation of prison security needs and the implementation of services. Asher's interlibrary loan program had such a liaison.[35] It was "[t]he limitations on inmate access to research materials and finding aids [that] made it necessary for the prison to

---

28. *See generally id.*

29. *Id.* at 28.

30. *Id.*

31. *Id.* at 31.

32. *Id.*

33. *See* POTTER & BOYD, *supra* note 5, at 2.

34. *See id.* at 6.

35. Asher, *supra* note 1, at 31.

designate an intermediary from the prison library."[36] It was then the prison librarian's role as a liaison "for determining inmates' information needs and then physically traveling to the CSUB library to obtain the items. If the specific resource the inmate is seeking is not available at CSUB, the intermediary may select another item that would fulfill the inmate's research need."[37]

Potter's work with the Regis library and distance students created a role for a librarian to function specifically as a liaison for distance students.[38] Potter describes that the "library recognized the importance of these new responsibilities by creating a new position for Extended Library Services. This full-time professional librarian has devoted her time to developing services for the more than two dozen programs or sites," not all being prisons.[39]

Program liaisons can use Lehmann's suggestion that "[i]n general, it is very important to disseminate information about new projects and model programs, especially if they charter new territory."[40] A program liaison could lead the responsibility of documenting "the impact and viability of the services and projects with hard data, such as circulation statistics, number of patron interactions, program attendance, reading improvement scores, etc., as well as patron comments. Successful pilot projects are likely to lead to more funding and support."[41] The importance of these documents will also extend to co-authoring publications to share partnership models.

III. ACADEMIC AND PRISON LIBRARIES AS FORGOTTEN AND ELUSIVE PARTNERS

The librarian profession often strategizes how to reach the elusive non-user that would benefit from library services.[42] Students behind bars are not elusive; academic librarians are engaging within their own paradigm as elusive partners. Students first need access to an academic library before they can be identified as non-users; therefore the library is enacting the role of being mysterious and vacant. Asher, like other prison librarians and educators, observes that a prison "is normally not an environment conducive to academic learning. Many facilities are neither funded nor stocked to provide resources for academic research."[43] Yet so few academic libraries engage with higher

---

    36. *Id.*

    37. *Id.*

    38. POTTER & BOYD, *supra* note 5, at 2.

    39. *Id.*

    40. Lehmann, *supra* note 16, at 303.

    41. *Id.*

    42. *See* Meredith Schwartz, *Engaging the Elusive Non-User*, LIBR. J. (July 1, 2013), http://lj. libraryjournal.com/2013/07/marketing/engaging-the-elusive-non-user-ala-annual-2013/.

    43. Asher, *supra* note 1, at 28.

education programs inside of prisons. There are several possible reasons as to why this may be, such as students behind bars being viewed as outside of libraries' patron bases; further research must be conducted to say for sure.

The 2013 American Library Association (ALA) Conference, with the slogan of "Transforming Our Libraries, Ourselves," lacked programming on serving patrons behind bars altogether, with the exception of one discussion session on serving incarcerated youth, for over 25,000 attendees.[44] ALA President Maureen Sullivan stated in her welcome that the "two themes of [her] presidential year have been the role of libraries in transforming communities and the transformational leadership necessary to make it happen."[45] By ignoring patrons behind bars at the 2013 ALA Conference, the librarian profession is using its privilege to ignore and limit or all together prevent these patrons of their access to information and potential community. Librarians need to use their leadership skills to create transformative partnerships that expand beyond the imagination of even our governing professional organization.

In addition to academic librarians being elusive in their understanding of their patron population, higher education programs in prisons also fail to engage academic libraries to arrange partnerships for distance or on-site educational services. At the 2013 National Conference on Higher Education in Prison, fostering partnerships with a library was not once mentioned as an imperative or strategy of a single program. Libraries inside of prisons were also not mentioned as partners at the panel specifically focusing on collaborations between prisons the university campus.[46]

IV. ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF LIBRARY PARTNERSHIPS

This section problematizes the Association of College and Research Library (ACRL) standards, librarians' code of ethics, and privileges, all of which need to be evaluated for how they serve students behind bars.[47] With the numerous higher education programs in prison, it is the academic librarian's

---

44. For more information regarding the conference, see AM. LIBR. ASS'N ANN. CONF. & EXHIBITION 2013, http://ala13.ala.org (last visited May 22, 2014). *See also ALA Conferences: Q & A*, AM. LIBR. ASS'N, http://www.ala.org/offices/conference/confservices/ccc/faq (last visited May 22, 2014).

45. AM. LIBR. ASS'N, 132ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION: PROGRAM & EXHIBIT DIRECTORY 6 (2013), *available at* http://ala13.ala.org/files/ala13/AC13_ProgramBook_small er.pdf.

46. *See Conference Presenters*, ST. LOUIS UNIV. C. ARTS & SCI., http://www.slu.edu/prison-program/2013-conference/conference-presenters (last visited May 22, 2014).

47. The standards are available at *Standards for Distance Learning Library Services,* AM. LIBR. ASS'N (July 1, 2008) [hereinafter *Standards*], http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/guidelines distancelearning.

ethical duty to aid in cultivating student success.[48] If we want libraries to stand as a pillar of society, librarians must not stigmatize and deny patrons behind bars in the same manner society does. According to Michelle Alexander's text, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, this tendency is central to American culture: "Upon reflection, it is relatively easy to understand how Americans come to deny the evils of mass incarceration. Denial is facilitated by persistent racial segregation in housing and schools, by political demagoguery, by racialized media imagery, and by the ease of changing one's perception of reality simply by changing television channels."[49] Denial is facilitated by libraries' power over patrons, so it is critical that academic librarians do not follow suit by criminalizing their potential patron population.

The ACRL, a division of ALA, holds a living document called "Standards for Distance Learning Library Services." It is within this document that standards for librarians are clearly stated:

> Every student, faculty member, administrator, staff member, or any other member of an institution of higher education, is entitled to the library services and resources of that institution, including direct communication with the appropriate library personnel, regardless of where enrolled or where located in affiliation with the institution. Academic libraries must, therefore, meet the information and research needs of all these constituents, wherever they may be. This principle of access entitlement, as applied to individuals at a distance, is the undergirding and uncompromising conviction of the Standards for Distance Learning Library Services, hereinafter designated as the Standards.[50]

This standard clearly lays a foundation for seeing students behind bars as distance learners. Students behind bars must be seen as a long-distance residential patron group, similar to how public libraries offer services to home-bound patrons.[51]

Susan Potter and Sandra Hughes Boyd, authors of *Extending Library Services to Remote Sites*, interpreted ACRL's standards to provide library services "equitable with [those] provided to the on-campus community" as a "challenge [that was] addressed in many different ways at Regis," such as by designating a position to manage library services to distance students.[52] Yet services to students behind bars are not equitable to the on-campus student. Tina Edwards-Willey and Nadia Chivers, authors of "Perceptions of Inmate-Students Ability to Succeed," believe that the lack of equity is obvious, stating

---

48. *See Directory,* PRISON STUD. PROJECT, http://prisonstudiesproject.org/directory/ (last visited May 22, 2014) (providing a database of higher education programs in prisons).

49. ALEXANDER, *supra* note 2, at 177.

50. *Standards*, *supra* note 47.

51. *See id.* at 47.

52. POTTER & BOYD, *supra* note 5, at 2.

"[o]ne can imagine the comparisons between college students on a university campus access to adequate library facilities in comparison to those attempting to obtain a comparable degree in the prison setting."[53] Since library access can be distinguished as unequal, it is difficult to comprehend why there is such an extreme lack of services being offered to incarcerated students.

By not providing services, librarians support the system of mass incarceration and the racial caste system. Academic libraries that withhold services to students behind bars become the power structure we ethically strive to overcome. Many librarians agree that our "professional ethics require the provision of services to underserved populations."[54] Miriam Larson, scholar of race and school libraries, confronts her readers when she states that "[i]f librarians are interested in successfully cultivating citizenship across the United States, it seems that mass incarceration and the subsequent disenfranchisement of Black and Brown people should be our concern."[55] Academic librarians cannot provide services to students under the assumption that our nation, a carceral state, is colorblind. Prison educator Rob Scott explains that "[w]hen comparing prison and campus populations it is clear that prison has disproportionately more poor people of color."[56] Service models must be re-evaluated under the pretense that librarians are not immune to the privilege of white supremacy.

The library profession needs practitioners to investigate the current punitive model of service that further oppresses students in carceral spaces. First, our profession must recognize our privilege as gatekeepers to knowledge and as a barrier to student success; only then can we offer partnerships that bridge the knowledge and physical gaps that divide our campus and patrons behind bars. Becoming a partner with an education program does not necessarily mean opening a new library unit when most libraries are operating under budgetary constraints. Potter's experience shows that "[t]he cost of working cooperatively with a public or junior college library is about one tenth that of operating a branch library."[57] Academic libraries partnering with libraries that are already functional inside of a prison facility is a compromise that could work well for the education program, academic library, and students.

---

53. Tina L. Edwards-Willey & Nadia Chivers, *Perceptions of Inmate-Students' Ability to Succeed*, 56(1) J. CORR. EDUC. 65, 69 (2005).

54. Asher, *supra* note 1, at 29.

55. Miriam Betty Larson, In Search of Culturally Relevant Library Practice: A Case Study Examination of Race and Racism in the School Library 9 (May 2013) (unpublished C.A.S. Project, Univ. of Ill. at Urbana-Champaign) (on file with the Graduate Sch. Libr. and Info. Sci., Univ. of Ill. at Urbana-Champaign).

56. Robert Scott, *Distinguishing Radical Teaching from Merely Having Intense Experiences While Teaching in Prison*, 95 RADICAL TCHR. 22, 29 (2012).

57. POTTER & BOYD, *supra* note 5, at 3.

As academic librarians broaden their view of serving people behind bars, services must be piloted. Our work does not end at reading articles and attending conferences. As Larson insists, "[a]s we build our own cultural understanding and critical consciousness, our second task is to build a model and implement culturally relevant library practice."[58] It is not only academic librarians' ethical responsibility to serve existing on-campus patrons with high quality service, but to forge new partnerships with higher education programs in prisons to extend library services. Vibeke Lehmann, an international leader in prison librarianship, urges that "[d]issemination about prison library programs should include articles in professional journals, presentations at workshops and conferences, development of web pages, and postings on Internet discussion lists."[59] It is the profession's ethical responsibility to share their services models while we grow as racially conscious librarians with a new discourse that includes student behind bars as distance learners.

While librarians like Asher believe that "[p]roviding some basic library services to an underserved population is part of the service commitment of the librarians and helps nurture intellectual aspirations in a place which is in need of such aspirations,"[60] other librarians are concerned with issues such as lost materials and re-allocated staff time. By encouraging more partnerships to co-publish about their relationship, it is hoped that academic libraries will become confident in their trustworthy patrons. Asher, the only author who has written of interlibrary loan agreements that serve students behind bars, is lengthy about institutional hesitation. He asserts, "[a]cademic libraries may consider service to prisons to lie outside their mission. State universities and colleges generally have well-defined collection polices based on the curriculum and often consider themselves understaffed, so they do not seek additional patron groups to serve outside their institution."[61] Further, "[c]oncerns about lack of reciprocity, security, book theft, and computer access may further limit academic libraries from establishing lending relationships with prisons."[62] Asher challenges these concerns, finding that instead the inmate might be the ideal patron: "Because inmates are interested in keeping the system in place, they have been extremely diligent about returning books. Four books have been lost but those losses were the result of prison staff error when inmates were transferred and discharged. None of the books have been lost to theft or vandalism by incarcerated inmates."[63]

---

58. Larson, *supra* note 55, at 52.

59. Lehmann, *supra* note 16, at 303.

60. Asher, *supra* note 1, at 29.

61. *Id.*

62*. Id.*

63. *Id.* at 32.

V. BENEFITS OF LIBRARY PARTNERSHIPS

David Wilhelmus, who was a director of a college in prison program affiliated with Martin College, claimed in 1999 that the "prison librarian is now confronted with a newly heightened responsibility of providing prisoner-patrons with support materials for academic course requirements."[64] Wilhelmus questions whether academic collections should be restricted only for students enrolled in a higher education program. He writes, "[t]he academic collection found in a prison library is not for the use of patrons matriculating through university programs alone, but is used, as well, by inmates who are participating in other educational programs offered by the correctional facility."[65] Joseph Bouchard and Linda Kunze, prison educators and authors of "Teaching Diverse Students in a Corrections Setting with Assistance from the Library," agree with Wilhelmus' stance when they express that the "education/library connection strengthens the library mission with a new function."[66] For students, this partnership shows the library as a place of research in addition to providing access to recreational reading and law materials; prison librarians benefit from "justification of budgets for additional reference materials, interconnectedness and cooperation" with the incentive of staying "vocationally interested."[67]

Wilhelmus also sees how a prison library may be limited due to prison requirements: "[T]he prison library characteristically has a limited academic collection because of a lack of shelf space and the competing court-imposed mandates of providing offenders with legal materials and services."[68] In 1993, and again in 2003, Edwards-Willey and Chivers used surveys to measure incarcerated students' ability to succeed; they found that "prison libraries in some states have been restricted to merely what is required by law to satisfy [patrons'] access to legal materials."[69]

Whether housing collections in the prison library will lead to greater access is debatable. Travaglini's experience from 1999 is still relevant today. Travaglini laments, "students at the Reformatory do not have unlimited access to the library. They must either be 'called out' by college personnel or need to state a reason for going to the library."[70] Time length and frequency of visits are dependent on each institution; having an academic library that is restricted to only the program's students may increase student access for those enrolled

---

64. Wilhelmus, *supra* note 6, at 114.

65. *Id.*

66. Joseph Bouchard & Linda Kunze, *Teaching Diverse Students in a Corrections Setting with Assistance from the Library*, 54 J. CORR. EDUC., 66, 69 (2003).

67. *Id.* at 69.

68. Wilhelmus, *supra* note 6, at 69.

69. Edwards-Willey & Chivers, *supra* note 53, at 69.

70. TRAVAGLINI, *supra* note 18, at 9.

in the program. While Wilhelmus claims that the prison librarian has new responsibilities, so does the academic librarian.

VI. CONCLUSION

Academic librarians' resistance to providing library services, both pre- and post- the 1994 Omnibus Crime Bill, supports America's position as a carceral state. The lack of services from academic libraries to support students behind bars protects the class and race privileges of higher education. While academic librarians need to dramatically shift their model of service to fulfill ACRL distance learning standards, higher education programs in prison must engage librarians in their work. Higher education programs in prison should invite librarians to events that highlight student success, such as open houses or theatre performances. Engaging librarians in such a manner could be the seedling that exposes librarians to the patron base to which they are elusive. This exposure will hopefully grow into a partnership that has been historically ignored.

If the library profession wants to live up to its own ethics, students behind bars must be served as distance learners. Academic librarians must look at what programs are available in their state, or even affiliated with their college or university. It is imperative for librarians to reach out to these programs and begin the conversation to start pilot programs that loan materials, donate weeded items, and provide reference services. In the era of mass incarceration, librarians must be socially and racially conscious and willing to transform our academic libraries to engage distance students, including students behind bars.