

LAW LIBRARY SERVICE TO PRISONERS 2002 ANNUAL REPORT

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Prisoners are persons whom most of us would rather not think about....It is thus easy to think of prisoners as members of a separate netherworld....Nothing can change the fact, however, that the society that these prisoners inhabit is our own....When prisoners emerge from the shadows to press a constitutional claim ... they speak the language of a charter upon which all of us rely to hold official power accountable.

William J. Brennan, Jr., *O'Lone v. Estate of Shabazz*, 482 U.S. 342, 354-55 (1987) (dissenting)

Before Justice Brennan wrote “the society that these prisoners inhabit is our own” in 1987, LLSP had already learned this lesson from Minnesota Corrections personnel and other people involved in the criminal justice system. For 18 years LLSP has worked alongside our partners to keep “justice” in the system. Our strength is getting information to the inmate. And with the increasing workloads of the Public Defender Offices, LLSP has become an even more important lifeline.

This report details how LLSP went about its business in 2002—staying true to the mission, but with efficiency and cost savings, something that librarians do well. I am very proud of LLSP and its dedicated staff. It is a credit to the State of Minnesota.

Barbara L. Golden,
Minnesota State Law Librarian

Law Library Service to Prisoners (LLSP) continued its longstanding tradition of service in 2002 by providing over 1,500 inmates incarcerated in Minnesota Correctional Facilities with assistance in finding and using legal information. Circuit-riding Law Librarians visit each of the adult correctional facilities on a regular basis, meet with inmates in person, help them find and use the legal resources available in their prison law library, and research questions that cannot be answered at the prison back at the State Law Library.

Created in 1984 by an interagency agreement between the Minnesota Department of Corrections and the Minnesota State Law Library, LLSP is a model of successful and cost-effective collaboration in state government. By supplementing the core collection of legal materials available at each prison with the resources of the Minnesota State Law Library, LLSP eliminates the need to maintain costly and extensive law libraries at each facility. By helping inmates to educate themselves about the law, their legal rights, and the merits of any potential claim, LLSP assists in channeling inmate concerns in a productive direction and reduces the likelihood that inmates will file frivolous lawsuits or engage in unnecessary litigation.

Demand for the services provided by LLSP has increased dramatically over the past several years. In 2000, LLSP Librarians delivered 24,171 items in response to inmate requests for legal

information. In 2001, the number of items delivered jumped to 30,546—a 26.37% increase over 2000. By contrast, the adult prison population increased by only 2.42% during the same time period. Normally, the total number of items delivered increases or decreases in proportion to the rise or fall of the adult inmate population. Although the general rise in inmate population, particularly at the Rush City facility, contributed to some of the growth, LLSP cannot explain the dramatic increase in the number of items delivered from 2000 to 2001.

LLSP implemented several measures in 2002 designed to rein in the number of items delivered and reduce expenses without compromising the overall quality of service. MCF-Stillwater changed from a weekly to a biweekly visit at the beginning of January 2002. Starting in July 2002, Faribault, Lino Lakes, Moose Lake, Saint Cloud, and Shakopee switched from biweekly to monthly visits. The last interactive television session with Moose Lake was conducted in August 2002. Like all of the other prisons on a monthly visitation schedule, the LLSP Librarian now visits Moose Lake in person. Driving to Moose Lake for a three-hour in-person visit with inmates is actually less expensive and more effective than a one-hour interactive television session. Prison library staff and the inmates at Moose Lake alike appreciate the new in-person visits. Stillwater and Oak Park Heights remain biweekly visits because these facilities together constitute nearly half of LLSP's total workload.

To cut costs, the LLSP Librarians made only one visit to each prison in the last two months of the 2001-2002 fiscal year, but continued to provide service through the U.S. Mail and kite system. In addition, LLSP reduced the total amount of information that inmates may receive to no more than 10 items or 100 pages, instead of

20 items or 200 pages, in a two-week period. However, if an inmate has a verifiable court deadline, LLSP will deliver up to 10 items or 100 pages per week.

The 2002 statistics show that LLSP is successfully corraling the number of items delivered. As expected, the total number of items delivered declined. In 2002, LLSP delivered 23,617 items—a 22.68% drop from 2001. By contrast, the adult inmate population at the prisons increased by 8.06% in 2002. All of the prisons, except for Rush City, reported decreases in the total number of items delivered in 2002. Rush City, with its explosive growth in inmate population, reported a 27.03% increase in the number of items delivered.

LLSP implemented measures designed to reduce office expenses in 2002. First, LLSP traded in its two old copiers for one newer used machine, which is faster, more efficient, and less expensive than its predecessors. Next, LLSP no longer sends information to inmates via U.S. mail unless the inmate has a verifiable court deadline. The information is instead packaged and sealed at LLSP, sent to the DOC Central Office, and distributed to the individual prisons via the inter-prison mail system. Although the inter-prison mail system is not as fast as the U.S. Mail, LLSP continues to maintain an approximate two-week turnaround time from the date a request is received. Finally, LLSP decided not to purchase updates and new editions for several items in its ready reference collection at the Minnesota State Law Library.

To facilitate the process of conducting the annual inventory of the prison law library collections, LLSP created a new checklist inventory system that is easier, faster, and more efficient for prison staff. At the request of library staff at several prisons, LLSP also developed a new

format for the list of items in its core collection that presents more information about each item and is easier to understand than the old version.

LLSP has always relied on the hard work and dedication of volunteers and interns. In 2002, LLSP's interns and volunteers logged over 450 hours. Joan Overgard, LLSP's long-term volunteer, has provided over 7 years of service.

LLSP hosted two interns in 2002. Although the internship is unpaid, the LLSP Intern gains valuable hands-on experience in researching practical legal problems in a fast-paced environment. At the time of her internship, Lisa Marohn was finishing her second semester in the School of Library and Information Science at the College of Saint Catherine. Under the supervision of the LLSP Librarians, Lisa researched answers to law-related questions from inmates, completed LLSP's semi-annual bibliography on inmate access to the courts, updated a list of jobs that persons with a felony conviction cannot hold, and researched publication and pricing information for items in the core collection. Robin Horowitz, LLSP's second intern, recently graduated from the College of Saint Catherine with a Master's degree in Library and Information Science. Robin

worked on several library archival projects in addition to answering requests for law-related information from inmates. After interning for several weeks, Robin accepted a professional position as Cataloguer at the Minnesota State Law Library.

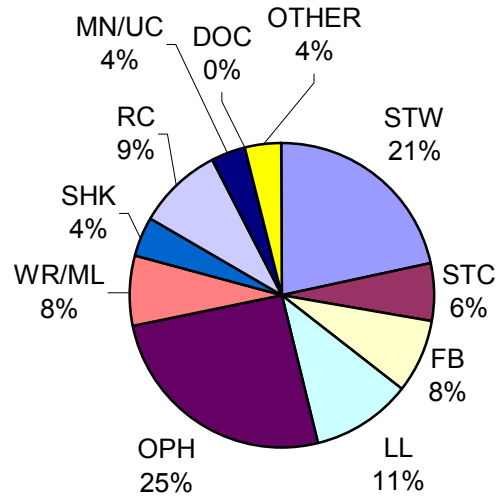
The LLSP Librarians continued to be involved in professional activities throughout 2002. Most notably, Karen Westwood moderated a panel discussion on prison law libraries and was featured as a panel speaker at two additional programs on providing effective law library service to the public at the 2002 Annual Meeting of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL). Karen is also the President of the Minnesota Association of Law Libraries (MALL). Timothy Baland is Chair of the MALL Exchange Committee and a member of AALL. Stephanie Thorson serves on the MALL Archives Committee and Susan Trombley is a member of the Minnesota Library Association (MLA). In addition, the LLSP Librarians authored an article titled "How to Look Up a Statute: A Guide for Minnesota Prisoners" that was published in 2002 by the Lino Ledger, Prison Mirror, New Perspective and the Faribault Voice. LLSP anticipates the publication of this article in the rest of the prison newspapers in 2003.

Statistical Summary

LLSP ACTIVITIES	2000	2001	2002	2001 – 2002 % CHANGE
Items Delivered	24171	30,546	23617	-22.68%
On-Site Meetings with Inmates	1,859	2,319	1,520	-34.45%
Individuals Assisted	1,476	1,721	1,562	-9.24%

Items Delivered quantifies the total number of items delivered to inmates. *On-Site Meetings With Inmates* is the number of reference interviews conducted with inmates both in-person and by interactive television. *Individuals Assisted* is the total number of people to whom LLSP provides law-related information.

2002 Items Delivered By Institution



2002 Items Delivered To Institution

