

Exploring Links Between Informal Learning, Library Provision, and Recidivism Rates in the USA (1974 to 2024): A Thematic Literature Review

Kaden Kirtley^a, Victoria Van Hyning^b, Travis Wagner^a, Chris Bailey^a

^aUniversity of Illinois Urbana Champaign, USA

^bUniversity of Maryland, USA

kadenk3@illinois.edu, vvh@umd.edu, wagnert@illinois.edu, cbailey3@illinois.edu

ABSTRACT

We propose a thematic literature review of informal learning and library provision in United States carceral facilities over the last fifty years of mass incarceration (1974 to 2024). We will explore the reported impacts of library provision and informal learning opportunities in carceral facilities--i.e. recreational reading and non-credit bearing programs--on recidivism rates. We anticipate finding a general consensus among library, information, and education scholars and practitioners that increased opportunities for informal learning results in reduced recidivism rates, but we hypothesize that there is a lack of conclusive evidence of a causal relationship due to small sample sizes for each study or article and the likelihood that carceral and detention facility librarians and lifelong education providers rarely track recidivism at the facility level. We will gather information about how recidivism has been discussed in research and practice in the American context from scholarly publications such as *Library Quarterly* and *The Journal of Prison Education Research* (formerly *The Journal of Prison Education and Reentry*), and relevant trade publications such as the *American Library Association's* magazine, and policy documents. Despite expectations of evidentiary gaps, particularly regarding the impact of such informal learning on recidivism, we hope to identify promising interventions in the literature, and build a foundation for future research, and evidence-based practice.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

Social justice; Information needs; Specific populations; Reading and reading practices; Special Libraries.

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

Lifelong Learning; Recreational Reading; Carceral Libraries; Recidivism

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