

Digitization and Exploitation: Acknowledging and Addressing the Use of Exploitative Prison Labor by Libraries and Archives

Kristen C. Howard

ABSTRACT

This article draws on exploitation theory to argue that the use of underpaid prison labor for digitization projects and other memory work is unethical. Such projects, and therefore our cultural memory institutions, exploit incarcerated people. As the for-profit prison industrial complex only continues to grow and disproportionately affects Black, Indigenous, and people of color, it is imperative that the information profession recognize its contribution to this moral wrong. To this end, I offer two potential interventions: (a) hiring formerly incarcerated people in memory institutions and (b) clearly and honestly disclosing the use of prison labor to users. Enacting these interventions will not end the exploitation of incarcerated people but will provide meaningful benefits to those who are (formerly) incarcerated and work toward greater transparency with our patrons.

Large-scale digitization projects require enormous amounts of resources and labor, both of which are frequently in short supply in libraries and archives. Patrons increasingly expect unique and archival documents to be freely and readily available online in a digital format with robust item- or collection-level descriptions and optical character recognition (OCR) (Miller 2013; Mills 2015). To respond to user demand, memory institutions have sought cheaper ways to provide these high-quality digital surrogates. One solution is outsourcing various aspects of digitization, such as scanning, indexing, and data entry. According to Hannah Alpert-Abrams, David A. Bliss, and Itza Carbajal (2019), outsourcing “has historically been used as a way for libraries to take advantage of global inequities in order to cut costs” (12). However, inequities are not confined to outsourcing this work to developing countries. Consider the “Yearbook Project,” a former service of Oklahoma Correctional Industries (OCI), a state-level prison industry program. This project scanned and processed high school yearbooks at no cost

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for schools, libraries, museums, and historical societies. OCI justified this service because of its recognition “that high school yearbooks are of irreplaceable historic value” (OCI 2021b). A few examples of memory institutions that have used the services of the Yearbook Project include the Dover Public Library in New Hampshire, the Animas Museum (2019) in Colorado, and the Brunswick Area Historical Society (<https://brunswickhistory.com/>) in Ohio (Caro 2016; Wojcik 2016). According to Susanne Caro (2016), the Yearbook Project allowed libraries and other memory institutions “to offer the community digital access to a popular collection at limited cost to the library and without adding to the workload of an already busy staff” (10), thus conserving both resources and labor.

The Yearbook Project and other digitization initiatives are able to offer cheap or free services due to the exploitation of incarcerated people. The Yearbook Project operated in Oklahoma prisons from at least 2013 until its suspension in March 2022 (Suarez 2022c, 2022d).¹ Robert Toothman, a former coordinator for the Yearbook Project, has stated that the service was free “because of the low labor costs that come with employing inmates” (Wojcik 2016). Far from recommending that memory institutions should capitalize on the cost-saving opportunity of outsourcing labor to initiatives like the Yearbook Project, information professionals should instead reckon with our roles in perpetuating this immoral practice.

Incarcerated people have long performed labor that aids society as a whole and benefits communication in particular, from laying railroad tracks in the late nineteenth century to binding books in the early twentieth century (Kaun and Stiernstedt 2020). Digitization and other memory work may be an intuitive next step in today’s prison labor market. Today, incarcerated people engage in various aspects of memory work including scanning, indexing, electronic imaging, data entry, OCR automation, and classifying content to improve algorithms for machine learning (Beckford 2010; Kaun and Stiernstedt 2020; Kaun et al., forthcoming). Incarcerated people are therefore providing the physical and menial labor that undergird memory work and data initiatives.

The ethics of digitization and digital archives have been deeply explored in scholarship, most notably by Nanna Bonde Thylstrup (2019) in her book *The Politics of Mass Digitization* (see also, Miller 2013; De Meo 2014; Manžuch 2017; Moravec 2017; Lee 2019–20). Likewise, the ethics (or lack thereof) of the mass prison industrial complex and its disproportionate impacts on Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) in the United States and abroad have been increasingly brought to light in recent years (e.g., Maynard 2017; Bauer 2019; Alexander 2020). Recent scholarship by Anne Kaun and colleagues (forthcoming) has begun to explore the use of prison labor in memory work (see Logsdon 2019a, 2019b; Kaun and Stiernstedt 2020; Stiernstedt and Kaun 2022). Despite recent calls for libraries and archives to adopt a social justice mission

1. Most of OCI’s webpages cited in this article have been suspended related to an investigation, ongoing as of June 2022, detailed in reports by Wendy Suarez (2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d).

(see Punzalan and Caswell 2016) and Jeanie Austin's (2022) excellent recent work on library services within carceral institutions, the current scholarly conversation is bereft of considerations of the use of prison labor to benefit cultural memory institutions. In this article, I seek to begin a conversation on this issue through two contributions to the current scholarship: (a) the use of exploitation theory to argue that the use of prison labor for digitization projects and other memory work is unethical, and (b) the proposal of two interventions that individual information professionals or, preferably, the institutions for which we work can deploy to help minimize our contributions to this moral wrong.

This article is primarily focused on examples drawn from North America—in particular, the United States. According to data from *World Prison Brief*, more than 2 million Americans are currently incarcerated (in either prison or jail), with a prison population rate of 629 per 100,000 people. Compare this finding with the rate in Canada, which has a prison population of less than 40,000 and a prison population rate of 104 per 100,000 Canadians. Although this rate is much lower than the US rate, the rate of imprisonment in Canada increased by nearly one-quarter (23%) between 2003 and 2015 (Patenaude 2019), demonstrating that increased imprisonment is not a uniquely American problem. I also draw on literature, policies, and examples of prison labor projects and policies in several European nations (including Finland, France, and the United Kingdom) in an attempt to demonstrate that the issue of exploitative prison labor in memory work is a global phenomenon, not isolated within North America. For all countries considered in this article, total prison populations and prison population rates are included in table A1 to provide further context.

Prison Labor Is Exploitative

Many prisons across the world include work programs for incarcerated people, ranging from internal work necessary to the running of the institution, such as kitchen and custodial work (frequently called “traditional” prison work, or “operational assignments”), to external work-release programs that allow incarcerated people to leave the institution and work embedded within society (e.g., firefighting). In between these possibilities are correctional industries, defined by Richard Lemke (2019) as “creating goods and services that often reduce costs for state-wide governmental purchases” (510). The American Federal Industries Program, also called UNICOR (2023a), was created in 1934 and, as its website currently states, sees itself as offering incarcerated people “‘real world’ jobs training.” More than 12,000 incarcerated Americans work in UNICOR factories (Powers, Krienert, and Walsh 2019). The Canadian prison industries program, Correctional Service Canada (CORCAN), includes manufacturing shops, textile operations, and construction services that “provide offenders with a work environment that strives to mimic [the] private sector” via “a realistic work experience” (Government of Canada 2017). Recent prison work has been as varied as fighting fires (Feldman 2020), sewing American flags, and producing hand sanitizer in response to shortages caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Ellis

2020). Despite recent calls to abolish prison labor (see, e.g., Garcia 2020), the practice is not inherently unethical. Labor may be valuable to incarcerated people for any number of reasons—for example, to earn money, to derive enjoyment or satisfaction, or for rehabilitation and job training, which, it is often argued, will help those incarcerated develop useful skills for obtaining employment upon release.²

According to philosophers Matt Zwolinski and Alan Wertheimer (2016), “to exploit someone is to take unfair advantage of them. It is to use another person’s vulnerability for one’s own benefit.” For cases in which incarcerated people derive even just some value from their labor, the practice can be considered “mutually beneficial exploitation.” In such cases, both parties benefit from the circumstances of the exploitation, but the interactions remain exploitative because they are, at base, unfair (Zwolinski and Wertheimer 2016). The exploiter—in this case, companies relying on cheap labor to drive profits—derives more value from the interaction than those exploited, the incarcerated people who earn some money, gain skills, or pass the time.

But even though incarcerated people may derive some value from prison labor, the circumstances are still exploitative and therefore morally wrong. Philosopher Ruth J. Sample (2003) has argued that exploitation is morally wrong even in cases of mutually beneficial exploitation because exploitation takes advantage of someone “in a way that degrades or fails to respect the inherent value in that being.” According to Sample, “it is this lack of respect that explains the badness of exploitation” (57). Even in cases of mutually beneficial exploitation, those exploited are degraded and disrespected. This is the case for prison labor.

One way in which incarcerated people are disrespected is through an unwillingness to provide adequate recompense for their labors. According to Zachary Powers, Jessie L. Krienert, and Jeffrey A. Walsh (2019), incarcerated people earn just \$0.03 for every \$1.00 their labor generates. This is because, legally, prison work is considered “noneconomic” in most countries, rendering exploitative prison labor as invisible both in the scholarly sense and in government statistics (Zatz 2009; Hatton 2017). In the United States, where current law requires essentially all incarcerated people to work (Crime Control Act of 1990, U.S.C. 18 [P.L. 101-647]), the average daily (not hourly) wage in 2017 ranged from \$0.86 to \$3.45, with higher-paying jobs providing an hourly wage between \$0.33 and \$1.41 (Sawyer 2017; Garcia 2020). Compare these amounts with the US federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour—as of January 2022, more than half of states had set a minimum wage higher than this amount (US Department of Labor 2022). The asymmetrical pay demonstrates that prison labor is exploitative.

Furthermore, in several US states—notably including Oklahoma, the home of the former Yearbook Project—incarcerated people do not earn any pay at all (Garcia 2020). The Thirteenth

2. Pandeli, Marinetto, and Jenkins (2019) also argue that prison work provides an opportunity for incarcerated people to socialize with fellow incarcerated people and functions as a coping mechanism. Neither of these potential benefits are explored here due to restrictions of space.

Amendment of the US Constitution allows for convicted persons to be punished by “involuntary servitude,” an exception commonly referred to as the “penal labor exemption.” Because of this exemption, many incarcerated people receive no wages for their enforced labor and, moreover, are exempt from protections from acts such as harassment, discrimination, and retaliation that apply to most US workers (Zatz 2009; Hatton 2015). The penal labor exemption clearly disrespects and degrades people who are incarcerated. Other nations also fail to provide legal protections to incarcerated people by excluding them from holding the status of “employee” (Zatz 2009; Pandeli, Marinetto, and Jenkins 2019). Many commentators have pointed out the ethical implications of this practice as modern-day slavery—especially when considering the high rates of BIPOC incarceration compared with that of the general population (e.g., Benns 2015; Littrice 2021; Kaun et al., forthcoming).

Governmental and institutional websites touting the memory services performed by incarcerated people frequently advertise how much money an outside organization can save by relying on incarcerated labor, demonstrating the exploitation of this population. OCI (2021a) noted, for example, that one benefit of using its services was to “save 35% to 70% compared to other vendors.” For context, over the course of 2 years, the Yearbook Project earned \$629,740 of revenue for the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, according to recent reporting (Suarez 2022a). UNICOR (2023b) likewise states that its contracts for digitization and coding will “significantly reduc[e] the cost of these labor intensive activities.” This devaluation of labor disrespects and disregards the real people working behind bars for incredibly low wages. For their own benefit, prisons, governments, and private companies wrongfully exploit incarcerated people.

Notably, scholarship provides mixed messaging about whether incarcerated people value the money they are able to earn while working within prison. Through interviews with incarcerated individuals working for Pennsylvania Correctional Industries (PCI), Kerry M. Richmond (2014a) found that incarcerated men considered the higher wages and production bonuses offered by PCI attractive. Individuals could earn between \$0.19 and \$0.42 per hour by working in most prison job assignments or studying compared with up to \$0.70 per hour by working for PCI. With production bonuses, they could make up to \$21.00 more per week at PCI. However, Jenna Pandeli, Michael Marinetto, and Jean Jenkins (2019) found that incarcerated people were attracted to engaging in more meaningful or demanding labor opportunities and less compelled by the increased wages that came along with them. This finding is highlighted by the personal experience of La’Shawn Yvonne Littrice (2021), who stated that the increased wages available through UNICOR did not convince her to work in a system she considered akin to slave labor. Littrice found the requirement to work within an environment enabled by the penal labor exemption to be demeaning and disrespectful.

Another way in which prison labor may be valuable to the incarcerated person is by providing them with the experience and skills needed to obtain employment outside of prison. The path to employment, and the hope that it will decrease recidivism rates, is frequently cited by

governments and institutions. CORCAN states, for example, that its “goal is to ensure that offenders have the skills and training required to obtain and maintain employment when they return to the community” (Government of Canada 2017). Toothman of OCI’s Yearbook Project stated that the project “is a good training program where we’re able to teach these folks [i.e., incarcerated people] some new skills so they can become productive members of society with the hope that it will keep them from coming back” (quoted in Wojcik 2016). However, scholars such as Amy Sheppard and Rosemary Ricciardelli (2020) have demonstrated that the stigma of incarceration makes it difficult for formerly incarcerated people to find work, even after participation in employment and education programs within prison. Richmond (2014b) found that employment in UNICOR did not affect rearrest rates of formerly incarcerated women. Moreover, according to Richmond (2014a), “there is often little connection between prison industries and employment on the outside” (245), a finding echoed by Pandeli et al. (2019) for most types of work available to people incarcerated at a UK for-profit prison. This potential benefit does not always obtain for those formerly incarcerated and does not demonstrate the valuation or respect of individual human beings who have been incarcerated.

A final way in which labor may be valuable for the incarcerated person is the possibility of deriving enjoyment or satisfaction, even just to pass the time. Working as a way to pass one’s sentence is viewed both positively and negatively by incarcerated individuals. In Fabrice Guilbaud’s (2008) study of French prisons, for example, one incarcerated person referred to work as a way of “killing time” (52), whereas another indicated that “time goes faster” while working and that “it gets you out of the cell” (53). Pandeli et al. (2019) also found killing time or passing the time to be key motivators for incarcerated people to engage in prison work, as did Richmond (2014a), who quoted an incarcerated person as stating “there would be nothing to do if I didn’t work for [P]CI” (240).

In circumstances where the incarcerated person is allowed to choose whether or not to work, for how long, and the type(s) of labor they engage in, satisfaction may be deeply valuable. In reality, however, incarcerated people are often required to work as a form of punishment, and as Littrice (2021) has noted, this punishment may be done with complete disregard for the health or well-being of the incarcerated workers. In the study by Pandeli et al. (2019) in the United Kingdom, nearly one-quarter of respondents (8 of 34; 23.5%) in unskilled prison work indicated “they felt forced to work” (604) and were denied opportunities to work in more skilled labor. The lack of agency allotted to those incarcerated demonstrates deep disrespect for incarcerated people.

However, even in cases where incarcerated people find their work satisfying, their labor may still be exploitative. Many incarcerated people in Utah, Idaho, and New Mexico state prisons “volunteer” to digitize records for the Mormon church (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints [LDS]) to fulfill US government contracts—information that shocked many in memory work (see, e.g., Moravec 2017) after it came became public knowledge, thanks to Shane Bauer (2015). In *Church News*, the online newspaper of the LDS church, Heather Whittle Wrigley (2011)

highlighted the intangible benefits that incarcerated people received from their volunteer work, noting that “the inmates are keenly aware of the temporal and spiritual blessings that come” from memory work. One incarcerated person, Terry, whom Wrigley identified not by his full name but rather by his inmate number, described his volunteer work indexing records as “about helping others . . . I find joy in helping inmates find their family. Here, I have a chance to reflect on my life. I just want to be of service to others now.” Other incarcerated people volunteer their time for nonspiritual benefits: according to Mike Judson, who recruited volunteers to index records in a Utah prison, one incarcerated person told him, “I would have done anything to get out of my cell” (quoted in Bauer 2015). Even though incarcerated people may derive satisfaction or reap spiritual benefits from performing memory work, this is still a case of mutually beneficial exploitation. Encouraging incarcerated people to work for only spiritual benefits is exploitative and relies on unfair power dynamics.

Prison labor initiatives such as digital indexing for FamilySearch, the LDS church’s free (for consumers) genealogy website, and the Yearbook Project are exploitative. Even though incarcerated people may gain some benefits from engaging in these practices of mutually beneficial exploitation, the system fails to respect the inherent value of incarcerated people. These initiatives are, therefore, unethical.

Two Proposed Interventions

Especially in the United States, it is unlikely that information professionals and memory workers can stop the practice of exploitative prison labor—the prison industrial complex is too large and too ingrained in society. It may even be argued that insofar as incarcerated people will be exploited anyway, it is better for them to perform memory work than other forms of menial labor, given its possible benefits to society (see Zwolinski 2007). However, information professionals can and should address the ethical issue of exploitative labor within our domain. This section advances two possible interventions that are intended to begin a conversation within our field.

Intervention 1: Hire Those with Memory Work Experience

The first intervention is for memory institutions to hire formerly incarcerated people who learn technical skills related to memory work during their incarceration. This intervention is a natural step for memory workers who advocate for social justice and seek the abolition of prison labor, policing, and related (mal)practices, such as members of the Abolitionist Library Association (<https://abolitionistlibraryassociation.org/>). Some have already argued that the profession should take just this step—for example, Gennea Duplisea (2019), archivist and special collections librarian at Salve Regina University in Newport, Rhode Island, tweeted her support for hiring formerly incarcerated people in 2019.³ Although hiring formerly incarcerated people

3. Duplisea’s (2019) tweet reads in part, “There must be something the archive profession can do to give jobs to folks with those skills after their incarceration.”

would not stop the practice of exploitative prison labor, this intervention would ensure that incarcerated people who are forced or choose to engage in memory work would receive a tangible benefit. Indeed, when incarcerated people work in employment that they believe could lead to opportunities in the external labor market by offering them a marketable skill, such as in waste management, carpentry, and optical services, they are more likely to perceive their labor positively and to have more optimistic outlooks for their future prospects after incarceration (Richmond 2014a; Pandeli et al. 2019).

Librarians, archivists, and other information professionals who are involved in hiring can check whether the prisons in their state or territory employ incarcerated people in memory work (by searching for correctional industries and prison work initiatives that include scanning, digitization, indexing, and data entry) and advocate for the hiring of formerly incarcerated people who have received relevant training or experience. This relatively simple intervention could have major impacts on the lives of formerly incarcerated people, not only by providing job opportunities but also by lessening the stigma of incarceration. In addition, it could help repair the damage of the morally questionable exploitation that occurs by or on the behalf of memory institutions.

Intervention 2: Label Items, Collections, and Databases That Benefit from Exploitative Labor

Insofar as the practice of exploitation is morally wrong, there are strong reasons for archives and other memory institutions to disclose to patrons and the public that their digital collections and databases rely on exploitative prison labor. By failing to note the roles played by incarcerated people, information and memory professionals are eroding the public trust that Zinaida Manžuch (2017) has rightly pointed out is integral to the profession. This is perhaps part of a larger problem of invisible labor in archival work and digital humanities, which information professionals are currently endeavoring to address (Shirazi 2016; Tansey 2016; Lee 2019–20; Pandeli et al. 2019; Kaun et al. 2020).

One way to repair and earn the public trust is by clearly identifying items, collections, and databases that have benefited from exploitative labor. Inspired by recent efforts at reparative (re)description (Robichaud 2021; Wilson Special Collections Library 2022), this identification should accompany the robust item- and collection-level descriptions that archivists and archive technicians are already experienced in creating. Identification should consist of informative, neutral statements that could appear in metadata, in finding aids, or on websites.⁴ These statements could include the names of the incarcerated people who digitized or otherwise contributed to the information item or could make more general statements to the effect that

4. Another area in which this information could be included is in the copyright, rights, or restrictions section of items or collections, as this information is intimately connected to the ethical use of items.

incarcerated people were involved in processing. Although it is not standard practice, many archives and special collections have already established a practice of including the name of the individual who created a finding aid or inventory list within the document and its metadata. This practice offers more dynamic description for collection management. Libraries, archives, and other institutions (e.g., online genealogy databases) that utilize prison labor could follow this practice. In addition to providing much-needed transparency, this approach would provide a tangible benefit to formerly incarcerated people as they search for employment. However, this practice may increase stigma or lead individuals to face increased discrimination—or privacy may simply be preferable to credit. In this case, a more general statement could be used.

For an example of how this intervention could increase transparency, take the South Dakota State Historical Society Data Entry Project. Through this project, people incarcerated in a South Dakota prison enter state census data into a database (SDDOC 2021a), for which they earn \$0.25 per hour (Sawyer 2017). Incarcerated people also perform other memory work for the state of South Dakota, including digitizing state and county records and converting microfilm to digital files (SDDOC 2021b; Kaun et al., forthcoming). Thanks to this labor, a state website hosts the 1905 South Dakota State Census Index, and its database can be queried by last name, first name, county, and town or post office.⁵ If a website user navigates to a tab titled “Special Projects Program,” one of 28 tabs on the site, they can read that government records are digitized by “archives staff trained in preservation and digitization techniques [who] supervise inmates at the Women’s Prison in Pierre who operate the scanners” (South Dakota State Historical Society 2022). The website does not indicate that incarcerated people also performed the labor (in this case, data entry) that enables searching the state census data. Rather than obfuscating this fact, the work performed by incarcerated people should be clearly indicated to all users of the South Dakota State Historical Society’s website, preferably on the same page where a user can query the database. As a starting point, I would suggest a general statement on this page that reads, “This database was made possible by the exploitative labor of people incarcerated at the Women’s Prison in Pierre, South Dakota.” The statement could also be supplemented by information concerning the low hourly wages earned by the individuals: “This database was made possible by the exploitative labor of people incarcerated at the Women’s Prison in Pierre, South Dakota who earned \$0.25 per hour.” The individuals who perform this labor should be asked for input on and/or approval of the statement and whether they would be interested in having their names included: “Jane Doe, Janet Doe, and Jeanine Doe served as data entry technicians while working under exploitative conditions at the Women’s Prison in Pierre, South Dakota.” These sample statements would offer greater transparency to South Dakota residents and users of the website, allowing the South Dakota State Historical Society and state government to earn the public trust.

5. The 1905 South Dakota State Census Index is available online at <https://history.sd.gov/archives/data/1905census/1905Search.aspx>.

The intervention of labeling documents or collections as benefiting from exploitative prison labor may backfire: patrons may boycott the memory institution—or worse—merely due to its association with incarcerated people or with the practice of prison labor. The reporting on the recent suspension of the Yearbook Project perhaps highlights this pitfall: rather than being outraged at the low wages earned by incarcerated people, Oklahomans are instead focused on the fact that convicted felons are handling images of children—an aspect magnified by media coverage (Suares 2022b). I would invite those swayed by this concern to consider that if boycotts or a public backlash is worrying, perhaps the institution should simply reconsider its use of exploitative labor. To be less tongue in cheek, although these concerns do not eliminate the strong reasons to disclose the use of exploitative labor to patrons and the public, memory institutions could forgo the terms “exploitative” or “exploitation” in favor of more neutral, although less honest, attributions—for example, “This database was made possible by the labor of people incarcerated at the Women’s Prison in Pierre, South Dakota.”

The intervention of labor statements is a mere suggestion, an attempt to begin the conversation of how not only to acknowledge but also to address the use of exploitative prison labor in the information profession.⁶ Practically, beginning these conversations within our institutions is a challenge that each of us must endeavor to meet, beginning with frank conversations about how and why we describe and label items and collections in the ways that we do (Robichaud 2021). One suggestion is to begin with the recent “Guide to Conscious Editing” produced by the Wilson Special Collections Library (2022) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to begin an institutional discussion of (re)describing archival documents and collections and adequately labeling other digital and information items. Although this guide does not consider incarcerated or exploitative labor, discussion can be steered to include local concerns and the concerns of individual employees.

Labor statements should not serve as mere trigger warnings or lip service but rather must go one step further in addressing this moral wrong. There is a danger that these labels could go the way of land acknowledgments, which too often reflect a professional burden of acknowledgment but do not move toward reconciliation (see Wark 2021). Nevertheless, if implemented thoughtfully and intentionally within a social justice framework, this intervention has the promise to move the profession toward righting this ethical wrong.

Conclusion

Memory workers have recently been working toward greater transparency with the public, including who performs the memory work integral to the maintenance of our cultural heritage

6. Another potential concern is that labeling items, collections, and databases as created by the labor of incarcerated people may further normalize the practice and therefore increase memory institutions’ reliance on exploitative prison labor. This concern is not completely unfounded and should be considered by any institution thinking about the application of such labor statements. Despite these, and surely other, concerns, it remains our moral duty to disclose the use of exploitative labor in memory work.

materials (Tansey 2016; Lee 2019–20). This transparency should extend to the use of exploitative prison labor in providing the high-quality digital information and collections that patrons are coming to expect from libraries, archives, and other memory institutions. Because prison labor in the current global context is highly exploitative, there are strong reasons to disclose the use of this morally dubious practice to patrons in order to continue (and merit) earning the public trust. Information professionals should be honest with the public and our patrons about the costs of creating and maintaining online collections, including when the expectations of completely online collections lead to the use of less (financially) costly solutions, such as outsourcing to incarcerated people. Although we cannot put an end to the practices of exploitative prison labor, we can come to terms with how memory institutions have benefited from this exploitation and rethink our involvement in this unethical practice. By enacting both interventions proposed in this article, memory workers can have a positive impact on the lives of formerly incarcerated people and merit the trust that our patrons have placed in us. In an era when the information profession is actively working to improve the lives of incarcerated people by, for example, expanding and improving library services inside jails and prisons, as in a new collaborative project between the ALA and the San Francisco Public Library (Office of the Mayor 2022), it is imperative that we examine and implement our professional ethics.

Appendix

Table A1. Scale of Incarceration

Country	Prison Population Total	Prison Population Rate (per 100,000 People)
United States	2,068,800	629
Canada	38,570	104
Finland	2,827	51
France	72,067	106
United Kingdom (England and Wales)	80,984	134

Source.—Data from Institute for Crime and Justice Policy Research (2022) as of August 17, 2022 (updated monthly).

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Kristen C. Howard: liaison librarian for history, classical studies, Indigenous studies, and religious studies at McGill University Library. Howard earned a PhD in history from the Division for Late Medieval and Reformation Studies at the University of Arizona in 2020 and a master of information studies from McGill University in 2022. Her research interests include library and archives-based user studies of humanities researchers, selection and labor in digitization projects, and animation of special collections through public history and creative projects. Email: kristen.howard@mcgill.ca.