

SRRT DAY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE 2025

# AI Literacy Instruction in Carceral Settings

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Hello everyone, I'm Matsuko Friedland. Thank you for having me here today at the SRRT Day of Social Justice. I am so excited for all the presentations today and for having the opportunity to present on "AI Literacy Instruction in Carceral Settings".

# Slides and Transcript



<https://tinyurl.com/3dpehae8>

If you would like to access the slides and transcript for this presentation, please go to this URL or scan the QR code.

# Introduction

- **MLIS student**
- **Background**
  - **Business**
  - **Web development, design, and accessibility**
  - **Public health**
- **Activities**
  - **Public library intern**
  - **Prison Library Support Network (PLSN) reference volunteer**



So to start with, a little about me. My name is Matsuko. To the right is a photo of myself and my tortie cat Kira who is very likely going to make an appearance at some point today.

I'm an MLIS student at SJSU, a couple semesters away from graduation.

I'm interested in libraries and social justice/equity. Some of the background I came into this program with includes business; web development, design, and accessibility; as well as public health.

I'm also currently interning at a public library and also volunteer with the Prison Library Support Network (PLSN)'s reference by mail program.

# AI Literacy Instruction in Carceral Settings

- **Background:**
  - Instruction project started in late 2024/early 2025 for an instructional design class
  - Increase in questions about AI from incarcerated patrons
  - Limited appropriate resources
- **Questions I'll address:**
  - Why is this important?
  - What are the challenges?
  - How will this project meet this need?
  - What's next?



So in this presentation, I will be discussing an AI Literacy instruction project specifically for carceral settings.

I started this project late 2024/early 2025 for an instructional design class in my program.

I'd been exploring information access in prisons and other carceral settings for a few years before that, including through volunteering in PLSN's reference by mail program. PLSN, for those that don't know, is a completely volunteer-run abolitionist collective supporting the information needs of incarcerated people.

One of the things that inspired this work was through that seeing an increase in questions about generative AI and not finding much out there in the way of suitable resources.

So some of the questions I hope to address today include:

- the importance of AI literacy instruction in carceral settings
- some challenges to AI literacy instruction in carceral settings
- some of the resources that are already out there
- and what will be coming next for this project

## Why is this important?

- **AI literacy: “the ability to understand, use, and think critically about AI technologies and their impact on society, ethics, and everyday life” (Leo S. Lo)**
- **Increased availability and use of AI tools**
- **Everyone needs AI literacy**
- **Identifying AI; mis-/dis- information, scams**
- **Limited access to information and technology in prisons: “time capsule” effect**



Why is AI literacy instruction in carceral settings important?

AI literacy can be defined as "the ability to understand, use, and think critically about AI technologies and their impact on society, ethics, and everyday life".

As we've probably all experienced, AI is quickly becoming more and more prevalent in our every day lives, and as a result, AI literacy is becoming more of a necessity to navigate the technology.

Personally, I've been seeing more and more of it on social media, and at school, by students and instructors alike. I notice that a lot of people don't understand its limitations, and overly trust AI-generated content: an example of automation bias, people trusting the output of machines more than themselves or other people. On the other hand, a lot of people also treat it like a toy to make fun or silly content, when it's incredible resource-intensive and quite wasteful in the midst of a climate crisis.

It's becoming increasingly difficult to identify AI-generated content; a lot of people are getting tricked with AI-generated mis-/dis- information.

So even those of us who have been exposed to AI throughout this development struggle with AI literacy.

For incarcerated people, this is further exacerbated by limited access to information and

technology in prisons, which can cause a "time capsule" effect.



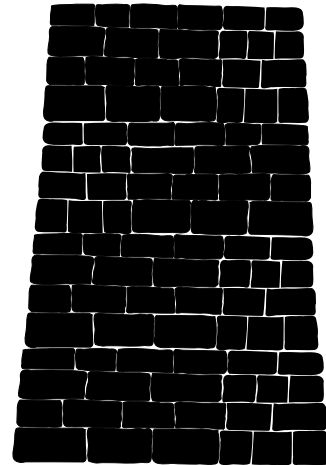
Here is just one example of the "time capsule" effect in real life. The Horton brothers, whose sentences were commuted after spending nearly 30 years in prison, found that they were unable to order fast food.

[read quote]

So they didn't have access to modern technology for 30 years, but technology expands so quickly, missing out on just a short amount of time can set someone back. If we think about AI, just a couple years ago, it probably wasn't on most people's radar.

# What are the challenges?

- Existing resources:
  - Mostly digital, online: up-to-date, interactive
  - Print-based: out-dated, text-heavy
- Institutional restrictions:
  - Limited/costly/no access to technology
  - Restrictions on physical materials (form, length, content)



What are the challenges to AI literacy instruction in carceral settings?

There's quite a few, the main one being a mismatch between available resources and what the incarcerated people, in general, can or want to access.

So the existing resources on AI and AI literacy. Unsurprisingly, since it's a rapidly changing technology, it's mostly digital and online. Of course there are benefits to having online instructional materials: information can be updated quickly, and learners can get practical experience with AI tools.

There are some more print-based resources lately, but they're often quite text-heavy and will get out of date quickly.

Institutions will have their own restrictions on the types of materials that are allowed, and it's different everywhere, even within the same jurisdiction.

Usually there's limited to no access to technology, and what access is available is costly to the incarcerated person. So this means that using digital and online materials for instruction is pretty much impossible.

Using existing print-based materials is not that much better. Physical materials will have restrictions too, often in terms of form, length, and even content. I borrowed this DK book on AI which is pretty cool, covers a lot, lots of graphics, but it's only available in print in hardcover. And



many prisons don't allow hardcover books.

# What are the challenges?

- Population characteristics:
  - Under-researched, under-resourced
  - Preference for interpersonal communication
  - Low literacy, educational levels
  - Marginalized groups are over-represented



There's also characteristics of the incarcerated population that makes it challenging to design instruction for them.

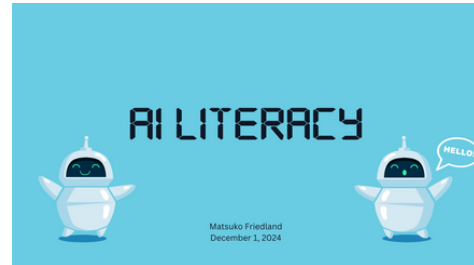
Earlier in my program, I did a research project on the incarcerated information community, and found there was very little research about them. I had to expand my search to the global incarcerated population, which doesn't necessarily reflect the experience of incarcerated people in the US, but I did find some common themes: they're under-resourced, and they prefer interpersonal communication.

Because of the lack of research, there's also there's not a lot of guidance on effective instruction for this group.

However, we can get some additional clues from population statistics. This is generally speaking, but also a reflection of systemic oppression, many have low reading literacy and educational levels; and marginalized groups are over-represented. They may have had bad experiences in traditional educational settings and I think it does suggest that conventional instruction, like those involving lectures and exams, are probably not going to be very effective for this group.

# How will this project meet this need?

- **Flexible delivery**
  - Self study
  - Peer group study
  - Facilitated group instruction
- **Materials**
  - Workbook
  - Slide deck
  - Supplementary digital materials



This project was designed to meet the instructional need for AI literacy, for broad range of institutions and individuals. While it's not going to be possible to meet every institution and person's requirements, the hope is that these design decisions will help maximize the number of people that can be reached.

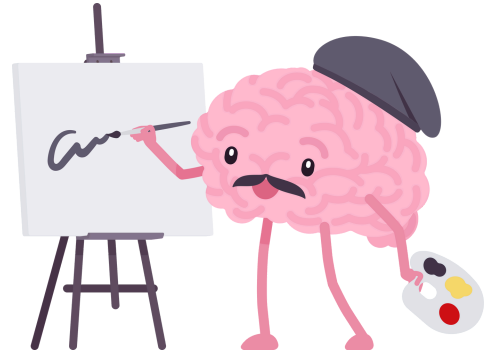
The instruction delivery will be flexible, allowing for self study, peer group study, and facilitated group instruction. This is to provide more autonomy for the learner, catering to different learning preferences, and also to support learning where resources are limited.

The primary material will be a print-based workbook, which can be used in all the delivery methods. There will also be a slide deck and supplementary digital materials for facilitated instruction, and for those who do have access to the internet.

The idea is that the workbook will cover the essential AI literacy content, while the supplementary materials may offer additional interactive examples, or resources for further learning in the topic of AI.

# How will this project meet this need?

- **Content**
  - Simple language
  - Visuals
  - Updates
- **Evaluation methods**
  - Art
  - Discussions



The content will use simple language, making it more accessible for those with low literacy, who are English learners, or anyone who's unfamiliar with technological vocabulary.

Visuals will be used to complement the simple language content, as well as to show examples of AI and its use, even if it's not quite the same experience as using or looking at it in action.

Since it's a workbook, and not a published book like many existing print-based materials on the topic, we'll be able to make updates more frequently, as the technology and discourse develops.

Evaluation won't involve traditional methods like tests, quizzes, or essays. As I said before, traditional schooling wasn't successful for many incarcerated people, so why should we keep using those methods?

Using more creative methods like art and discussion activities is probably better suited for those with low literacy levels, and may be uncomfortable with traditional evaluation methods due to past experiences, as well as addressing the preference for interpersonal communication.

## What's next?

- Complete development of first materials
- Gather feedback and revise
  - Direct feedback
  - Pilot project
- Evaluate
  - Focus groups
  - Paper surveys
  - Direct contact



I'm slowly working on developing the first version of these materials.

Once that's ready, I'd love to get some feedback and revise, whether through direct feedback or hopefully a pilot project.

And the plan would be to continue updating the materials after it's "live" with learner feedback, possibly through focus groups, paper surveys, or direct contact.

If you're interested in getting involved or getting updates as I go along, please do get in touch and let me know.



# Thank you!

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Thank you so much for your time. If you would like to reach me, my email is  
[its@matsuko.ooo](mailto:its@matsuko.ooo)

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