

**Services to Pro Se Patrons & Prisoners:  
LISP/RIPS/SR-SIS Joint Roundtable AALL 2004  
Monday July 12, 2004 (5:15-6:15pm)**

**Sample Letters to Prisoners**

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**Sample Letter (1)**

**San Diego County Public Law Library**  
1105 Front Street • San Diego, California 92101-3999 • (619) 531-3900  
FAX: (619) 238-7716

October 15, 2003

Mr. Prisoner ABC  
SATF/SP 85-127up  
PO Box 5248  
Corcoran CA 93212

Dear Mr. ABC:

Thank you for your letter requesting information from our law library. We cannot do research for any patron nor can we provide our service free of charge.

Our charges for photocopying are as follows:

\$5.00 per citation to be copied, plus 20 cents a page for each page copied. There is an additional charge for postage and handling, \$1.52 for the first five pages and up to \$3.50 for 51 pages and \$10.00 for up to 200 pages. We cannot copy more than 200 pages.

After your request for specific cases or materials is received, you are sent a letter advising you of the exact cost of providing the requested material. When we receive your cashier's check or money order made out to the San Diego County Public Law Library, the material will be copied and mailed to you.

We do NOT Shepardize cases. We do not provide the above services free of charge nor can we lend materials to non-members of our library.

Please let us know if there is any other information we can provide you.

Sincerely,

Sandra Cousins [*fictitious name*]  
Reference Librarian

## Sample Letter (2)

University of Washington  
Marian Gould Gallagher Law Library  
William H. Gates Hall Box 353025  
Seattle, WA 98195-3025  
206-543-7672 Fax: 206-685-2165

September 21, 2001

Prisoner XYZ  
Some street address  
Great Falls, MT 11111

Dear Mr. XYZ:

You recently wrote, requesting copies of fifteen cases and several other items.

To use our library's Copy & Send Service, you must have **citations** – that is, the exact volume and page number for each case. For example, when you write that you want *Beach v. Day* (1996), we cannot tell exactly where it is published in order to go copy it. I looked that one up: it is 913 P.2d 622. I did not take the time to look up all of the cases you listed. The ones that I found are:

- *Blockburger v. United States*, 284 U.S. 299 (1932)
- *Strickland v. Washington*, 466 U.S. 668 (1984)
- *Beach v. Day*, 913 P.2d 622 (Mont. 1996)
- *State v. Redcrow*, 980 P.2d 622 (Mont. 1996)

The charge for using the Copy & Send Service is \$15 per citation. If a case or article is longer than 30 pages, then we charge \$.10 for each page over 30. If you order 15 cases, it will cost *at least* \$225, plus tax.

In your letter, you said that the State Law Library of Montana does not offer services to jail prisoners. I telephoned there and spoke with a reference librarian who said that, in fact, they do. They will not do legal research for you but, if you have citations, they will make photocopies for you at 20 cents per page. This will be much more affordable for you than paying our commercial rates. I suggest you write to the State Law Library of Montana when you have citations for the cases you want.

You requested copies of the index and appendices from the *Prisoner's Self-Help Litigation Manual*. Our library does not own this book. You might want to buy a copy of the book for yourself. The publisher (Oceana Publications) sells it to prisoners for \$32.95 (the regular price is \$39.95). I am enclosing a description of the book from the publisher's website.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

[real name]  
Reference Department

cc: State Law Library of Montana

### Sample Letter (3)

Supreme Court of Wisconsin  
State Law Library  
120 Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd.  
PO Box 7881  
Web Site: [wsll.wicourts.gov](http://wsll.wicourts.gov)  
Telephone 608-266-1600  
Fax: 608-267-2319  
TTY 800-947-3529

We have received your inquiry regarding services to institutionalized persons. We handle such inquiries only by mail. Also note that we are not attorneys and therefore by law cannot give legal advice or interpret the law.

If provided with accurate and complete citations to specific legal materials, we will mail photocopies at the rate of **60¢ per page plus sales tax**. NOTE: If a court has found you indigent, that is for purposes of waiving court filing fees only. It does not entitle you to free photocopy services.

Prepayment is required, however -- **Do Not send stamps, stamped return envelopes, or any other form of payment with your initial request**. We do not maintain deposit accounts, and requests containing any estimated or advance payments will be returned unfilled.

Write us a short letter stating your request *clearly, concisely and legibly*. Be sure to include your *complete* mailing address in the letter. Send it to us at:

Reference Service  
Wisconsin State Law Library  
P.O. Box 7881  
Madison, WI 53707-7881

We will determine whether we can supply the materials, calculate the exact cost for mailing them, and send you a reply letter. You may then send us a check or money order for the exact amount, and upon receipt we will mail you the materials.

We are unable to process requests that require extensive research or access to materials we do not have. For those types of requests, we recommend that you first *consult with the librarian at your institution*. He or she might have what you need, or might be able to borrow it from another library on your behalf. As a last resort only, you can try forwarding your request to:

Legal Assistance to Institutional Persons (LAIP)  
University of Wisconsin Law School  
Law Building, Room 4318  
975 Bascom Mall  
Madison, WI 53706

Please note that LAIP receives many requests and cannot always provide assistance.

Reference Service  
WISCONSIN STATE LAW LIBRARY

### Sample Letter (4)

Supreme Court of Wisconsin  
State Law Library  
120 Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd.  
PO Box 7881  
Web Site: [wsll.wicourts.gov](http://wsll.wicourts.gov)  
Telephone 608-266-1600  
Fax: 608-267-2319  
TTY 800-947-3529

Your request for photocopies has been received by the Reference Service of the Wisconsin State Law Library. We require prepayment.

The copies you have requested amount to:

_____	<b>Copy(ies) @ \$.60 each</b>	=	<b>\$</b> _____
	<b>Sales Tax (5.5%)</b>	+	_____
	<b>TOTAL AMOUNT DUE</b>	=	<b>\$</b> _____

Make your check or money order payable to the **Wisconsin State Law Library** and send it to: Reference Service, Wisconsin State Law Library, P.O. Box 7881, Madison, Wisconsin, 53707-7881.

**NOTE: If you have not already done so, ask the librarian at your institution about obtaining these materials. He or she might be able to get them for you another way.**

Material requested:

## Sample Letter (5)

Fresno County Law Library  
1100 Van Ness Ave., Rm. 600  
Fresno, California 93721  
(559) 237-2227  
Fax (559) 442-4960

June 6, 2004

Thank you for your interest in our services. The goal of the law library is:

to provide legal information services to the judges, attorneys, law firm librarians, legal assistants, other members of the legal community, and citizens representing themselves in legal matters who reside or practice in Fresno County. In order of their priority, secondary obligations are to serve other California county law libraries and the state law library, other libraries in the county, other libraries and attorneys in California, and other libraries outside the state(Fresno County Law Library Mission Statement).

We will photocopy and mail to other libraries for .25\$ per page, plus a \$1.00 handling charge. We also offer a fax service to other libraries that is \$2.00 for the first page and \$1.00 for each page thereafter. In order for us to provide this service, we must have an exact citation (for case law or law review articles) or the exact title of a book including the page numbers needed. It is against the law for us to advise you and against library policy to conduct research on your behalf. We do not provide photocopy services for private citizens or incarcerated individuals. Our materials are available to the public and can be photocopied by the public at our self serve copy machines for .10\$ a page.

If you reside outside this county, we suggest you contact your local law library. If they do not have the material you request the librarian will determine the best means of obtaining it, which may not be this library.

Once again, thank you for your interest in our library.

Sincerely yours,  
Librarian