DATA + DESIGN
Justice Projects

FOR STARTING OFF NEW INITIATIVES that CAN HARNESS INFORMATION to IMPROVE Access to JUSTICE

How to use

1. This is for understanding what types of data-driven services, research, policies, and tools have been developed in the justice + poverty space.

2. Use it to inform groups' brainstorms about what might be possible -- after they have done initial needs-finding, agenda-setting, and brainstorming work.

3. For Project Case Studies: have each group read through each slide/card, talk through what the story involves, and if it could be applied directly or analogously to their problem statement.

4. For Project Plan + Card: print out the Brainstorm template + cards. Have groups brainstorm combinations of problems, stakeholders, and datasets that could define a Data-driven design space. The Case Studies can inform these combinations too.

Project Case Studies

Project

MD Expungement

MD Expungement is a data-driven web application that lets a person or advocate identify if someone qualifies for Expungement of their criminal record -- and then populate the forms needed to request an Expungement.

Matthew Stubenberg, then at the Maryland Volunteer Legal Services, as a lawyer and technologist, built MD Expungement to increase his own (and others') capability to see people's expungement eligibility.

How It Works

- Matthew built an algorithm to regularly scrape Maryland Judiciary Case Search database to find records of individuals. The records are scraped into machine-readable data.
- Then this data is fed into an algorithm to determine if the user's particular case number is expungeable based on the requirements for expungement in Maryland.
- A person comes to the application and searches a record based on name or number.
- If the person's case is eligible for expungement, the algorithm will auto-populate some fields of the relevant forms. Then the person must complete them, sign them, and turn them into the courts to request expungement.

https://www.mdexpungement.com/
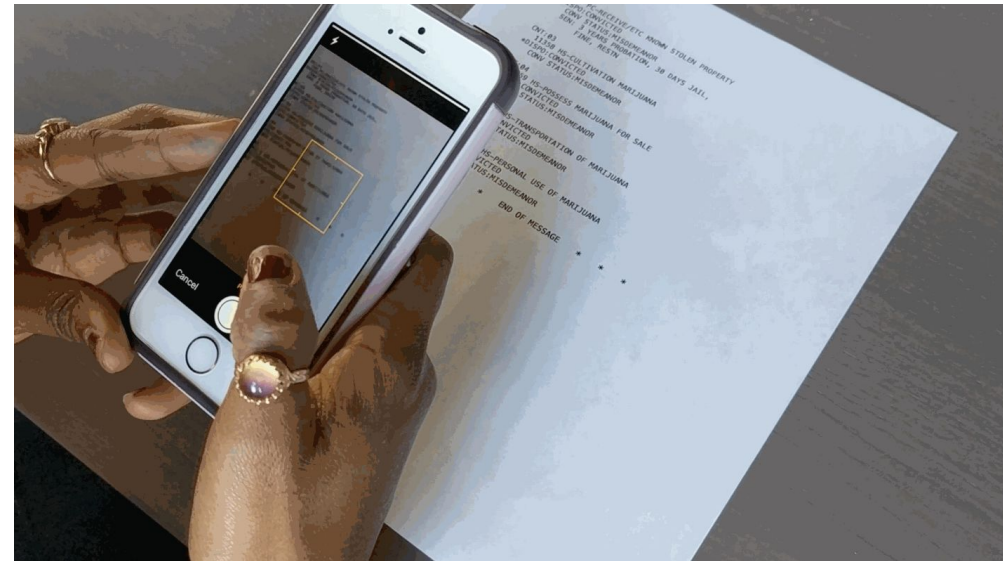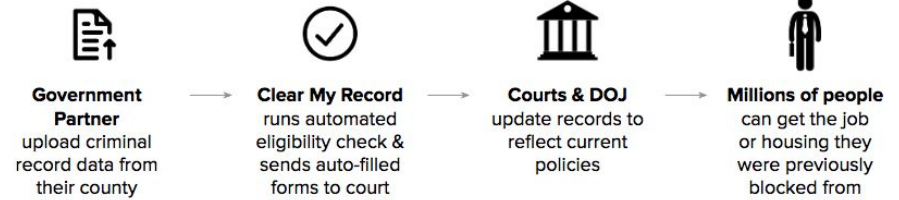
Project

Clear My Record

The Code for America team that works on criminal justice identified that expungement (clearing or sealing criminal records of those eligible for it) was a huge possible benefit to people struggling to get employed or housed. But few people eligible for expungement in California were able to navigate the system to get their record expunged. It involves filling in paperwork, getting your fingerprints or biometrics taken, waiting for your papers to be processed and assessed, and following through on what the court/agencies ask from you next.

Their first solution was to build a website that would help people initiate the paperwork and understand the process.

Now they have moved onto a policy-oriented design. They are working with the California government to have all people eligible for expungement to have records automatically forwarded for expungement. Instead of people having to shoulder the burden of initiating the request and navigating procedure, the burden is shifted to the government to default to expunging all eligible criminal records. Their pilot has:

- Government agencies uploading criminal records data into a tool Code for America made
- The tool checks for records eligible for expungement based on the logical rules they wrote
- They then automatically fill in the paperwork to submit to the court
- The courts and DOJ then decides on the application, and notifies people if their record is cleared

Remove the burden of applying, by automating

Government Partner upload criminal record data from their county → **Clear My Record** runs automated eligibility check & sends auto-filled forms to court → **Courts & DOJ** update records to reflect current policies → **Millions of people** can get the job or housing they were previously blocked from

Reduce or dismiss your convictions

Take the first step in just 10 minutes

Start now →

https://www.clearmyrecord.org/
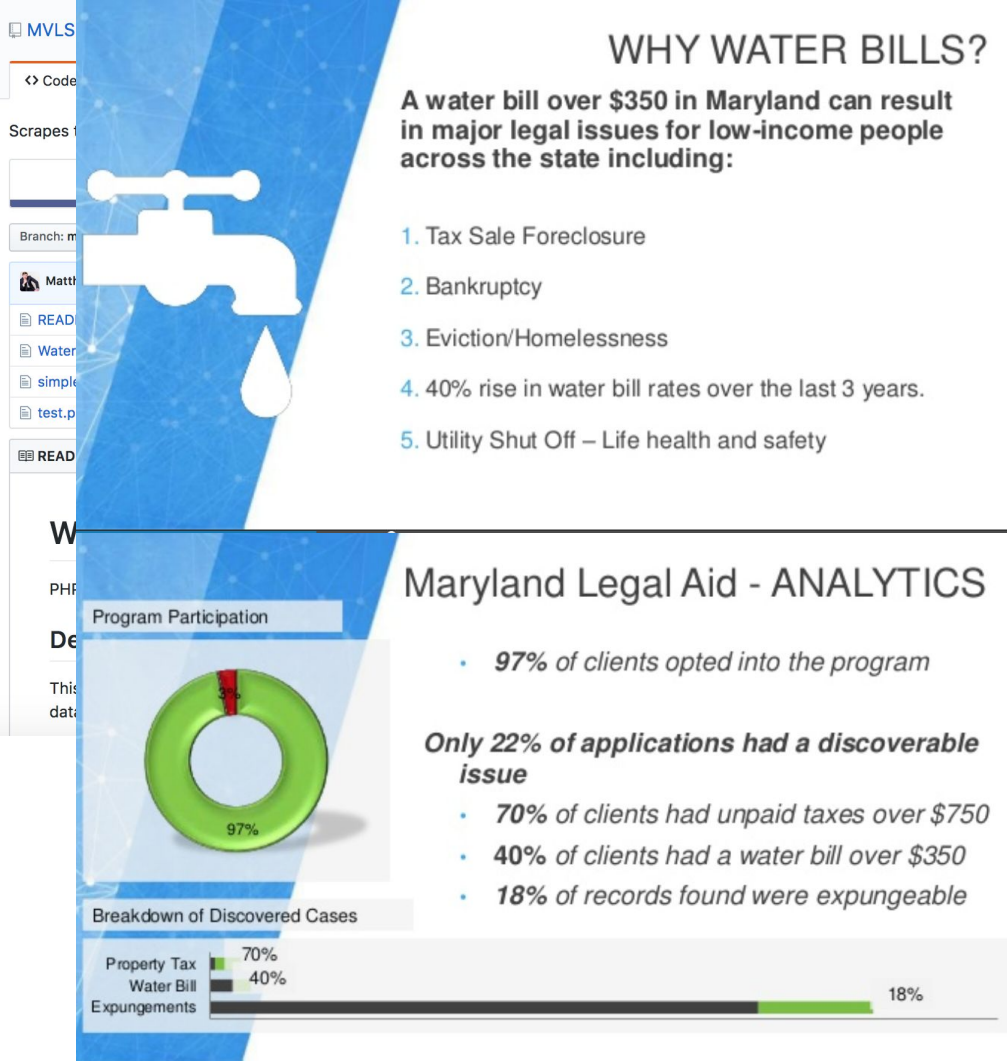
Project

Water Bill Scraper

The legal aid lawyer Matthew Stubenberg created a tool to scrape local Baltimore and Maryland databases of people's overdue water bills.

When he was sitting down with clients, who were there to talk to him about other issues, he then got their permission to check if they had overdue water bills. (Often, when he had just asked people if they had other outstanding problems or bills, they would report 'no'.)

He was then able to see if they did have overdue bills, and connect them with assistance to get them taken care of promptly. He then expanded this to run any (opted-in) client/applicants' names through a series of public database queries, to see possible criminal records to expunge, property taxes overdue, court warrants, etc.

The theory behind the project was that catching overdue bills early -- like water bills, car payments, mortgage payments, rent, etc. -- he could help his clients from staving off a larger financial crisis later on. Before, he would typically be doing "putting out fires" work with clients, when they had already been far behind on bills or called into court for debt or housing. This helped him get help to people earlier.

He trained other lawyers in his office how to use the same Water Bill checkup tool. The scraping was done on his own initiative, without explicit permission. The code is open source, but is hard to replicate in all jurisdictions because of different government website policies about opening this data and making it open for scraping or searching.

WHY WATER BILLS?

A water bill over $350 in Maryland can result in major legal issues for low-income people across the state including:

1. Tax Sale Foreclosure
2. Bankruptcy
3. Eviction/Homelessness
4. 40% rise in water bill rates over the last 3 years.
5. Utility Shut Off – Life health and safety

Maryland Legal Aid - ANALYTICS

Program Participation

- 97% of clients opted into the program

Only 22% of applications had a discoverable issue

- 70% of clients had unpaid taxes over $750
- 40% of clients had a water bill over $350
- 18% of records found were expungeable

Breakdown of Discovered Cases

Property Tax — 70%
Water Bill — 40%
Expungements — 18%

https://pt.slideshare.net/MatthewStubenberg/discoverable-client-issues-using-public-big-data

https://github.com/MVLSLAW/WaterBillScraper

Learned Hands

Learned Hands is a project to train machine learning models to identify people's legal issues from text or transcripts of their stories about problems.

It uses a set of 75,000 posts that people made on Reddit's Legal Advice board. All the posts are public, and users consent to them being used for research. They are usually 1-6 paragraphs describing the person's problem, and asking for legal help

Each of those people's posts are then presented in the application Learned Hands, one at a time. The Learned Hands users are asked whether a certain legal issue is present in the story, and they respond yes, no, or pass. They are asked about a series of issues: is there a Family law issue present here? Housing? IP? Immigration? etc.

The labels are then used to train models to spot these legal issues on their own. The models learn from the labeled story data, and then are able to spot the legal issues in new text that are given to them.

The goal is that these models become an effective 'classifier' -- an automated tool that can look at text and classify what issues are present. This classifier could be integrated into other applications and services. Future chatbots, voice lines, or other tools could use the classifier to automatically spot issues.

https://learnedhands.law.stanford.edu/

**Learned Hands**   Margaret Hagan

0/5

Points: 535350

Is my Landlord obligated to pay for my damages?

I have been living in my apartment for nearly 2 years now. Shortly after I moved in there was a leak in my ceiling that damaged my mattress beyond repair. My landlord grudgingly paid for me to replace it though angrily told me I could replace it for 50$. He is an angry cheapskate but told me it was fixed and we had no issues. Fast forward to yesterday when the Same pipe burst. Soaking my mattress monitors and keyboard. I am looking at 500-600$ to replace

Do you see a legal issue around **Family** in this post?
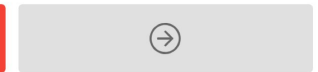
Are you interested in Machine Learning?

Do you want to practice your ability to spot legal issues in real people's stories?

Do you want to contribute to Access to Justice?

Learned Hands is a crowd-based game for doing machine learning on real people's legal stories, taken from Reddit's Legal Advice board. Learned Hands lets you read these stories, and figure out if you can spot any legal issues in them.
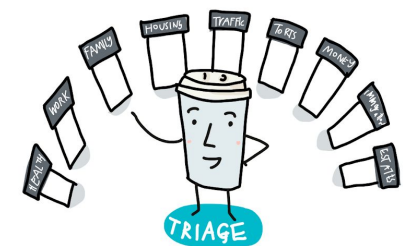
You get points based on your responses — and every week we'll tell you your Quality Score. Your responses help train machine learning models, that can be used in access to justice applications.
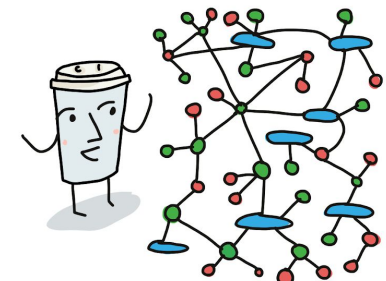
Mapping Problems

Mapping through geographic information system (GIS) is a system designed to capture, store, manipulate, analyze, manage, and present all types of geographical data. The key word to this technology is Geography – this means that some portion of the data is spatial.

How It Works

The data you use needs to have some sort of geographic marker in order to map it. Those markers an be states, counties, census tracts or local neighborhood boundaries. Whatever it is it must be represented in the data. The most common map display is a "chloropleth map". It basically displays the variation in a given data point across different areas of the map.

The image on the right is from a study of evictions in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The analysis was done but UNC but it was done in partnership with Legal Aid of North Carolina.

Key Findings

From FY2003 to FY2015, the number of areas where evictions concentrated increased and gradually shifted outward toward the edges of the county.

The highest rates of households at risk of formal eviction and writs of possession are found in North, East, and West Charlotte, extending to the edges of the county.

The neighborhood indicators associated with higher rates of households at risk of formal eviction were: Black/African-American population, population under 18, public nutrition assistance, and neighborhood residential renovations. The indicators associated with lower rates of households at risk of formal eviction were development-based subsidized housing and single-family housing.

The neighborhoods that have been and continue to be most affected by formal evictions are located in East, Northeast, West, and Southwest Charlotte.

Neighborhoods with high rates of households at risk of formal eviction and writs of possession served tend to cluster near other neighborhoods with high rates.
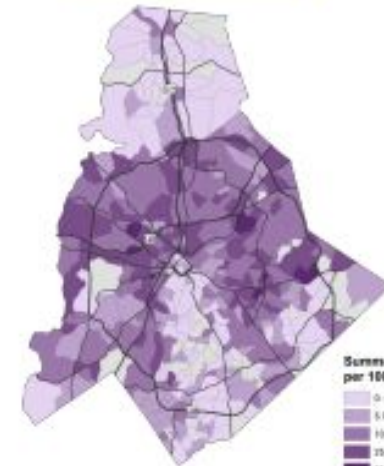
In clusters of neighborhoods with high rates of households at risk of formal eviction, the average rate of households at risk of formal eviction is more than double the county rate and the average rate of writs of possession served are almost three times the county average.

Households at risk of formal eviction in FY2015

Density FY2015
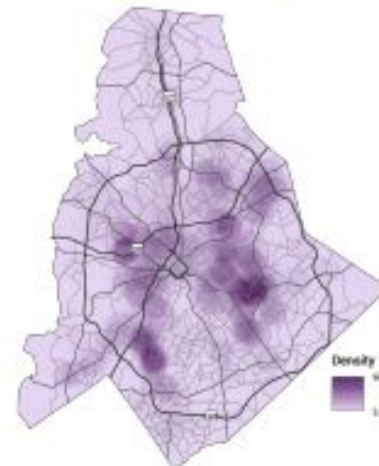
Rate FY2015

Density
High
Low

Summary Ejectments per 100 Renter Households

Use Case

Reddit Divorce Bot

...

The developer, Nora al-Haider, built an automated bot that lives on Reddit's boards where family and domestic problems are discussed.

The bot searches the postings about divorce-related issues -- looking for keywords that indicate the person posting is considering filing for divorce.

Then the bot posts an automated reply on the page, with links to official legal help webpages for that jurisdiction. The links provide self-help divorce resources from the local court website or legal help portal.

The goal is to spot where people are talking about legal problems, and to connect them with official resources there.

https://medium.com/@ahnora/the-reddit-divorce-bot-85cf1acdcae8
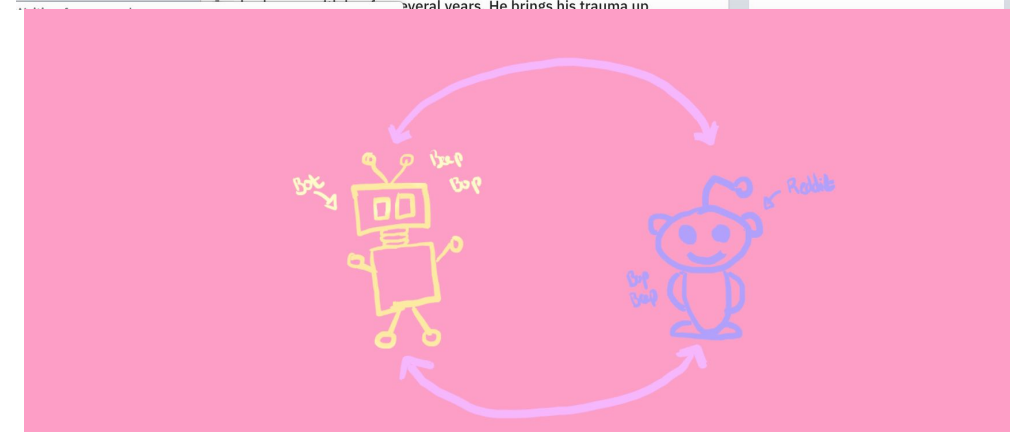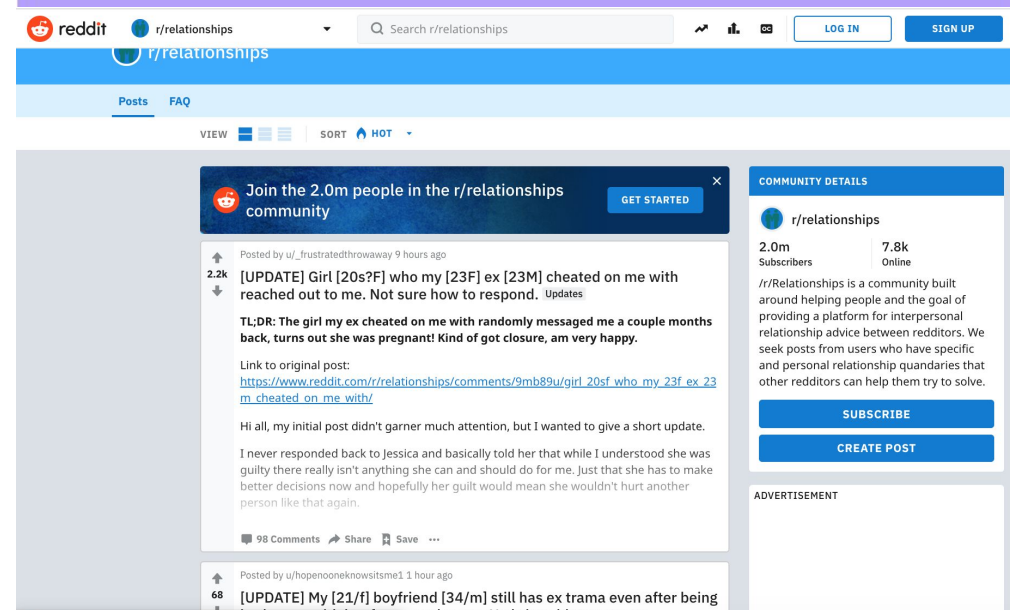
Project

AZ Eviction Help

Project: AZ Eviction Help
Name: Daniel Bernal @ Stanford Legal Design Lab
Project Type: Eviction Coaching

Project Description:
This is a combination of a service and web application. Individuals in Arizona facing eviction receive customized information for assistance in the mail.   The postcard content will provide a web address detailing instructions/next steps and referral to a web coach that can assist them in navigating the eviction process.

Data Involved & General Process:
Court sends or Stanford scrapes nightly new eviction filings, in which landlords are submitting summons and complaint to initiate an eviction action against a tenant.

The application identifies name of tenant and street address from the court records. Potentially, also scan the summons and complaint PDFs to determine the reason for eviction, the date, time, and place of the hearing

The application uses that to send postcard to tenant, and to refer to web coach

Web site has hearing lookup, as well as coaching information

https://www.azevictionhelp.org

Project

Better Legal Internet

How can we connect people who are searching online, on Google or other search engines, with legal help?

This project at Stanford's Legal Design Lab is using the Schema.org project (a non-profit initiative of the search engines Google, Yahoo, Bing, Yandex,e tc.) to start structuring online services information so that it shows up more effectively in search results.

This entails:

- Making comprehensive lists of the websites in each jurisdictions that present services or DIY information for a given legal problem (like legal aid groups, courts, self help centers, etc.)
- Defining a standard set of terms with which these websites will be marked up
- Having teams of RAs and librarians completing these 'mark-up' terms for each of the websites
- Working with Google to get this mark-up to be applied to the legal organizations' websites
- Tracking how it changes the search results.

The goal is that by applying structured Schema.org markup to legal help websites, the search results will be more effective. They will show **correct information for the jurisdiction, actionable links to services and DIY info, and step-by-step guidance** directly on the Search Results page.

https://betterinternet.law.stanford.edu
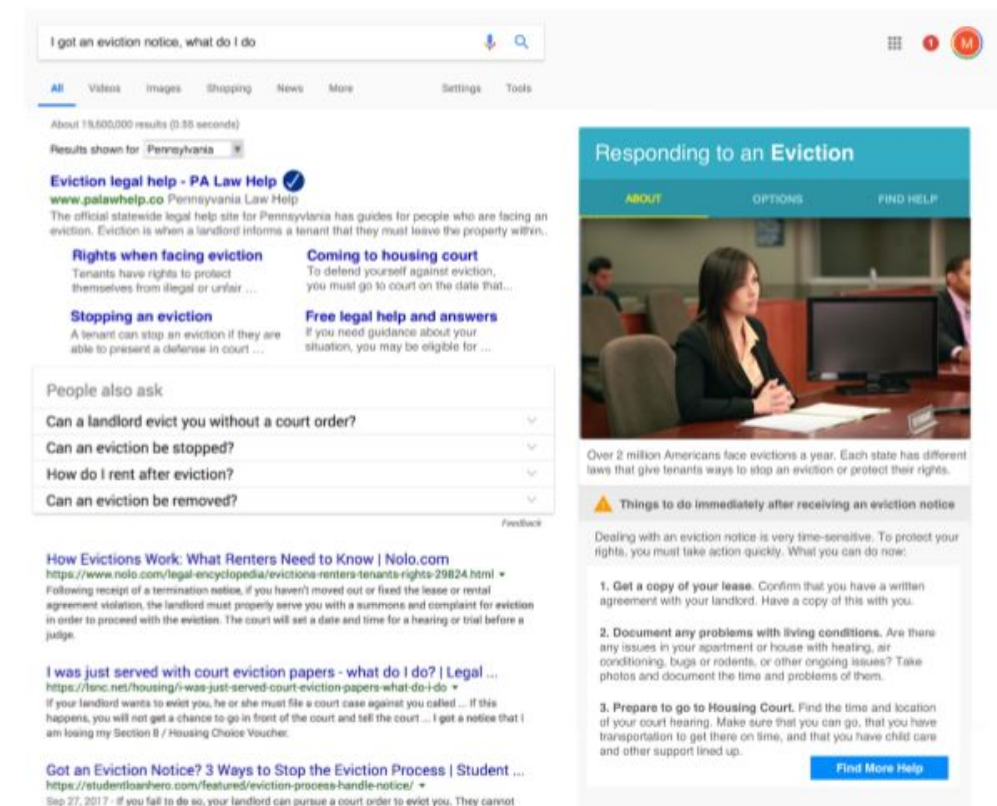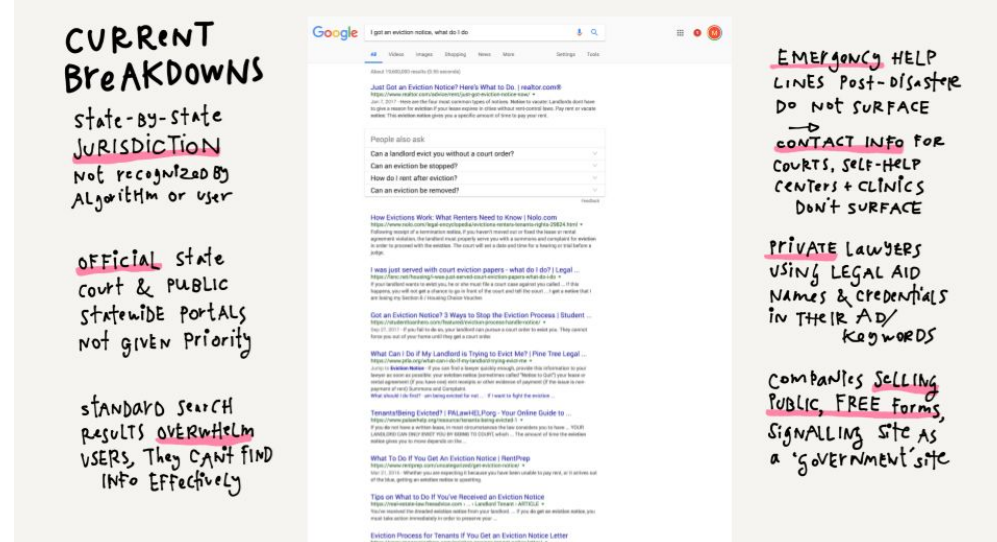
Project
Regulatory Sandbox

What if a jurisdiction -- like California, or Bay Area counties -- removed many of the regulations that currently inhibit new services or business models that could serve consumers with legal needs?

Australia, UK, and some US states are considering a new policy design called a Regulatory Sandbox.(It's already popular in Fintech). In this scheme, the current regulators allow companies to propose new innovations that might be illegal under current regulations. If the company can show that the consumer benefit likely outweighs the harm, and pledges to track outcome data that would help the regulator judge risk -- then the current regulations can be relaxed for their company to run this new offering.

In the justice sector, this can mean that the current regulator (the Supreme Court of the court, and the Bar Association) might relax the rules that:

- Only licensed lawyers are allowed to give legal advice (specific, strategic recommendations about how to deal with a legal problem). If this was relaxed, than it would be possible for non-lawyers to do some advising, or for automated tools to give robo-advice.
- Organizations that provide legal advice can only be owned/controlled by lawyers. If this was relaxed, it might be possible for a legal organization to accept investment or to have leadership from businesspeople or technologists. This might foster more innovative solutions and business models.

https://www.fca.org.uk/publications/documents/regulatory-sandbox
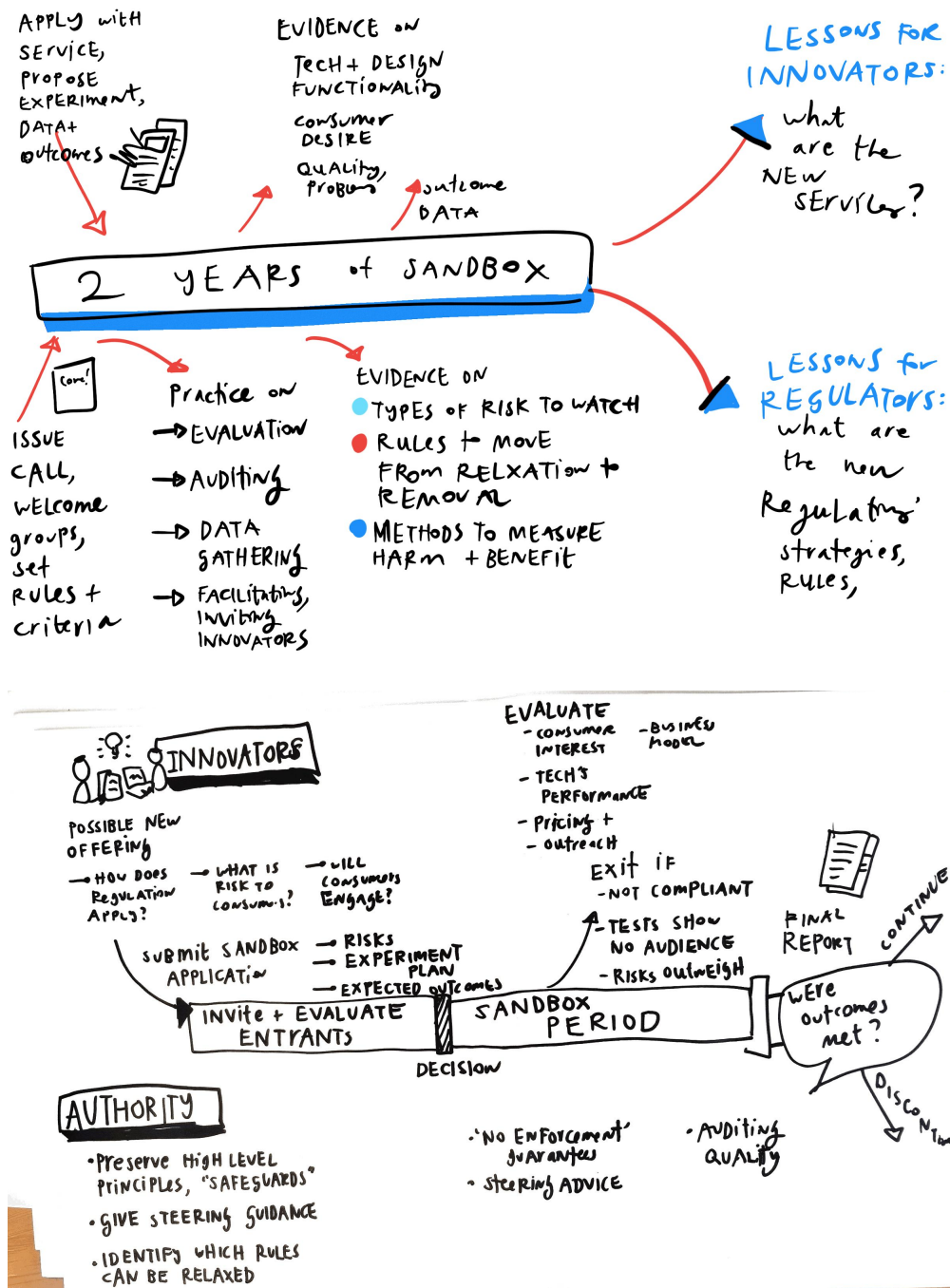
Project
Project Legal Link

This project in the Bay Area trains social service provider with how to make effective referrals to legal organizations.

It was incubated at local foundations and legal aid organizations, with the mission of better connecting services so that people are not passed over from social services to cold, expensive, confusing referral lines to lawyers.

The project started as a shared Google Sheet that was updated by the project's staff, with what type of legal organization might take which kind of client and issue.

Now it also has a website for Referrals and Resources, to guide social service orgs to the right referral org. It also conducts in-person trainings of social service organizations, to teach them what legal issues are and how to spot and refer clients who could benefit from legal help.

The project also offers resources and guides that can educate social service organizations about the basics of legal rights and processes.

It is still focused on the Bay Area ecosystem only, with lawyers Sacha Steinberger and Kate Richardson running it.

PROJECT LEGAL LINK   REFERRALS   RESOURCES   ABOUT US

Does your client's issue fit into one of these areas?

BENEFITS
CAAP, CalWORKS, CalFresh, MediCal, SSI

CRIMINAL + TICKETS
Criminal Process Questions; Quality of Life Tickets; Record Expungement

FAMILY + RELATIONSHIPS
Divorce, Custody, Guardianship; Restraining Order; T-Visas; U-Visas, VAWA

HOUSING
Eviction Defense; Other Housing Help; (Not Necessarily Legal)

IMMIGRATION
Asylum; SIJS, DACA; T-Visas; U-Visas, VAWA

Select Language

PROJECT LEGAL LINK   REFERRALS   RESOURCES   ABOUT US

HOUSING

HOUSING FRAMEWORK + TOOLS YOU CAN USE
Click HERE for the Housing Framework ➡
Click HERE for Security Deposit letter template - to generate a letter to landlord ➡

RELATED RESOURCES

PRE-EVICTION (OR NOT EVICTION)
Problems with rent, repairs, landlord behavior, notices or harassment.

Pre-eviction assistance [all counties] ➡

RELATED RESOURCES
California Tenants Guide
Eviction Notice Types & Requirements
Know Your Rights-SF Tenants (HRC)
Assistance for SF Tenants in Public, HUD, and Section 8 Housing (HRC)
Tool! Deposit Demand Letter
Tool! Sample Habitability Letter

EVICTION
Legal process for removing a tenant.

Eviction services [all counties] ➡

RELATED RESOURCES
Eviction Basics (HRC)
Unlawful Detainer (Eviction) Process

https://projectlegallink.org/

Project

JustFix.nyc

JustFix is a New York-city project that combines a web-based mobile application for tenants with community organizing data.

The application lets any tenant record problems, issues, and questions they have with their housing situation. These records -- photos, text messages, emails, phone calls, notes -- can then be legal evidence if the tenant needs to bring a complaint or respond to an action. The records are a means to protect the tenants' rights and improve their position in a housing court action. It will also give official notice to landlords about repairs they need to make, with certified mail.

If a tenant receives an eviction notice, the app has a step-by-step guide on how to respond, and connect with services.

JustFix also helps people find organizations -- like tenants unions, community groups, and legal aid -- who can help tenants who need more support around their housing. The tenant can share their records (like a digital case file) with the advocates they choose to.

On the advocates' side, JustFix aggregates data from tenants' usage to find patterns in certain neighborhoods, or with certain landlords. This can help in organizing and policy-change efforts, with clear points of data about outbreaks of mold or pests, bad behavior, or other concerning trends. They recently launched Who Owns What, to let tenants and advocates search buildings and landlords by address to better understand the market.

The JustFix.nyc platform allows tenants, community organizers, and legal services to:

Connect → Document → Take Action → Share

Build Your Case

Your case is your story. It provides a clear record of everything you have done to resolve your housing issues. If things get more serious, it can help avoid disputes or be used as a powerful tool in housing court. JustFix.nyc is a free webapp for tenants which makes the process of building your case as easy as possible.
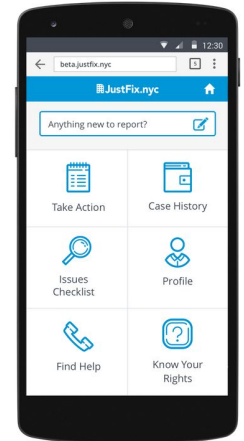
Keep Records

JustFix.nyc is the easiest way to maintain a papertrail of communication with your landlord and photos of your apartment conditions. Add a **Status Update** at any time from the dashboard to provide an update on your situation.

CREATE AN ACCOUNT

https://www.justfix.nyc/
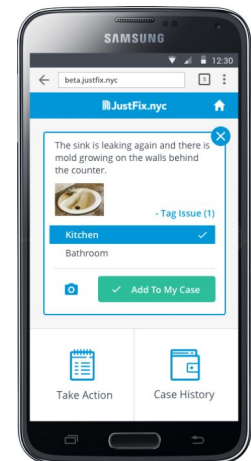
Project
Right to Counsel

Several jurisdictions, including the state of New York and the city of San Francisco, have introduced a new policy: that all litigants in a certain type of court (namely, Housing Court) are guaranteed a free lawyer to help them through the legal process.

There are no eligibility requirements for who qualifies for the service. It is open to all tenants in SF (or New York), who are served an eviction notice.

This often is referred to 'Civil Gideon' -- an equivalent of the guarantee in the criminal justice system (that was established through a case called Gideon) that people in the criminal justice system are guaranteed free legal counsel.

In SF, it is also known as "Prop F", the measure that was approved by voters in June 2018 to allow for Right to Counsel in SF. It will begin to be implemented in July 2019. The City has appropriated several million dollars to fund it.

Implementation of the Guaranteed Counsel policies are just beginning to be rolled out. There is not an established protocol that makes this policy completely clear in terms of service, offerings, measurement, etc.

The current plan in SF has partnerships with many different legal aid organizations, including Eviction Defense Collaborative, Bay Area Legal Aid, and many others -- who will be responsible for supplying the attorneys who will represent litigants.

CITYLAB

DESIGN / TRANSPORTATION / ENVIRONMENT / EQUITY / LIFE

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio walks with other officials in May. // Brendan McDermid/Reuters

New York City Guarantees a Lawyer to Every Resident Facing Eviction

KRISTON CAPPS   AUG 14, 2017

GROUNDBREAKING SAN FRANCISCO MEASURE GUARANTEES COUNSEL TO TENANTS FACING EVICTION

http://civilrighttocounsel.org/

Project

Wise Messenger

Wise Messenger is an application developed at Stanford Legal Design Lab. It is a text messaging platform that lets courts, legal aid groups, public defenders, or social service providers have automated conversations and/or reminders with their users.

It started as a tool to remind people of their upcoming hearings and appointments, to reduce the 'Failure to Appear Rates' at important court hearings. It was piloted with Maryland's Office of the Public Defender, to send several reminders to criminal defendants about when and where their hearings were. The hope is that it could help people avoid fines, fees, warrants, and delays that come with missing appointments.

It is also used to guide people through complex legal processes. In Orange County, California, it is being used by the Self Help Center to guide people through the lengthy process of filing a divorce. It has an automated logic flow to tell people of upcoming deadlines, the outcomes of their filings, whether they are on track or not, and what their next steps are.

Now the team is also piloting text-based follow-up plans for clients of social and legal services. Rather than handing people a sheet of things to do next, instead the providers sign the clients up to a text message line that can check in with them about whether they have followed up on next steps, reminds them about other services, and encourages them to follow through.
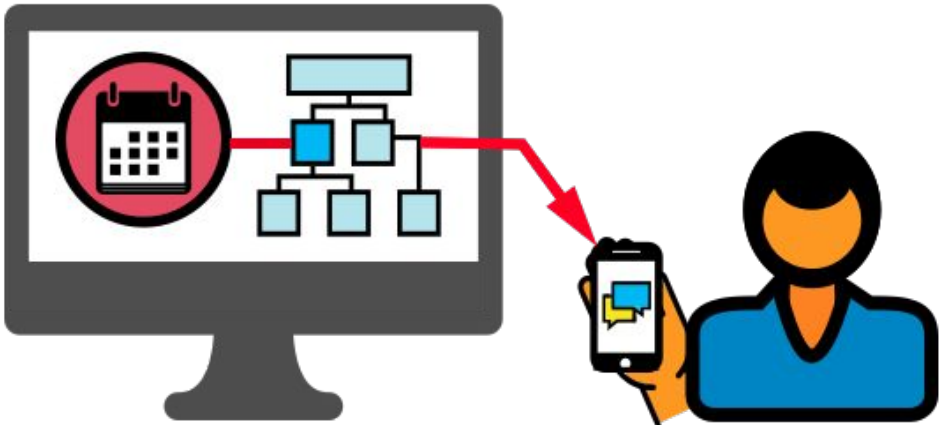
1. The user is at the Court/government facility after first entering into the system. He is told he has to appear at the Court at a later date to resolve his situation with the government.

2. A Court/facility employee approaches the User and asks if they would like to enter a Reminder Program to get notice that will help them plan for & attend the next proceeding.

3. The User agrees to sign up for the Reminder Program. He gives his consent to the employee & enters in his contact details and preferences for communication.

4. The Employee takes the User's details and enters it into the Reminder Program's database, along with the dates & information to be included in his custom Reminders.

5. The User goes home and gets on with his life. He knows he has to get back to the Court to make sure his situation is resolved. But it's not his top priority, as his life goes on.

6. A court employee, prompted by the Court Reminder System, dispatches a custom message to the User -- reminding him of time, directions, do's & don'ts for his appt.

7. The User receives the message & starts making plans for his court appointment. He reads the messages to understand what to expect & how to be prepared for it.

8. The User appears at Court at the right time and place, and feels confident that he knows what is about to happen & how to act. He proceeds through the Court process.

Project
Outlier Media

A journalist in Detroit developed a public service project to proactively reach out to community residents through mass texting, offering everyone an automated channel to ask questions about property and housing. She mixes automatic services with manual research and replies from her team of journalists. They draw on large public databases that they've organized, to do research for people about their situation.

- Her team proactively sending text messages out to people in Detroit, announcing that they are journalists who can help with certain issues and welcome responses. THey get these phone numbers from a data broker company, which has collected phone #s and demographic info from people who have opted in.

- They have some automated pathways (e.g., text 1 for utility shutoffs, text 2 for housing inspections) but also handle off-script replies.

- Some people write back immediately with questions about their house, utilities, or landlord. Others keep the outreach text and then write back weeks or months later, when a problem arises.

- Her team has programmed some automatic replies. When people enter in their address, their program can find property or utility issues. Other times, her team does customized research for that person's issue.

- They also have a shortcode for people to text in, to learn more and get these services.

Detroit

This is Outlier Media, a free journalism service for Detroit. You can use these txts to check if your home is on the auction list or if your landlord has blight tickets. You can also talk to a journalist about your housing and utility questions this way.

Std msg rates may apply. Text STOP to quit and we won't get in touch again. More about us: outliermedia.org. Privacy + terms: https://outliermedia.org/data-and-privacy/

Enter an address in Detroit to get started. Only use the house number and street name like this: "123 Gratiot" & right away you'll get tax and blight info.

2648 grand blvd

Our system can't find that address so we'll double check by hand and and get back to you. If you used an apt. number or zip code that could be the problem. Thanks for using Outlier.

Would you like to do another search?
Text 1 For Yes
Text 2 For No Thanks

2

Do you need more info about housing, inspections, or utility shut-offs? An Outlier journalist can help you get answers.
Text 1 For No Thanks
Text 2 For Follow up with me

https://outliermedia.org/

Project Plan

Project Brainstorm

Mix and match different Data-Design cards -- including ones you write yourselves.
Use these different matches to think widely about what kinds of project might be of value to you.

Problem

that your organization or community is facing

Stakeholders

Who could be involved in (or impacted by) your project

Information

That would be helpful to understand or solve the problem

How might we address _____PROBLEM_____ by bringing together _____STAKEHOLDERS_____ and using _____INFORMATION_____ ?

Problem Card

How can we **better reach out** to more people who need legal services,
so that more people in our target client communities are aware of our services and their options?

Problem Card

How can we find potential **clients who have specific problems** that we're seeking to address?

Problem Card

How can we demonstrate to (potential) funders how our organization is performing?

Problem Card

How do my services compare to those of other providers?

Stakeholders Card

Religious Leaders

(e.g., ministers, preachers, rabbis, nuns, imams, priests, congregation leaders, administrators)

Stakeholders Card

Universities and Schools

(e.g., Students, Professors, Classes, Researchers, Labs)

Stakeholders Card

Local Businesses

(e.g., retail stores, lawyers, paralegals, notarios, banks, car dealerships, grocery stories, etc.)

Stakeholders Card

Banking + Financial Companies

(e.g., Visa, H&R Block, Wells Fargo, Bank of America, Chase, Experian, insurance companies, etc.)

Stakeholders Card

Technology Companies

(e.g., Google, Amazon, Facebook, Reddit, Uber, NextDoor, etc.)

Stakeholders Card

Nonprofit Service Providers

(e.g. housing advocacy groups, domestic violence shelters, debt counselors, food shelters, etc.)

Stakeholders Card

Court Clerks

(e.g. those who accept filing forms, who mail out notices, who deal with people's questions)

Information Card

Your Own data

What does the information that you collect about clients needs or service provided tell you about the problem you are trying to address?

Information Card

Social Media Posts

(e.g., Tweets sent, online forum posts, Instagram photos, Facebook shares and messages)

Information Card

Funding for Services in Your Area

(e.g. government collects data on funds provided to legal service organizations; a foundation collects data on grant making)

Information Card

Demographic Characteristics of Poverty Population

From Legal Services Corporation: https://public.tableau.com/profile/legal.services.corporation#!/vizhome/2015DemographicCharacteristicsofPovertyPopulationwithfilter/ACSDashboard

Information Card

Staffing Type and Level of legal services

Legal Services Corporation:
https://public.tableau.com/profile/legal.services.corporation#!/vizhome/2015DemographicCharacteristicsofPovertyPopulationwithfilter/ACS Dashboard

Information Card

Data on county/neighborhood conditions
(e.g. Census data at the county or tract level)

Information Card

Rates of case filings by debt collection agencies
or
Data from third parties (e.g.[Debt in America](#))

Information Card

Overdue Water Bills

Information Card

Problem Card

Stakeholders Card

Information Card

Problem Card

Stakeholders Card

Information Card

Problem Card

Stakeholders Card