

University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law

## UMKC School of Law Institutional Repository

---

Faculty Works

Faculty Scholarship

---

Summer 2024

### KS POP Celebrating Three Years of Tech-Driven Justice for All

Ayyoub Ajmi

*University of Missouri - Kansas City, School of Law*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://irlaw.umkc.edu/faculty\\_works](https://irlaw.umkc.edu/faculty_works)



Part of the [Computer Law Commons](#), [Family Law Commons](#), and the [Science and Technology Law Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Ayyoub Ajmi, *KS POP Celebrating Three Years of Tech-Driven Justice for All*, 28 AALL Spectrum 20 (2024).  
Available at: [https://irlaw.umkc.edu/faculty\\_works/952](https://irlaw.umkc.edu/faculty_works/952)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Scholarship at UMKC School of Law Institutional Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of UMKC School of Law Institutional Repository.

# KS POP

## CELEBRATING THREE YEARS OF TECH-DRIVEN JUSTICE FOR ALL



The crucial role law librarians played in KS POP design and implementation.

BY AYYOUB AJMI

Born out of the urgent need exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Kansas Protection Order Portal (KS POP) emerged as an example of innovation redefining how legal aid could be accessed and delivered remotely. With courts and legal services grappling with unprecedented closures and restrictions, the Kansas Judicial Branch, in collaboration with the University of Missouri at Kansas City School of Law (UMKC Law), spearheaded an initiative that would not only address the immediate crisis but also lay the groundwork for more accessible legal help.

KS POP exemplifies how technology, collaboration, and human-centric design can successfully bridge the justice gap. The platform facilitates a more approachable legal process by allowing victims to securely file for protection orders online, significantly simplifying typically complex and lengthy legal procedures.

This article revisits the role of law librarians in designing and implementing KS POP. By leveraging their expertise in information management, user access, and educational resource development, librarians have played a pivotal role in KS POP's success, becoming a model for future self-help innovations nationwide.

### KS POP in Numbers

In the three years since its launch, KS POP has dramatically streamlined the filing process for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment, and victims of human trafficking. Filing papers for a protection order with children could take up to eight hours. Filing the same protection in KS POP takes about 45 minutes on average. The system's eligibility review feature, which can be completed in less than two minutes, allows victims to quickly determine their eligibility for a protection order and the specific type of protection they

can request, eliminating frustration and delays from filing the wrong forms.

The eligibility review has been utilized over 67,000 times, leading to more than 26,000 filed protection orders. Notably, 37 percent of these filings occurred outside of regular business hours, indicating KS POP's critical role in providing continuous access to justice. As a testament to its effectiveness and user-friendliness, 75 percent of all protection orders in Kansas are now filed through KS POP, with its use extending beyond self-help litigants to include attorneys and advocates who value its efficiency and direct court filing capabilities.

### How It Started

Before COVID-19, UMKC Law was already working with the Kansas courts to find ways to create self-help tools to support people representing themselves, particularly those facing domestic violence. One particular project was to introduce law students to document automation and guided interviews to support self-help litigants. However, once the court restricted access to their facilities and services to limit the spread of the virus, accessing court resources became a critical issue as individuals facing violence suddenly found themselves without in-person assistance from support centers, court libraries, and court staff.

Recognizing these challenges, UMKC Law and the Kansas Judicial Branch took proactive steps to develop the Kansas Protection Order Portal (KS POP). This portal was a critical step, offering a free and secure way for individuals to seek protection orders online, eliminating the need to visit the court during the pandemic. The Kansas Judicial Branch funded the portal. UMKC Law librarians designed and implemented it with input from judges, court clerks, Kansas Legal Aid attorneys, and family violence advocates.

### How It Works

KS POP integrates two key components: First, the [website](#) acts as a starting point, offering educational resources on domestic violence and safety measures. It also features a dynamic directory that helps victims locate resources. Users can filter these resources by county, the type of service provided, and even the primary language spoken,

ensuring that help is accessible to everyone in need.

The second component is the guided interviews used to generate court documents. For that purpose, we opted to use a form generator called [JotForm](#). This online form builder allowed us to deploy a solution rapidly without compromising security.

The initial step of the filing process is a series of screening questions to help victims determine the most appropriate protection and relief they can petition the court for. The screening helps customize the guided interviews to each victim's unique circumstances, making the filing process as relevant and efficient as possible. Once on the proper interview, they can answer the remaining questions necessary to complete the court forms. Upon completion of the guided interviews, the protection order forms are electronically submitted to the selected court for processing.

### The Design and Development Process

The development of KS POP occurred in the UMKC Law Library with a team of law librarians, students, and faculty with expertise in family law. The team used an agile methodology for rapid deployment and ongoing enhancement. [Agile](#) is a project management and software development approach emphasizing flexibility, user-centric design, continuous improvement, and adaptability. We divided the project into the following small management phases:

**The Discovery Phase:** This phase ensured we understood the problem we were trying to solve before actual developments began. During this phase, we reviewed existing protection order forms and instructional material, became familiar with Kansas statutes and court procedures, and surveyed judges, attorneys, court clerks, and advocates.

**The Design Phase:** During the design phase, law librarians and students focused on creating the optimal workflow for each type of protection order. This required substantial revisions to the court form using the National Association of Court Management to ensure all questions and interactions were in plain language and free of legal jargon. We also used conditional logic to display questions dynamically based on the users' input.

**The Development Phase:** One of the reasons we selected JotForm was its drag-and-drop feature, which allowed us to lay down the structure and flow of the questions quickly. We spent most of the time building the conditional logic that controls the fields and helpful resources. Another advantage of JotForm is its PDF builder. This visual tool helped us connect the interview fields to their respective places in the court forms. Ensuring the final petition generated remained identical to court-approved forms was essential for maintaining the integrity of these legal documents.

After a thorough internal review cycle, we initially made the tool available to three counties. Having actual users test the guided interviews helped us identify and address the remaining issues before making the entire system available to all 105 counties in Kansas on April 1, 2021.

### Lessons Learned

Through the journey of developing KS POP, our team has gleaned several invaluable insights:

Engaging with Kansas Legal Aid, court clerks, and other stakeholders as early adopters proved critical. Their intimate knowledge of victim needs and judicial processes guided our design and development process. A notable example we learned from legal aid attorneys was splitting the narrative section of the petition into smaller parts following a clear chronological order of the events. This small change helps simplify one of the challenges identified during the research phase.

User interactions brought to light scenarios we had not foreseen, such as the treatment of confidential information or processing special characters. Figuring out these limitations early on allowed us to adjust our approach to meet the users' needs and prevent filing hiccups.

Establishing a clear data retention policy from the outset was essential. The court devised the policy to identify the time needed to preserve the data before destroying it. This time was determined based on the court hearing date, typically 21 business days after the filing. The policy also identified private information and other information we can destroy, as well as anonymous data we can keep for analytical purposes.

Transitioning from a school-led project to a statewide system underscored the complexities of scaling, particularly in handling sensitive information, further development, and ongoing support. After the initial research, design, and development of the system in the school, the court outsourced the remaining tasks to a third-party vendor to ensure the project's integrity and longevity.

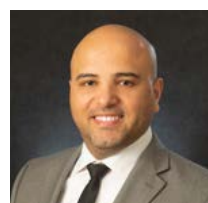
### Looking Toward the Future

KS POP's achievements over the last three years have underscored its crucial role in aiding victims and streamlining legal procedures. It has also established a benchmark for future tech-driven innovations in the legal domain. In 2024, the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) spearheaded an initiative that focuses on using technology to enhance safety and accessibility in virtual civil protection orders, sharing lessons learned from KS POP with courts, court-based programs, and other service providers. This movement toward technological solutions in the legal field, inspired by KS POP and other similar initiatives, signals a transformative period where access to justice is significantly enhanced through innovative, user-centered design and strategic partnerships, laying the groundwork for a more equitable legal system.

Law librarians' role in designing and implementing KS POP is particularly inspiring. By leveraging their expertise in information management, user access, and educational resource development, librarians have played a pivotal role in KS POP's success. This contribution highlights how law librarians can directly extend their influence beyond traditional library services to impact access to justice through technology and innovation. ■

 Information Management

 Marketing + Outreach



**AYYOUB AJMI**

**DIRECTOR OF LEGAL INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**

University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law

AJMIA@umkc.edu

© 2024 BY AYYOUB AJMI