

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN
SOUTHERN DIVISION

HENRY BROWN, #2010020376,

Plaintiff,

v.

CASE NO. 2:10-CV-14170
HONORABLE VICTORIA A. ROBERTS

JERIEL HEARD,

Defendant.

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OPINION AND ORDER OF SUMMARY DISMISSAL

I.

Before the Court is Plaintiff Henry Brown’s pro se civil rights complaint filed pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Plaintiff, an inmate at the Wayne County Jail in Detroit, Michigan, has been granted leave to proceed without prepayment of the filing fee for this action. In his complaint, Plaintiff challenges the adequacy of the jail law library, including the quality of the books, the photocopier, and the staffing. Plaintiff names the Jeriel Heard, whom he identifies as the Chief/Director of Jails as the sole defendant in this action and sues him in his individual and official capacity. Plaintiff seeks an investigation of the law library to determine if it violates the inmates’ Sixth Amendment rights, as well as other injunctive-type relief. Having reviewed the complaint, the Court dismisses it pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B) and 1915A(b)(1) for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted.

II.

Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a) requires that a complaint set forth “a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief,” as well as “a demand for the relief sought.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2), (3). The purpose of this rule is to “give the defendant fair notice of what the ... claim is and the grounds upon which it rests.” *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007) (quoting *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 47 (1957) and Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2)). While this notice pleading standard does not require “detailed” factual allegations, it does require more than the bare assertion of legal conclusions. *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555. Rule 8 “demands more than an unadorned, the defendant-unlawfully-harmed me accusation.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, _ U.S. _, 129 S. Ct. 1937, 1949 (2009). “A pleading that offers ‘labels and conclusions’ or ‘a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do.’” *Id.* (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555). “Nor does a complaint suffice if it tenders ‘naked assertion[s]’ devoid of ‘further factual enhancement.’” *Iqbal*, 129 S. Ct. at 1949 (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 557).

Under the Prison Litigation Reform Act of 1996 (“PLRA”), the Court is required to *sua sponte* dismiss an *in forma pauperis* complaint before service if it determines that the action is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(c); 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B). The Court is similarly required to dismiss a complaint seeking redress against government entities, officers, and employees which it finds to be frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. A complaint is frivolous if it lacks an

arguable basis either in law or in fact. *See Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 31 (1992); *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989).

To state a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, a plaintiff must allege that (1) he was deprived of a right, privilege, or immunity secured by the federal Constitution or laws of the United States; and (2) the deprivation was caused by a person acting under color of state law. *See Flaggs Bros. v. Brooks*, 436 U.S. 149, 155-57 (1978); *Brock v. McWherter*, 94 F.3d 242, 244 (6th Cir. 1996). A *pro se* civil rights complaint is to be construed liberally. *See Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520-21 (1972). Despite this liberal pleading standard, the Court finds that Plaintiff's complaint is subject to dismissal.

III.

As noted, Plaintiff challenges the adequacy of the Wayne County Jail's law library, particularly the books, the photocopier, and the staffing. Prisoners, including indigent prisoners, have a constitutional right of access to the courts which the states have an affirmative duty to protect. *See Bounds v. Smith*, 430 U.S. 817, 821-25 (1977). A prisoner's right of access to the courts is limited to direct criminal appeals, habeas corpus applications, and civil rights claims challenging the conditions of confinement. *See Lewis v. Casey*, 518 U.S. 343, 355 (1996); *Thaddeus-X v. Blatter*, 175 F.3d 378, 391 (6th Cir. 1999). This right of access requires prison authorities to provide either the legal tools necessary for inmates to represent themselves, *e.g.*, a state-provided law library, or the assistance of legally-trained personnel. *See Holt v. Pitts*, 702 F.2d 639, 640 (6th Cir. 1983) (citations omitted).

To prevail on a §1983 claim concerning the denial of access to the courts, a plaintiff must make some showing of prejudice or actual injury as a result of the challenged conduct. *See*

Lewis v. Casey, 518 U.S. 343, 351 (1996). This can be established by showing that the deprivation resulted in “the late filing of a court document or the dismissal of an otherwise meritorious claim.” *Pilgrim v. Littlefield*, 92 F.3d 413, 416 (6th Cir. 1996). Plaintiff makes no such showing. He neither alleges nor establishes prejudice, *i.e.*, that any of his constitutionally-guaranteed legal proceedings have been compromised by the asserted deficiencies at the jail. He has thus failed to state a claim that his constitutional right of access to the courts has been denied. His complaint must therefore be dismissed.

IV.

For the reasons stated, the Court concludes that Plaintiff has failed to state a claim upon which relief may be granted under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Accordingly, the Court **DISMISSES** his civil rights complaint. The Court also concludes that an appeal from this order would be frivolous and therefore cannot be taken in good faith. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3); *see also McGore v. Wrigglesworth*, 114 F.3d 601, 610-11 (6th Cir. 1997).

IT IS ORDERED.

S/Victoria A. Roberts
Victoria A. Roberts
United States District Judge

Dated: October 22, 2010

The undersigned certifies that a copy of this document was served on the attorneys of record and Henry Brown by electronic means or U.S. Mail on October 22, 2010.

s/Carol A. Pinegar
Deputy Clerk