

The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society McLean Library

Institute for Museum and Library Services, Accelerating Promising Practices for Small Libraries

Cultivating Community Garden Histories

Project Justification

Community gardens are a fundamental part of the urban fabric of Philadelphia – and many other cities in the US and elsewhere. In Philadelphia, it is estimated that there are around 400 community gardens in existence today. They are a popular and effective way for people to build community with one another through a common love of gardening and a connection to the land. Community gardens are also an effective way to address community challenges like urban blight, green space access, food access and much more. Numerous studies have documented how community gardens enhance the social capital of communities through increasing the social bonds and networks among neighbors, among people from more diverse backgrounds, and among those in different positions of power.

While many of Philadelphia's community gardens are deeply embedded in their neighborhoods and the lives of community residents, by their nature they are grass-roots organizations with often ad-hoc leadership and organizational systems. In Philadelphia, many gardens face numerous challenges connected to growing real estate pressures and changing neighborhood demographics. PHS and its partner, the Neighborhood Gardens Trust work together to build organizational capacity and ensure long-term vitality and preservation of community gardens in Philadelphia. Integral to building a stronger future for community gardens is the acknowledgment and celebration these gardens' past contributions to community life in Philadelphia.

In many cases, the activities and presence of these gardens is not widely understood as public history. The origin stories of these gardens are at risk of being lost as the memory-keepers pass away or as garden membership changes. Given Philadelphia's history as major destination for African-Americans during the Great Migration, the history of many Philadelphia community gardens is also closely tied to the experiences of the city's African-American communities. Puerto Rican and immigrant communities also figure prominently in the history of Philadelphia community gardens.

PHS has heard from community gardeners that sharing and preserving the histories of their spaces and the people that built them is important to them, especially in the face of changing neighborhood social dynamics and sometimes-uncertain land tenure. When a community garden is lost to development, not only is the land gone, so are the stories and significance of what happened there – unless the history has been documented and preserved.

The McLean Library is uniquely positioned to assist community gardeners to document, share, and preserve the histories of their gardens. As Philadelphia's only special library dedicated to horticulture and greening and with a long history of documenting, archiving, and sharing the historical and contemporary activities of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, the Philadelphia Flower Show and Philadelphia greening initiatives, the library can bring its professional expertise and archival capacity to bear in the service of community garden history-keeping.

Through our IMLS Community Memory project, the library will introduce community gardeners to the importance of documenting their histories. Through a series of hands-on, engaging workshops developed with input from community gardeners, we will train and support gardeners in web

archiving and object scanning/digitization. The McLean Library will make historical content widely available via a range of national library and archiving web sites. Through a train-the-trainer model, we will ensure that additional community gardeners can become history-keepers in the future. PHS will offer continuing technical support and archival storage to help ensure that community histories documented through our project remain accessible and preserved for future generations.

Our IMLS project will build on the McLean Library's past and future work. The library has made it a priority to preserve and provide wider access to the many files and reports, photographs, and audio-visual materials of Philadelphia greening activities dating to the 1974 founding of the Philadelphia Green initiative by activist and PHS president, Ernesta Ballard. Through a CLIR-funded Cataloging Hidden Collections grant received in 2010-2014 by the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCL), EAD finding aids were created for many community gardens materials held by the Library. Through a current Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) grant, we are creating a digital collection of glass plates: Philadelphia Garden Photographs 1900-1940. In 2018, the library began an institutional web archiving program.

Going forward and to mark the up-coming 50th Anniversary of PHS's Philadelphia Green programs, the Library will seek to make even more of its archival collections digitally available. Plans include grant-funded projects to reformat and make accessible core audio-visual materials documenting the history of PHS community gardening.

Our IMLS project will be informed by best practices in community engagement and community capacity-building. Through our IMLS project, participants will have the necessary context, techniques, and tools to become their own history-keepers. While the McLean Library will offer post-project support, participants will not need to depend on PHS resources or continued services.

Our approach also fits closely with PHS's community garden capacity building model. This model tailors services to needs of gardens at different stages in their evolution – whether they are emerging, established, or mature gardens. For example, preserving the web and online record of an emerging community garden without land preservation could help establish proof of activity should garden tenure be challenged through the law of adverse possession. Established and mature gardens can build leadership and organizational strength by documenting and sharing the garden history among members and larger community.

This project will also be informed by the best practices outlined in Technical Guidelines for the Still Image Digitization of Cultural Heritage Materials (Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiative, 2016). The library currently follows national standards and rules for cataloging that include Resource Description and Access (RDA) and the application of Library of Congress Name and Subject authorities and other thesauri for descriptive cataloging. Bibliographic records are formatted according to the MARC21 format for books, archival and digital materials for contribution to the OCLC WorldCat Union Catalog. The library will follow web archiving quality assurance guidelines in Quality Assurance for the Bentley Historical Library Web Archives: Guidelines and Procedures (2018)

The McLean Library was founded in 1828, one year after PHS was formed. It is a small research library consisting of collections on horticulture, gardening, urban greening and related information. Staff consists of one full time library associate director, one half-time library assistant, one 8 hour

per week archivist, and small group of volunteers. The annual operating budget is \$20,000 for materials and library services and \$167,000 for salaries and benefits, coming from PHS's operating budget.

The library is located at PHS's headquarters in downtown Philadelphia, occupying a first floor suite in an office building. The total square footage is 4680 square feet, which includes a multi-use meeting room. The library serves the gardening public as well as PHS members/staff/volunteers, researchers, media, academics and students. Geographic distribution is mostly Philadelphia and the Mid-Atlantic region, but via virtual research services and interlibrary loans we serve users throughout the United States and beyond.

The collection consists of 19,000 volumes, including eBooks, rare books and manuscripts, and archives consisting of 400 linear feet archival material documenting PHS's nearly 200- year history including its major activities, the Philadelphia Flower Show and its nearly 50-year history in urban community gardening and greening projects. Services include virtual and onsite reference, circulation, and interlibrary loans. Current digital activities include participation in the POWER Library PA Photos and Documents Digital Repository. Library use includes 4700 annual visitors and 1300 virtual visitors via askPHS, email and phone.

The McLean Library is a member of CBHL, the Council on Botanical and Horticultural Libraries. On the continuum of CBHL library size, the McLean Library is on the small side. As a member of the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCL) the McLean library is on the continuum of small-sized.

Community gardeners and garden stakeholders in Philadelphia will be the primary beneficiaries of our IMLS project. Through a recent survey, as well as outreach done over the past year as part of PHS's community garden program planning, we have gleaned the importance of history-keeping for gardens. We know that most of the gardens in our network have an online presence through websites and or social media. We know that some have collections of photos, documents, or videos. To our knowledge, none of this is being actively archived or digitized for permanent preservation. We also know of gardens that have been lost to real estate development in recent decades, of which we have little record to know that they ever existed.

Gardeners are not the only people that stand to gain from this project. Residents of garden neighborhoods and those interested in Philadelphia's public history will gain access to stories and documents that will bring new life to the city's past. Philadelphia's African-American community will also benefit from the access to the histories of the many community gardens founded and led by African-Americans, often with past ties to the agricultural South.

Researchers will also benefit from this project. In the past few years, we've worked with several graduate students in areas of study ranging from geography to sociology to urban studies who requested access to the library archives because they were researching the history of urban community gardens, especially from the 1970s and forward. Having access to vibrant stories of urban revitalization will inform the work of future researchers.

Cultivating Community Garden Histories addresses the IMLS Community memory goals because this project engages local community gardener groups in the collection, documentation, and

preservation of their community garden histories. As described in the project plan, we will follow library standards and best practices for making the documentary history of the community gardens accessible to all audiences via the online portals of the POWER Library PA and Photo document repository; WorldCat; the library's catalog; and the Smithsonian Community of Gardens website. And we will train gardening groups to document their own histories going forward.

Additionally, we address IMLS's APP goals of service to our communities and to strengthen our own capacity through community of practice activities. The Project Director will fully participate in regular teleconferences, online engagement, and in-person gatherings with our Community Memory collaborators to share experiences and learn from each other from the process.

Project Work Plan

The Cultivating Community Garden Histories project will focus on the preservation and contextualization of community garden documents and records through scanning/digitization and audio capture of associated descriptions and stories from gardeners. We will also provide a place and tools for community gardeners to archive and preserve the web presence of their gardens going forward.

A. Preparation for the Project

Project staff will purchase equipment for preservation scanning. The scope of this project prescribes a need for additional equipment not already in place (see attached Equipment List). A Cultivating Community Garden Histories on the Web account be created on the Webrecorder hosted site. Project staff will develop preliminary teaching materials and forms to support the workshop sessions and hands-on trainings.

The Project Director will advertise, interview, and hire the temporary, part-time Project Coordinator and have them ready to start at the two months into the grant period. The project coordinator will be hired for 14 months. Because of the complexity of the skill set needed for the project, PHS will arrange for the Project Coordinator to attend live and web trainings on Digital Project Management (LYRASIS Continuing Education Series) and Web Archiving (Society of American Archivists Continuing Education Courses).

An Advisory Committee to include project staff, core community gardeners, and representatives from the Neighborhood Garden Trust will work with the project team to help promote and explain the project activities to members of the community garden network; to help find gardeners who want to take part in audio and digital production; to help source community garden documentation suitable for scanning; and identify individual administrators responsible for their community garden website and social media activities. A group of four community gardeners advisors will be recruited to form a core group that can continue to assist gardeners in web archiving and digitization after project completion. They will attend one of two train-the-trainer workshops and will be compensated for their time to ensure equity for those that may be of limited means.

With input from the Advisory Committee, introduction of the project to the wider gardening community and calls to participate in the program will be via the garden communication network tools already in place — through community garden network email blasts, website and social media site messaging, through PHS's print communication channels and staff attendance and project presentations at PHS and onsite community garden meetings and work days.

B. Workflow

Digitization and contextualization of core documents and records: In partnership with community garden collaborators, project staff will schedule onsite scanning days and mobile community garden site visits by staff and volunteers. The Preservation through Digitization Curriculum will include an introduction to the concept and process of preserving community garden history through digitization, guidance on participants' selection of core documents and photographs for scanning, instruction on the use of digital and audio equipment and present strategies for file storage, dissemination and access to community gardens cultural heritage materials going forward. Workshop activities will include hands-on scanning of selected documents and image materials and the creation of raw contextual audio files addressing the materials in the individual collections and garden recollections/stories the materials represent.

If copies of the digitized image and audio files created by session participants are conveyed as a gift to the PHS Library, additional tasks for volunteers and staff would include the creation of descriptive metadata to accompany digital files to be contributed to the POWER Library's PA Photos and Documents and the Smithsonian Community of Gardens repositories. In addition, PHS staff will create collection-level records with links via OCLC Connexion to contribute to WorldCat.org and the PHS Library Online Catalog.

Web Archiving: Onsite classes will include an introduction to web archiving and provide the tools and training to volunteer community garden website and social media administrators to contribute and manage their own collections via the webrecorder.io web archiving service. The Web Archiving Curriculum will include an introduction to the concept and process of web archiving, guidance on the selection of core candidates for harvesting, establishing collection space for individual community gardens, hands-on instruction on using Webrecorder, and present strategies for dissemination and access to their web collections going forward.

PHS is committed to the future maintenance of this collection beyond the project duration through periodic download of off-line WARC files to be stored on the Library server. PHS staff will be responsible for the creation of collection-level records describing the collections and their links to WorldCat and the PHS Library Catalog.

C. Progress Measurement and Evaluation.

Progress evaluations will take place at least monthly during the grant period, and more often if so determined by the Project Director.

Project Outcomes

We anticipate a number of specific outcomes and deliverables from this process of community garden history-keeping and awareness-raising. The most significant deliverable will be a series of Philadelphia community garden histories documented, preserved, and shared widely for the first time online. Community gardeners will also have the capacity – the training, tools, and ongoing support - to continue documenting their own garden histories and archiving their online presence going forward. By incorporating a train-the-trainer approach, we will create new group of citizen archivists and historians that can help others in Philadelphia document and share their community stories.

We also anticipate a broader understanding of community gardens as places of important community history and with stories worth preserving and sharing widely. Furthermore, we anticipate

that participating gardens will strengthen their intra-garden and inter-garden relationships with important co-benefits of increased organizational capacity. Participating gardens that are not permanently preserved will begin a web-archived record of their presence that could be used in the future to advocate for permanent preservation.

We plan to hold 9 history-gathering workshops (6 digitization and 3 on web archiving). Our goal will be to amass at least 30 digital collections, and have at least 24 community garden websites web archived. Digital collections gifted to PHS will be uploaded to the Smithsonian's Community of Gardens website and all POWER Library PA Photo and Documents repository. We will aim for wide representation from Philadelphia community gardening groups. We also plan to hold two train-the-trainer workshops that will prepare a group of gardeners to continue informal support of history-gathering activities of gardeners in the future.

On one level, success will be gauged through level of awareness, participation, and amount and quality of materials preserved and made available to online repositories and sites. Another indicator of success will be the relationships strengthened among participating gardeners and with the McLean Library. Through our project, we believe the participants will strengthen bonds with one another, their gardens, and their wider communities.

Additionally, the McLean Library is committed to building solid relationships with members of the community gardening world so that they will think of us as a reliable source for gardening information as well as advisors to help them sort out archival, preservation and even web-based information challenges. We want them to visit the library in person or virtually. As part of a community of libraries and archives we can tap into both local and national expertise to address information needs. While gardens clubs, plant societies and master gardener groups are not target audiences for this project, we would like to adapt our model to for these groups in the future.

Our metrics will include using Islandora's report generator to count number of items uploaded to the system; we will track number of records added to WorldCat and our own catalog; we will track the number of attendees at our workshops; we will conduct evaluations to assess workshop satisfaction and learning outcomes and will adjust the curriculum accordingly. We will track the number of Philadelphia community gardens profiles added to the Smithsonian's Community of Gardens websites. We will track the number of community-of-practice presentations made and the amount and type of promotion generated on the project.

Project benefits will be sustained through a core group of trained community garden advisors who can continue advocate for the importance of community garden history keeping and support future gardeners with web archiving and digitization of materials. Access to document scanning will continue to be provided by the McLean Library. The library is committed to maintaining its contributed records on POWER Library PA Photos and Documents repository. We commit to maintaining a Webrecorder subscription in future years so that the web archiving can continue.

