

Forbes Library is requesting support from the IMLS Accelerating Practices for Small Libraries (APP) initiative to fund the MOVING MEMORIES LAB in the Community Memory category. This project, with its focus on building and preserving community memory, draws on our ongoing multimedia work in collecting local history and extends our institutional expertise into our community, providing patrons with the access and knowledge to preserve their own materials. Our goals for the project are:

1. Strengthen our institutional expertise in digital preservation and grow our ability to collect across media in order to deepen and extend our collection, correcting gaps and silences in the historical record.
2. Offer educational programming and equipment resources to our community to support public history, increase community knowledge and understanding of best practices, and facilitate access to and understanding of digitization equipment.
3. Document best practices, workflows, equipment specifications, and other necessary information as a resource to other small institutions or organizations wishing to use this model.
4. Collaborate with community partners to increase professional capacity and sustain ongoing local history projects beyond the scope and timeline of this grant.

Project Justification

In 2017, Forbes Library received funding from Community Webs, a two year IMLS funded program to provide education, training, cohort support, and web archiving software to capture historically valuable web materials documenting our local communities. Through this project, we gained important technical expertise and also opened up our collection to new streams of materials, expanding and deepening our relationships with a diverse range of community organizations. It also provided an opportunity to reflect on the significant lacunae in our local history collection and to use these gaps as inspiration for outreach and growth. These gaps included materials we as curatorial staff would have wanted to digitize for our collection but for which we lacked the capacity, as well as personal materials community members wanted to preserve themselves but lacked access to appropriate technology and support.

We understand these gaps in capacity and in our collection as calls to change, and we see ourselves as a small public library specifically responsible to respond to this call, given our institutional values and strategic plan. Inspired by the work of both the Washington, DC Public Library's Memory Lab and the Queens Library Memory Project, MOVING MEMORIES LAB draws on the models established by these two library systems and innovates their models for our specific community needs and resources. From our ongoing work collecting and digitizing oral histories, ephemera, and archival footage in the Bay State Hotel Music History Archive, we bring existing staff expertise in creating and preserving digital materials. Our work on this project, as well as previous planning sessions with the Northampton Senior Center, surfaced the need not

just for the library to expand its ability to digitize and preserve different formats but the specifically expressed wish of our partner community organizations -- the [Northampton Senior Center](#), [Historic Northampton](#), and the [Center for New Americans](#) -- and individual community members to gain access and knowledge related to digitization. It is in direct response to and in service of these community needs that we have developed the MOVING MEMORIES LAB.

Forbes Library is located in Northampton, Massachusetts, a small city of just under 30,000 people in the heart of the beautiful Connecticut River Valley. The library has a collection of 285,479 items, and 15,376 active borrowers. In 2018, we had 221,917 visitors to the library and offered 1,329 programs with a combined attendance of 17,714 people. Our Richardsonian Romanesque building opened in 1894 and is on the National Register of Historic Places. It includes an inviting children's area, exemplary arts and music collections, a strong reference department, an art gallery, extensive local history and genealogy materials for Hampshire County, and the Calvin Coolidge Presidential Library and Museum. The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners has identified Forbes Library as a magnet library, meaning we not serve only our immediate community but also provide additional programs and resources for many neighboring communities with smaller libraries.

MOVING MEMORIES LAB reflects Forbes Library's commitment not only to the goals of our [strategic plan](#) (FY 2019-2023), but also to all three of the IMLS agency-level goals. Our strategic plan prioritizes connecting past, present, and future through local history programming, and MOVING MEMORIES LAB has the creation and preservation of local historic documents at its core. MOVING MEMORIES LAB also aligns with our strategic goal of access and innovation by expanding not only the resources and equipment we circulate but the supportive programming and instruction we provide to our patrons. Our proposed model has collaboration and community-centered needs as guiding paradigms with increased public access to technology and expertise, capacity building for both Forbes Library and our partner organizations, and programming that embodies lifelong learning for a diverse range of served audiences as pillars of this project. Our project, informed by the earlier work of DCPL and Queens Public Library, would make us the only public library using the [memory lab model](#) in New England.

Project Workplan

To achieve the goals of MOVING MEMORIES LAB, Forbes Library has planned the following activities, listed in sequence below.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK (September 2019-March 2020): In this initial phase of the project, we will continue to conduct interviews with stakeholders in order to tailor our equipment and programming, particularly focusing on local partners with expertise--[Northampton Community Television](#) (NCTV)--and those we plan to host programming with later in the grant timeline --

Center for New Americans, Northampton Senior Center, Historic Northampton, and [the Public History Program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst](#). As we select our equipment, we will prioritize accessibility, ease of use, performance, and durability. We will purchase and train staff on digitization equipment for recording oral histories and preserving multiple formats, including photographs, VHS tapes, and cassette tapes; additionally, we will map out the process, including instruction and release forms, for public use of MOVING MEMORIES LAB equipment. In collaboration with NCTV, we will build and develop policies for a mini-collection of audio-visual equipment that circulates to patrons, enabling them to create and record their own material. By offering equipment for public use beyond the walls of NCTV, we extend their reach to community members who might otherwise never visit their building to use their resources.

A second mini-collection of circulating equipment will also live at NCTV. During this planning period, we will also develop our workflows for digitization and cataloging of materials to be added to our collection. We will also fund Oral History Boot Camp, a training run by the Public History program at UMass Amherst, for representatives from our staff as well as our partner organizations. We will hire a metadata consultant to establish standards for making new digital materials accessible and to help us plan for community-based asset description programming later in the grant period. Finally, we will apply for the services of the Roving Archivist, a program of the Massachusetts State Historical Records Advisory Board, to provide oversight to this process.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING (April 2020-September 2021): With our equipment and workflows established, we will support at least 6 training sessions led by NCTV on the MOVING MEMORIES LAB equipment, including a training at each of our community partner organizations as well as trainings onsite at the library. Offsite trainings will be accompanied by a short-term residency of the lab equipment itself, and will include training materials for staff at host organizations. We will evaluate and improve these trainings using pre-and post-training surveys and feedback forms as well as interviews with partner organizations. We will also support our own collection of circulating equipment using our existing technology appointments to provide instruction to patrons.

PUBLIC PROGRAMMING (June 2020-September 2021): Accompanying the roll-out of both permanent publicly-accessible and circulating equipment at Forbes Library and the offsite equipment residencies, we will also offer public programming on topics such as caring for your digital memories and files, conducting and recording oral history interviews, planning and prioritizing family archives, and a roundtable discussion on archiving and preserving the history of marginalized communities. Our monthly “Cookies with a Curator” event has often touched on preservation topics and regularly uses primary source materials to explore local history topics; we will extend this series by inviting patrons to bring and digitize their own materials

around a monthly theme, such as “Main Street Memories” in conjunction with Historic Northampton’s “Making It on Main Street” exhibit. In addition, we will host an edit-a-thon to engage our patrons in cataloging existing local history digital assets using community taxonomy. We will expand our teen podcasting program and preserve materials for the library's archive, ensuring new perspectives in the library's collection.

EXTENDING AND SUSTAINING THE PROJECT (June 2021--onward):

In the final months of the funding period, we will reflect on how we can use our increased capacity and strengthened community relationships to support additional work in recording and archiving local history. This process will include examining and summarizing all of our program assessments, identifying areas to change or improve our procedures, calling out gaps in our local history collection and calling out ways to correct these lacunae, and looking towards future community history projects documenting topics such as the Northampton Pride Parade, local agriculture, the sanctuary movement, and local music history beyond the scope of our ongoing Bay State Hotel Music History Archive. During this final period we will also draft reflection documents on the project overall as well as complete the documentation of the project on the library’s website.

Project Outcomes

Our proposed project, which would develop a public-facing digitization lab that both exists within the library and travels to community organizations, would in fact address all three IMLS Agency-Level Goals. We have broken down our self-identified project outcomes below, noting which agency-level goals each targets and how we will identify and determine success for each, using the [SMART goals](#) framework.

- *Strengthen our institutional expertise in digital preservation and grow our ability to collect across media in order to deepen and extend our collection, correcting gaps and silences in the historical record.*

This outcome falls under **Build Capacity Access** in its focus on enriching our library staff’s technical expertise and capability by improving available equipment, undergoing trainings around this equipment, and contracting the expertise of a metadata consultant, the Roving Archivist, and community partners. This expands our ability to curate a robust and complex local history collection that reflects the diversity of our community as well as positioning Forbes Library to better collaborate with partner organizations in public programming. We will collect data on this outcome by surveying staff about training, tracking the number of on- and off-site training attendees and lab users, and tallying the number, type, and size of new digital additions to our local history collection.

SMART goal: By March 2020, we will implement procedures and trainings to support the roll-out of newly purchased digitization equipment for the MOVING MEMORIES LAB, including

procedures for circulating equipment as well as metadata standards for adding new digital materials to our collection.

- *Offer educational programming and equipment resources to our community to support public history, increase community knowledge and understanding of best practices, and facilitate access to and understanding of digitization equipment.*

Explicitly turned outward, this outcome address **Increase Public Access** with its emphasis on building community expertise and awareness of library resources, building connections through better documented local histories, and extending the range of local organizations and the delivery models piloted by other public library systems. Our collaboration with NCTV and the Northampton Senior Center includes technical support for a program where high school students train elders on the use of digitization equipment. This cross-generational model also touches on the agency-level goal, **Promote Lifelong Learning**. We will collect data on the number of program attendees for public trainings, collect feedback surveys from MOBILE MEMORY LAB users, and conduct interviews with our community partners in order to track this goal.

SMART goal: Between June 2020 and September 2021, we will support 6 trainings on the use of digitization equipment, including one training at each of our partner organizations. These trainings will expand public knowledge of available equipment and allow the library to connect to new local history materials.

- *Document best practices, workflows, equipment specifications, and other necessary information as a resource to other small institutions or organizations wishing to use this model.*

In this third project outcome, we hope to make transparent and useful the knowledge we've acquired through the funding period, working towards the **Build Capacity** goal for not just our institutions but other libraries, historical societies, and organizations as well. We will present our work at one regional and one national conference as well as build out Forbes Library's website to include documentation of our equipment, forms, and procedures. In the final period of the grant, as we look towards the time beyond the funding period, we will create a document providing assessment and reflections of the project as well.

- *Collaborate with community partners to increase professional capacity and sustain ongoing local history projects beyond the scope and timeline of this grant.*

Our partnerships with community organizations are directly informed by our desire to push library programming beyond the typical library patron and reach new audiences where they are, a cornerstone of the agency-level goal of **Promote Lifelong Learning**. When we consider our list of future oral history projects, which would document the stories of local queer activists, undocumented immigrants, musicians, and farming families, we see the library striving

to go beneath the surface of our community's intricate and rich local history--aligning with the goal, **Increase Public Access**. Also, by involving our community directly in recording their own histories, including community organizations in collection development, and empowering people to tell their own stories, we can broaden, diversify, and complicate the subjects and perspectives in our local history collection. We will track this outcome by using the final, reflective period of the grant timeline to interview partners for these projects and survey interest in participating.

SMART goal: By September 2021, we will survey and interview each of our community partners seeking feedback on the two-year project. We will compile the results into a report that we will share with our partners at the end of the grant period.

Schedule of Completion

