

***Community Webs: Empowering Public Librarians to Create Community History Web Archives***

**Abstract:** Internet Archive, in collaboration with multiple public libraries, requests \$324,550 (with \$207,760 cost share) for a two-year project to provide continuing education, training, and services to enable 15 public librarians at 15 different libraries to build collections of historically-valuable, web-published materials documenting their local communities. Based on a cohort model and including in-person and virtual trainings, applied education, iteratively-developed open educational resources, and technology for creating extensive born-digital web archives, the project will empower public libraries to serve as leaders in archiving and providing access to the web-based records chronicling the lives and accomplishments of their patrons.

**National Need:** Many public libraries have active local history collections and have traditionally collected print materials that document their region. The ascension of the web as the primary publishing platform, however, has led to this material now being published exclusively on the web. Yet due to the technical challenges of archiving the web, the lack of training and educational opportunities, and the lack of an active community of public library-based practitioners, very few public libraries are building web archives. Public libraries account for only 6 of the 450+ institutions that have used the widely-adopted Archive-It web archiving service of the Internet Archive. The 2013 and 2015 NDSA *Survey of Web Archiving in the United States* show similar numbers, with public libraries representing only 2% of the national community. Overall, there is a national need for localized special collections focused on web-based community materials stewarded by public libraries. A concurrent need exists for educational materials supporting this activity.

**Solution and Relevance to Funding Priorities:** Public libraries are ideally situated to expand their role as community anchors by developing a network of professionals trained in building local web collections and integrating these collections into public programming and patron services. The *Community Webs* project will provide the education, training, professional networking, and technical services to enable public libraries to fulfill this vital role. The project addresses key IMLS funding priorities and program goals. By giving under-resourced public libraries the technology and education to archive local web resources, it supports to the “exemplary stewardship” of collections, especially in regards to the born-digital, online cultural heritage of communities. Through iterative, applied training, cohort building, and open educational resources, the project provides librarians continuing education in the key skills of digital curation, local digital collection building, and web archiving. Lastly, by situating project activities in public libraries and including training and support for local public programming, the project promotes civic engagement in local history projects and advances the central role of public libraries in community historical preservation.

**Project Work Plan:** The two-year project will organize its work in six four-month phases. **Phase one:** The project will recruit and select a cohort of fifteen diverse public librarians, including a number of “community leads” with some experience in web archiving for local history collecting. Simultaneously, the project team will develop course outlines, materials, and collaborative workspaces for training. A kickoff, immersive training will be held for all participants. **Phase two:** An ongoing training period, consisting of multiple one-hour, virtual sessions, will provide an introduction to the field of web archiving, local history documentation, primary sources, patron engagement, and digital curation skills. During the training series, participants will commence local collecting activities in their communities. **Phase three:** Participants will build their community programs, involving patrons and other stakeholders in the selection of materials. Congregating at regional and national meetings will provide additional opportunities for cohort building, collaboration, and professional development. **Phase four:** With experience from program activities, an all-day, in-person forum will allow participants to report back on success, challenges, and new ideas. Feedback from participants will then inform further activities and help refine education materials and local activities in response to lessons learned. **Phase five:** As participant collection and activities grow, the online course spaces become a community of practice allowing knowledge sharing, networking, and mutual guidance and support.

Continuing cohort meetings and conference participation will market participant work to the professional community. **Phase six:** Participants will present case studies and presentations at national conferences on how they incorporated web archiving into local history preservation and create additional deliverables via blogs or articles. All materials and program documents will be published as Open Educational Resources online and promoted as a resource for the larger library and archives community.

**Goals & Outcomes: Goal #1:** Train and enable public librarians in the preservation of born-digital, web-published records and facilitate collaborative education, knowledge sharing and new partnerships. **Activities:** Create training and educational resources and an online course space to interact with instructors, experts, and colleagues. All participants receive three-year accounts with the Archive-It web archiving service, which includes archiving, public collection portals, and storage and access in perpetuity. **Outcome:** Over 15 terabytes of web-published community history materials will be archived and publicly accessible. Multiple presentations will be given at national and/or regional conferences. **Goal #2:** Bring traditional collecting activities of local history collections in-line with born-digital web publishing. **Activities:** Librarians will create web archives and involve local stockholders in collecting and preserving historically significant online community materials. **Outcome:** A cohort of librarians has tested skills in building and stewarding digital collections with their communities and integrating them into existing programs. **Goal #3:** Expand national capacity and educational resources for web archiving in public libraries. **Activity:** Build a cohort network of professionals and develop Open Educational Resources informed by project and participant activities. **Outcome:** Freely available online training materials to support digital stewardship within public libraries.

**Impact, Sustainability, and Diversity:** The project will have an immediate impact by seeding a professional network to advance education and community practice in an emerging area of digital curation that can scale nationally. It will also triple the number of public libraries building collections of web-based local history, archive over 15 terabytes of content for long-term access, and explore new areas of patron engagement in digital community memory collecting and use. The project will create open-access resources on a key area of librarianship where none currently exist. Priority will be given to the inclusion of regionally-diverse applicant libraries that serve minority and marginalized communities.

**Project Partners:** *Internet Archive* will lead project management, provide all technical resources, coordinate and contribute to training and OER development, and organize project meetings. Communication has taken place with multiple potential partners (such as WebJunction and Educopia) for subcontract work on open educational resources development, training, and outreach and promotion. **Participating Libraries:** Fifteen public libraries would participate in the program. Preliminary discussions with several (such as Queens Public Library) have identified “community leads” with web archiving and local history programs that can offer mentorship for the other participant libraries, which will be selected from a public application process.

| <b>Budget:</b>   | Requested        | Cost Shared      | Project Total    |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Salaries & Fringe                                      | \$53,550         | \$47,760         | \$101,310        |
| Archiving, Preservation, and Access Services           | \$66,000         | \$150,000        | \$216,000        |
| Subawards: Curriculum, OERs, Workshop assistance, etc. | \$85,000         | \$10,000         | \$95,000         |
| Learner Support: Travel, Meetings, Events, Development | \$120,000        | n/a              | \$120,00         |
| <b>Totals</b>  | <b>\$324,550</b> | <b>\$207,760</b> | <b>\$532,310</b> |