

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

Random Lake, Wisconsin and its surrounding area enjoy a rich history that could be seen to reflect that of rural areas across the country. In 1872, railroad access inspired the formation of a tiny village on the shore of a small inland lake about 10 miles west of the Lake Michigan shore. It grew to vibrancy through the mid- to late-twentieth century as a social and business hub for surrounding dairy farms. Today, the impact of the demise of the family dairy farm over the last decade threatens to disable the area's livelihood. Despite commendable effort on the part of active community organizations, individual and shared heritage is also at risk of demise due to rapidly changing economic conditions and demographics.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported earlier this year that "Wisconsin has lost more than half of its dairy farms over the last 20 years, many of them multigeneration, family operations. Whipsawed by low and unstable milk prices, farmers have increasingly called it quits; nearly two farms a day closed in 2018 and more than 300 folded from Jan. 1 through May 1 of this year."¹ As family farms, homesteads and agricultural businesses shut down and family farmers and their children move on to new endeavors and new locations, their individual and family histories are buried, both literally and figuratively, in the stressful change of lifestyle and vocation. Even oral history is lost when young adults move away and family members who were the "old-timers" pass on without their stories being documented and preserved. Family *and* community shared history suffers. It is vitally important that area families have access to the means to digitize personal and shared histories as well as enjoy community engagement that further encourages the exploration of shared heritage before it is too late.

The Random Lake community is in fact already activated around community history. The Random Lake Area Historical Society provides a local history museum and the long-standing community newspaper, The Sounder, is in process of digitizing its publication history slated for completion in 2020. In contrast, however, public library-based digitization services in the Random Lake area can presently only be accessed at a few select libraries that are at least 20- to 30-minutes away. This is an impediment to many, especially those older adults who may be motivated to capture individual and community heritage if only the technology and training to use it were accessible at a trusted local community resource.

First opened in 1957, Lakeview is a small rural-serving public library². As a joint municipal library, Lakeview is funded by four area municipalities: the Village of Random Lake where it is physically located (population 1,573), the Village of Adell (population 511), the Town of Scott (population 3,545) and the Town of Sherman (population 1,520). (See attachment Map of Service Area.) In 2018, Lakeview's total service population was 5,884. In total, patrons from 42 different municipalities in 6 adjacent counties (Sheboygan, Ozaukee, Washington, Fond Du Lac, Milwaukee, and Walworth) used Lakeview services. Combined municipal appropriation was \$147,383. The appropriation from Sheboygan County, Lakeview's home County, was \$10,875 with payments from other Wisconsin counties coming in at \$47,041.

Today, Lakeview has over 32,000 items in print, over 3,700 video materials, and nearly 2,000 audio materials. There are 9 public computers with internet access. In 2018, Lakeview had over

31,000 visitors at the Library and 4,124 people attended 344 library programs. The Library Director holds an ALA-accredited Master's in Library and Information Science. The library staffs 3.5 FTE with the Director as the sole full-time employee. Lakeview is a member of Monarch Library System, a four-county system of over 32 libraries.

In 1996, Lakeview moved into the historic Random Lake Auditorium, an impressive historic building on the shores of Random Lake. Constructed in 1921, the Auditorium served for years as a vibrant hub of activity and civic engagement for the surrounding area, hosting town hall meetings, farm shows, basketball games, weddings and dances. The building was rehabbed with funding from a Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) grant along with community fundraising. In 2021, the Random Lake Auditorium building that now houses the library will be 100 years old, providing a timely and meaningful local historical focus for the proposed Project.

In September of 2018, following a comprehensive community survey, the Lakeview Board of Trustees adopted a 2019-2023 Strategic Plan. Two of the four strategic components of the Strategic Plan are relevant to this Project – *Revolutionizing Technology* with a goal of creating a library-based local history and ancestry hub and *Community First*, a set of objectives aimed at promoting library resources, hosting community engagement activities, and engaging with local schools. Aligned with the Lakeview Strategic Plan and the goals of the IMLS Accelerating Promising Practices for Small Libraries funding opportunity, ***Random Memories: Empowering Individual and Community Memory in Random Lake, Wisconsin (Random Memories)*** is proposed as a *Community Memory* Project to implement digitization services alongside a rich and dynamic set of community engagement activities. Community partners engaged in ***Random Memories*** include the Friends of Lakeview Community Library, the Random Lake Area Historical Society, Random Lake High School, The Sounder (community newspaper), the Sheboygan Historical Society and the Monarch Library System. Members and staff of each of these organizations have informed the planning of this Project.

Random Memories addresses the IMLS strategic goal *Build Capacity* through its goal of strengthening technological and programming capacity of Lakeview to meet the needs and improve the well-being of the rural communities it serves. Each objective of *Build Capacity* will be addressed by ***Random Memories***; however, the objective most directly aligned with the proposed Project is that of serving as a trusted space for community engagement and dialogue. Populations served by ***Random Memories*** will be across all municipalities and geographies served by Lakeview, and will include the general population, adolescents/high school, adults, aging/elderly/senior, and families/intergenerational. These populations include low income/economically disadvantaged and are mostly rural living. Due to its unique blend of technology and community engagement, the Project will also be of interest to library professionals and scholars/researchers.

The development of ***Random Memories*** has been informed by the review of previously funded IMLS Projects such as the Maine Memory Network³. Significantly, ***Random Memories*** Project partner *Recollection Wisconsin* is also IMLS funded⁴. Resources from the Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiative (FADGI) have been consulted in the planning of this Project.

Lakeview Project staff will be responsible for incorporating FADGI guidelines and learnings from relevant IMLS projects into digital production policies and workflows.

PROJECT WORK PLAN

The activities of *Random Memories* are organized in five phases taking place over the 24-month Project period: Phase I-Planning and Preparation; Phase II-Launch; Phase III-Empowering Individuals and Families; Phase IV-Community Engagement; and Phase V-Sustainability. Several critical activities will take place throughout the Project. A *Random Memories* Partner's Council will be convened with representatives from all partners. This group will meet at least quarterly and ad hoc as needed. Community Input sessions will be held on a quarterly basis where the public will be invited to hear Project updates and provide input and ideas for future programming. Community input will also be sought informally throughout the life of the Project via participant feedback during each Project session. Attendance and service utilization data will be tracked throughout the Project. Throughout the Project, Library Director Jacqueline Rammer will be participating in IMLS mentorship and community of practice activities and assuring effective partnership with the IMLS designated third-party evaluator. All activities and milestones are detailed in the Schedule of Completion.

Phase I Planning and Preparation. The first four months of the Project will be focused on planning and preparation for the *Random Memories* Project. Critical activities of this Phase include ordering and installing digitization hardware and software, launching the Partner's Council, hiring and training one Project Intern and two high school student support staff, planning data collection and outcome measurement plans, partnering with IMLS mentors and third-party evaluators, and developing Project policies, workflows, forms and handbooks.

The addition of funded staff is essential to expanding services and adds a workforce development component to the Project. The college- or graduate-level intern will get vital experience in community program development in a small/rural library, working with patrons interested in digitization, overseeing volunteers, and more. The high school student positions will provide valuable exposure to library service and technology-oriented adult education as career options.

Phase II Launch. *Random Memories* will be launched following four months of Planning and Preparation at the end of 2020. Marketing of the Project Launch will begin in November and December of 2020. A public Launch event will be hosted in January of 2021. Also, in January 2021 the *Random Memories* Community Input sessions will launch.

Phase III Empowering Individuals and Families. The activities of this Phase focus on adding digitization training and services to library programs and maintaining them on an ongoing basis. Marketing and outreach for these services will begin in January of 2021 and will be ongoing. Digitization training will be held on a scheduled basis every week during the first two months, then monthly thereafter. All Lakeview staff will be trained to provide general assistance to any trained individual who comes in during library open hours to use the equipment. Lakeview Project Staff will be trained in more advanced support and will hold regularly scheduled Digitization Help hours for that purpose. Lakeview staff will collect utilization information from every individual prior to their use of the equipment. Digitization utilizers will be asked if any of their photos relate to community activities or historical events that affected the life of the

community. If so, they will be asked for permission to upload it to the *Random Memories* web page on the Recollection Wisconsin website, forthcoming.

Phase IV Engaging the Community. An extensive calendar of community engagement activities will provide numerous and various types of activities to engage on the topic of documenting and preserving individual and community history. These activities take place for the most part in 2021, the year the community will celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Random Lake Auditorium building (now Lakeview Community Library.) Throughout this Phase, marketing and outreach continues that announces all events. In addition, The Sounder (community newspaper) has offered to run additional in-depth articles about *Random Memories* activities and historical discoveries that are made by Project participants and Lakeview staff.

A. Workshops. A monthly Training Series will alternate between genealogy/ancestry research topics presented from outside speakers, and training on the Ancestry for Libraries subscription that the Friends of the Libraries has sponsored. A Local History Series will also be held every other month throughout the year, providing curated programs led by community volunteers who will share their personal knowledge and/or research on topics of local interest. Topics that have been identified through community input include historically significant industries (e.g., prominent farm enterprises; cheese factories; the local cannery; the grain co-op; and the ice-making industry on Random Lake); the role of the railroad in Random Lake's history; wartime experiences (e.g., the nearby World War II German POW camp whose occupants worked in local industries); the 1920's celebrity entertainer Hildegard who was born in nearby Adell; significant weather events and the several fires that ravaged the town over the years; and the role of the Random Lake Auditorium in hosting dances, weddings, farmer education, and served as the gymnasium for the high school. Two special sessions of Collecting Oral Histories (utilizing PreSonus AudioBox Recording Studio equipment borrowed from the Monarch Library System) will allow for the collection of oral histories to document and preserve individually experienced history and 'local flavor' in storytelling.

B. Outings and Outdoor Activities. To take history and research outside of the library and onto the streets of the broader community, outdoor activities will take place during Spring and Summer months of 2021. Three daytrips by bus will be scheduled to the Sheboygan County Historical Research Center in Sheboygan Falls, the Sheboygan County Historical Society and Museum in Sheboygan, and the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison. Additionally, the Random Lake Historical Society will host several outdoor events in the summer months of 2021, such as community historical walks and reenactments highlighting significant community events. The summer will end with a 100th Anniversary Celebration of the Random Lake Auditorium hosted by the Friends of the Library. No IMLS funding will be used for this celebratory event.

C. Discovery Series and Community Scan Day. Following the busy calendar of events and activities in 2021, the next year (2022) will first entail a curated series of 3-5 monthly programs that share discoveries that *Random Memories* participants made as they pursued their genealogical and local history, thus facilitating authentic shared heritage. In addition, a community-wide Scan Day will be held in March of 2022, in which the community is encouraged to bring up to ten items they've identified as meaningful to community history to the library for scanning and uploading to the Monarch Library System's *Recollection Wisconsin* website. The Scan Day will be done in collaboration with Monarch Library System and

ResCarta, Inc., a Wisconsin foundation dedicated to assisting Wisconsin libraries and museums with interoperable digital content production.

D. Capstone Event. Random Memories interactive capstone community engagement event will be held in May of 2022, at which a local celebrity historian (for example, author and speaker Jerry Apps or the host of Wisconsin’s award-winning Public Television show *Around the Corner*, John McGivern) will be invited to speak and to facilitate community sharing and discussion of the *Random Memories* experience, putting local experience into a broader context of regional and Wisconsin state history.

Phase V Sustainability. The Sustainability Phase of *Random Memories* will focus on building the basis for long-term maintenance of Project services and programming beyond IMLS funding. Throughout the Project, continuous improvement activities will monitor customer service and how efficiently the digitization services operate in order to adjust policies and workflow as needed. Project staff will continuously seek and respond to community input. Refresher training will be offered at least three times throughout the Project to assure that existing and new staff and volunteers have the knowledge and experience they need to serve Project participants well. Finally, throughout the Project Lakeview staff and Project Partners will research the availability of other funding for long-term sustainability of digitization services and community engagement activities, with the goal to secure other funding before IMLS funding is completed.

The following table identifies risks to the Project and plans for mitigation.

Risk	Mitigation Plans
Small staff at Lakeview is overwhelmed by Program management and/or staff-intensive service utilization	Utilize resources from Monarch, WiLS, and Program partners; visit other programs for ideas for workflow and scheduling of Program activities
Low public turn-out to Program activities	Increase PR; expand outreach area; seek marketing support from Program partners; seek additional community input into programming
Uptake of technology by patrons is difficult	Seek input from established programs; increase staff training; increase Project hours; seek additional community input into training needs and approach

PROJECT OUTCOMES

Random Memories is proposed as a Community Memory project with a goal of Building Capacity and a primary objective of serving as trusted space for the community to engage in lifelong learning that benefits the health and well-being of the community. The primary intended result of *Random Memories* is active engagement and utilization of the community in enhanced technology and programming capacity of Lakeview Community Library and its partners. Success is defined as speaker programs have at least fifteen participants; bus tours have less than five spaces open; at least 10 sessions of digitization utilization occur each month after Project Launch; at least 35 people participate in the Community Scan Day which results in at least 300 historical photographs detailing the rich history of Random Lake and the surrounding communities are uploaded to *Recollection Wisconsin*. *Random Memories* expects to gain

perspective and experience in measuring Project outcomes through participation with the IMLS community of practice and funded third-party evaluators.

A preliminary evaluation plan will be multi-pronged and consist of (a) tracking Project participation; (b) structured and unstructured observation of participant engagement at Project activities, and (c) pre- and post-surveys of Project participants⁵. Participation at each activity will be tracked through sign-in sheets coupled with staff observation to verify numbers present, as well as observations as to level of participant engagement, questions asked, discoveries shared, and Project feedback offered. Each activity will also include an Activity Evaluation form each participant will be asked to complete. Besides tracking basic Project participation and engagement, the Project will design a Pre- and Post-Survey for each enrolled Project participant with the goal of assessing several key factors at both the beginning and close of the Project. Factors to be assessed would include the following, as well as others that may be suggested through Lakeview's participation in the IMLS community of practice and third-party evaluation: engagement in local history and family heritage activities; access to public or private services in support of those activities; experience with digitization equipment as a tool to preserve family history; and prior experience with Lakeview as a trusted space for lifelong learning.

At their initial Program participation, individuals will be asked to complete the Pre-Survey and provide permission and preferred contact information so that they can be contacted for completion of a Post-Survey. The Post-Survey will inquire as to the activities in which the person participated and assess participant's perception of the impact on them personally and their family of both the digitization services and community engagement component of the Project, as well as perceptions on the impact of the Project on the community at large.

Random Memories is designed for sustainability beyond the IMLS funding period. The Lakeview Board of Trustees is committed to identifying the means to maintain Lakeview capacity as a local history hub. The Project's active inclusion of a strong set of community partners representing local, regional, state and federal engagement in the collection, documentation and preservation of local history further supports long-term sustainability.

Citations

1. Barrett R. Q&A: Whipsawed by low milk prices, more dairy farmers call it quits. Here's what you need to know. 2019; <https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/special-reports/dairy-crisis/2019/05/16/whipsawed-low-milk-prices-more-wiconsin-dairy-farmers-call-quits/3304074002/>. Accessed 11/24/2019.
2. Swan D, Grimes J, Owens T. The State of Small and Rural Libraries in the United States. In: Institute of Museum and Library Services, ed. Washington, DC. 2013.
3. Empowering Individual History Makers: The Story of Maine Memory Network and My Maine Stories. 2019; <https://www.imls.gov/grant-spotlights/empowering-individual-history-makers-story-maine-memory-network-and-my-maine>. Accessed 11/29/2019.
4. Recollection Wisconsin - Overview. 2019; <https://recollectionwisconsin.org/about/overview>. Accessed 11/30/2019.
5. IMLS Evaluation Resources. 2019; <https://www.imls.gov/research-evaluation/evaluation-resources>. Accessed 11/30/2019.

Phases, Activities and Milestones	Lead Role	2020				2021								2022												
		9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
I Random Memories Planning and Preparation																										
Connect with IMLS mentors, participate in IMLS community of practice, and partner with 3rd party evaluation	LD																									
Announce receipt of IMLS grant	LD																									
Order hardware and software	LD																									
Site visits to libraries in region that offer digitization services	LD																									
Develop policies, workflow, consent forms, introductory handbook, and evaluation forms and surveys	LD																									
Plan Project marketing and outreach campaign	LD																									
Launch <i>Random Memories Partner's Council</i>	LD, RMPP																									
Hire one part-time <i>Random Memories</i> Project Intern (college-level undergraduate or graduate student)	LD																									
Hire two part-time <i>Random Memories</i> Project Support staff (high school students)	LD, RLHS																									
Seek Library Board input and approval for Project policies	LD																									
Prepare space for new equipment and program activities	LD, LAS																									
Install hardware and software upon receipt	LD, LPS																									
Create <i>Random Memories</i> web page on Lakeview website	LD, LPS																									
Train Project Staff, and subsequently all Library staff and volunteers in use of equipment	LD, LPS																									
Plan and implement Project-related library acquisitions and subscriptions	LD, LPS																									
Milestone I: Random Memories Planning and Preparation Completed																										
II Launch																										
Launch marketing and outreach campaign	LD, TS																									
Host public launch event	RMPP																									
Convene <i>Random Memories Community Input</i> sessions	RMPP																									
Milestone II: Random Memories Launched																										
III Empowering Individuals and Families																										
Ongoing marketing and outreach re. availability of library-based digitization services	LD, TS																									
Host regularly scheduled educational sessions on how to use the technology (weekly at first, then monthly)	LPS																									
Support Lakeview patrons who use digitization services during library open hours	LAS																									
Support Lakeview patrons who access dedicated support during advertised help hours	LPS																									
Milestone III-A: End of Y2 Empowering Individuals																										
Milestone III-B: End of Y3 Empowering Individuals																										
IV Engaging the Community																										
Ongoing marketing of all events including in-depth articles in local paper on local history/local impact/local discoveries	LD, TS																									
Training Series 1: Genealogy/ancestry research topics (outside speakers to be determined)	LPS, RLHis																									
Training Series 2: <i>Ancestry for Libraries</i> training	LPS																									
Local History Series: Curated programs led by volunteer local topic enthusiasts	LPS, RLHis																									
Collecting Oral Histories, a la SoundCorps, using Recording Studio Equipment from Monarch Library System	LPS, MLS																									
<i>Recollection Wisconsin</i> seminar (outside speaker) co-hosted by Monarch Library System	LPS, MLS																									
Milestone IV-A: Community Educational Programming Complete																										
Outing: Sheboygan County Historical Research Center (Sheboygan Falls)	LPS																									
Outing: Wisconsin Historical Society (Madison)	LPS																									
Random Lake Historical Society outdoor events	RLHis																									
Milestone IV-B: Community Outings and Outdoor Activities Complete																										

LAKEVIEW COMMUNITY LIBRARY
 LD - Lakeview Director
 LPS - Lakeview Project Staff
 LAS - Lakeview All Staff

PARTNERS:
 FOL - Friends of the Library
 RLHis - Random Lake Historical Society
 RLHS - Random Lake High School
 TS - The Sounder (community paper)
 RMPP - Random Memories Project Partners

