

***Counted In: National Forum on Hard to Reach Communities, Libraries and the 2020 Census***

**INTRODUCTION:** We are proposing the *Counted In: National Forum on Hard to Reach Communities, Libraries and the 2020 Census*, a one-year, corporate approach to developing material and training for promoting participation in the 2020 census. The aim is to inform traditionally hard to reach communities about library services. The 2020 United States Census marks the 24th national census. Yet, this iteration will be vastly different. The primarily electronic census response collection will change participation dynamics. Thus, underrepresented groups such as immigrants, the elderly, those who are economically underprivileged and persons with disabilities are at higher risk of exclusion. Some experts are concerned about potential undercounts resulting from various social and technological hindrances (Strane & Griffis, 2018; Mervis, 2018; O’Hare, 2018). A fair and accurate census count is essential for resource distribution and political representation.

**BACKGROUND:** Libraries have a long tradition of helping underserved groups such as immigrants, people of color, persons with disabilities, the underprivileged and the elderly (Jaeger, Gorham, Taylor & Kettlich, 2017; Ndumu, 2018). Particularly when it comes to e-government services, libraries are pivotal for meeting public demand for access (Baker & Clark, 2018). Digital inequality threatens response to the census. Consider the following 2017 Internet penetration rates among marginalized groups: the elderly—67%; immigrants—78%; racial and ethnic minorities—75%; households below the poverty level—81%; persons with disabilities—61%. (Anderson & Perrin, 2017; Pew Research Center, 2018). Along with responding to an anticipated increased demand on their library’s technological infrastructure and workforce, library leaders will have to promote their libraries as means for census participation. A streamlined marketing effort would be beneficial.

Dedicated attention to fair participation in the national census is important to our national welfare. By facilitating a national dialogue on the 2020 census, we hope to expand professional development and provide promotional tools for libraries. Entities such as the American Library Association’s 2020 Census Outreach and Education Task Force, the Census Bureau’s Complete Count Committees, the Council for a Strong America and others are working diligently to ensure that the entire U.S. population is counted. However, there is a need for a collective, national conversation where experts, advocates and professionals can partake in a guided discussion and contribute to the designing of library-specific marketing material. Our intent is to add to existing resources.

The iSchool at the University of Maryland is well-suited to host a national forum. Not only does the university sponsor two population research centers, but it is also proximal to relevant think tanks, D.C.-based advocacy groups and the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The project co-PIs are Ana Ndumu, a postdoctoral researcher who examines libraries in the Information Age, population studies, and social inclusion, as well as Paul Jaeger, iSchool Professor, director of the MLIS program, and co-director of the Information Policy and Access Center (iPAC) who brings to this project extensive experience in LIS, policy, and diversity and inclusion.

**GOAL:** The overarching goal of this strategic, collaborative initiative is to bring together up to 30 experts who can distill approaches to garnering census participation among communities that have historically been hard to count. Through both dialogue and a workshop, participants will contribute toward generating

outreach material. The dialogue portion of the forum will be streamed online for public viewing. Subsequently, forum participants present their insight for marketing conceptualization and techniques. A key mission is to create paraphernalia that represents and appeals to members from a wide range of backgrounds, languages, abilities, and ages. With the help of marketing consultants, the project directors will then oversee the creation of a repository of free, downloadable and customizable resources for libraries. The repository will also provide access to important, existing resources made possible by stakeholders. The project directors will later provide face-to-face and virtual training to encourage material use and foster effective library outreach for 2020 census participation.

### OUTCOMES:

During the *Counted In: National Forum on Hard to Reach Communities, Libraries and the 2020 Census* participants will:

- Learn the unique role of population experts, advocacy groups, researchers, and library professionals
- Synthesize strategies for encouraging 2020 census participation among hard to count communities
- Contribute toward the development of library-specific marketing material and training

The *Counted In: National Forum on Hard to Reach Communities, Libraries and the 2020 Census* will result in the following deliverables:

- Library-tailored, customizable and free marketing material to promote census participation
- An online, open access repository that includes marketing material and cognate resources
- Face-to-face and virtual training for librarians

**BUDGET:** The estimated budget is \$99,436, which includes expenses for travel and accommodations for out-of-town participants as well as transportation for local participants (\$10,000), function expenses for the forum (\$14,000), marketing material design (\$6,000), travel for material dissemination and training (\$4,500), personnel (\$46,305, including a graduate assistant and marketing consultant), and indirect costs at the University of Maryland's negotiated on-campus rate of 39.5% (\$18,631).

**TIMELINE:** To guarantee rapid event planning/execution and, more importantly, knowledge dissemination, we present the following timeline:

JUN 2019	JUL 2019	AUG 2019	SEPT 2019	OCT 2019	NOV-DEC 2019	JAN 2020	FEB 2020	MAR 2020	APRIL 2020	MAY 2020	JUN 2020
Graduate Assistant hiring & orientation; Project management implementation	Participant/Speaker Recruitment; Venue/Travel Procurement	Event Development	Event Execution & Data Collection	Data Analysis & Marketing Consultation	Marketing Material Development	Material Dissemination (Social media promotion; State library association listservs)	Training & Promotion (Online webinar)	Training & Promotion (Twitter LiveChat; Public Library Association conference session)	Training & Promotion (Online webinar)	Training & Promotion (FaceBook Live Chat)	Training & Promotion (American Library Association session); Project Evaluation

**NATIONAL IMPACT & IMPLICATIONS FOR DIVERSITY:** This initiative is in keeping with IMLS's mission of transforming communities and improving individual well-being. It directly addresses social inclusion in that it seeks to ensure that disenfranchised groups are included in the democratic process. The uniqueness and urgency of the 2020 census calls for an interdisciplinary course of action. The *Counted In: National Forum on Hard to Count Communities, Libraries and the 2020 Census* will leverage the expertise of various thought leaders, professionals and interest groups in order to add an important marketing component to ongoing library efforts.