

Information Literacy Instruction for Library Professionals will be an online professional development course, co-developed by experts at Brooklyn Public Library (BPL) and Syracuse University's iSchool to train library staff to teach information literacy skills to the public. The course will retool and retrain library professionals to bolster their customer service, programming and instruction. Partners with BPL on this project are the iSchool and the New York Library Association (NYLA). BPL is seeking IMLS support from the Project funding category for this Lifelong Learning project. The two-year budget is \$253,181 of which BPL is requesting \$183,313 from IMLS.

**Statement of Broad Need:** Information literacy is defined as “the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning” (ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education 2015).<sup>1</sup> Now more than ever, public library professionals must keep their information literacy skills fresh in order to teach our patrons how to combat misinformation and navigate the information landscape to find reliable resources and tools. As a trusted community resource, public libraries play a critical role in guiding people to the information they need to navigate life in the 21st century.

The course content and methodologies are based on Teacher Lab, an award-winning course for K-12 educators created by BPL's Amy Mikel which ran for four summers and then adapted into an online, self-paced course with the support of an IMLS Sparks grant (#SP-02-16-0028-16). Since its launch in July 2017, more than 2,000 educators from 25 states and Canada have enrolled, 300 completed the course, 95% of graduates reported increased ability to teach information literacy and research skills. The project earned Ms. Mikel Library Journal's 2018 “Movers and Shakers” recognition as well as a 2018 Urban Libraries Council Innovator in Adult Educator award. The success of Teacher Lab led BPL to identify a need for an information literacy course geared specifically to library staff.

During the two year project period, Information Literacy will be at the piloting and scaling level of maturity. In Year 1, BPL and the iSchool will adapt the Teacher Lab curriculum to the needs of library professionals and pilot the course with 200 BPL staff. In Year 2, the course will be open to library professionals across New York State with a graduation target of 500 people. The partners will continually assess the relevance and applicability of the course content and methodologies resulting in a professional development offering that can be brought to scale nationally.

**Project Design:** Information Literacy will be an online self-paced course providing professional development for front-line library staff in the skills they need to effectively disseminate information literacy skills to the general public. This course will address three key competencies: the research process, information literacy, and instructional strategies and techniques. With Ms. Mikel as project lead, course content will be developed by BPL in partnership with faculty of the Syracuse University iSchool and with other experts in areas such as research, information behavior and instructional theory. Course topics include: review of research and inquiry fundamentals; database and information organization; tools for navigating the open web; introduction to archives, primary sources and digital collections; introductions to media, health and data literacy; and a variety of practical teaching and presentation strategies. The approximately 12 hours of coursework will be a mixture of video lectures, independent work, readings, and a final assignment. Lessons will be taught by subject matter experts and a course instructor supports students, answers questions, and grades coursework on a Pass/Fail basis. Independent work assigned throughout the course will reinforce skills and connect new knowledge to professional practice.

The course's self-paced online model has multiple benefits. It allows students (busy professionals) to move through the content as their schedules permit and the curriculum can cover more material in greater depth than is possible in face-to-face training. Most importantly, the course can be made available to an unlimited number of library staff.

In the first year, the online course will reside on the BPL's internal training system and be managed by a BPL instructor. In the second year, the course will be migrated to an external online learning management system and made available at no cost to library professionals across New York State. The course will be distributed through NYLA as one of its continuing education programs for library staff. This rollout will be supported by a full-time

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<sup>1</sup> [www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework](http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework)

program manager responsible for promoting the course to library systems statewide while also serving as course instructor. The project's partners, BPL, the iSchool, and NYLA, will develop the evaluation framework, measure progress of the project's goals and modify the course as necessary. The process will be repeated in Year 2. Following the grant period, the iSchool plans to absorb Information Literacy as a Continuing Education offering.

**Diversity Plan:** Diversity, equity and inclusion will be a core value of the Information Literacy course. Subject matter experts and guest lecturers invited to contribute material will represent a diverse range of experiences and viewpoints, and the curriculum will guide public service staff in culturally responsive information literacy and instructional strategies such as identifying confirmation bias; fundamentals of resource diversity audits; inclusive presentation and programming techniques; principles of universal design; and teaching to a range of learning styles. The values of information equity will be reinforced throughout the learning experience, training attendees to carry those values in practice to their respective communities throughout New York State.

**Impact:** The goals of the proposed project are to: 1) Train front-line library staff in information literacy competencies: the research process, information literacy, and instructional strategies and techniques; 2) Develop a comprehensive, practical course in information literacy that meets the needs of today's library professionals; 3) Increase library professionals' capability and confidence in providing information literacy guidance to patrons of all backgrounds, and 4) Encourage more frequent and higher quality direct service, programming, teaching, and outreach in libraries around information literacy. These goals directly align with IMLS goal of building capacity of libraries to improve the well-being of their communities. A confident information literacy professional is more likely to contact a school with an offer to teach a research lesson, reach out to community partners to create programming on themes of news, media or data literacy, or create new services designed to help patrons with their research challenges.

Outcomes: 1) Library staff gain knowledge and confidence in information literacy, and related instructional strategies and techniques; 2) A model information literacy course for library professionals is tested, refined, and ready to share nationally; 3) Library professionals are capable of assisting patrons with information queries and searches in a wide variety of topics; and 4) Library professionals offer programs, workshops, services, and outreach on the topic of information literacy.

BPL will develop a Course Manual that details the curriculum and learning activities; a Guidebook for library systems who'd like to assign an instructor in-house; and a Manager Handbook with guidelines for supporting staff throughout the learning process. A marketing campaign in Year 2 will publicize the course to libraries statewide and create messaging models that can be reused and adapted going forward. Evaluations conducted in Year 1 and Year 2 will yield insight into the course's effectiveness in increasing the knowledge and confidence levels of staff in the field. The partners will present at NYLA's annual conference and publish articles in major trade publications.

The rollout of the course statewide will provide a consistent level of training and knowledge for staff in New York libraries of all sizes and provide a significant professional development opportunity for smaller libraries with less resources. Staff who complete the course will receive a certificate of completion for 12 hours of professional learning credit, which may be applied to the [New York State Public Librarian Certificate](#) 60 hours requirement.

**Budget Summary:** The two-year project costs include: project coordinator/instructor, Year 2 (\$145,927 salary and benefits); contracted services: Syracuse iSchool (\$10,000), and subject matter experts (\$70,000); program expenses: closed captioning of videos (\$2,500); online learning management system, Year 2 (\$2,000); outreach in New York State, Year 2 (\$4,000); and Indirect costs (\$18,754). Total budget: is \$253,181 and the IMLS request: \$183,313.