

Activating Archives in Remote Communities: Training Rural LIS Professionals for Inclusive Memory Work

Represented by co-PIs Prof. Lindsay Mattock and Prof. Micah Bateman, the University of Iowa School of Library and Information Science (SLIS) seeks a Forum grant of \$149,996 from the IMLS Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program to investigate best practices for increasing the capacity of library workers in small and rural libraries to organize community-engaged archives sustainably and equitably. The grant from IMLS will fund a series of meetings with an expert advisory panel of library practitioners, archivists, and researchers who will inform the development of curricula and training materials accessible to working library professionals in rural information environments nationwide. Year One will include directed meetings with our advisory panel, who will formalize unanimous best practices into a publishable Delphi study. Year Two will include translating our research findings into Open Educational Resources (OER), distributing results, and positioning SLIS to initiate a lightweight online curriculum designed to network and support rural information professionals across the US. Our ultimate hope is to intensify rural community bonds using inclusive memory practices as activating agents of citizenship and belonging; and, further, to diversify and make accessible community memory records, leading to greater equity in the narratives of small and rural communities. The methods and outcomes cited above align with Objective 3.2 of the grant program.

Our project leverages partnerships with the UI Office of Community Engagement, the Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities, and the Iowa Small Library Association, and builds on past collaborations between our program and small and rural memory institutions such as Washington Public Library (IA), Kendall Young Library (Webster City, IA) and others. Rural libraries' distance from other memory institutions often positions these libraries to be the sole inheritors and stewards of community memory records, everything from genealogical documents to newspaper archives to oral histories. These collaborations have revealed a dire need for training that supports community memory practices to ensure the preservation of these collections. The planning period for this project was supported by a \$12,000 research grant from the University of Iowa's Obermann Center for Advanced Studies.

Project Justification

The Problem

In recent years, through collaborations with various UI community outreach programs, SLIS has enjoyed partnerships with small and rural libraries in Iowa and the surrounding Midwest. SLIS faculty have observed similar problems in each of these public institutions: untouched boxes of photographs, cabinets brimming with yellowing newspapers, whole basements of genealogical documents and burial records in storage. Stewarding these untouched collections are overworked library directors, rightly more concerned with immediate patron needs such as computer access. Being the only memory institutions within large radii, rural libraries especially become presumed repositories for community memory records, donated by well-meaning citizens cleaning out the family attic, or by the local organizations producing such documents, such as the community school district (yearbooks) or newspaper. Describing this phenomenon to librarians doesn't take many words; to them, it's self-evident. "I know exactly the problem you're talking about," a rural librarian from Vermont responded to us. But getting to the root of the problem is harder, and finding solutions is harder still.

For one, small and rural libraries are underfunded and understaffed. As mentioned, a lack of staff power prioritizes only urgent tasks. Often, for lack of nearby library schools or degreed candidates willing to move to remote locations for low pay, even library directors in remote communities have not received curricular training in library and information science, much less in archival methods. And local historical societies—frequently self-selecting, majority white, and retired—comprise the only available or engaged volunteers. These conditions conspire toward the outcomes described above, but with the added contingency that even when staff and

volunteers are equipped to organize local memory records such as the ones enumerated, the records themselves as well as the ways in which they are organized tend to bear out dominant narratives that do not reflect the whole community profile. But community memory records tell important stories that should include community denizens who have been historically excluded from such archives. As the historical roots of archival theory can be traced to governmental archives, the systems of power at play in institutional archives have explicitly excluded underrepresented groups such as Indigenous communities, communities of color, queer communities, and other marginalized identity-based groups (Cook, 2013; Kelland, 2018; Flinn, Stevens & Shepherd, 2009; Bettine & Mattock, 2019). Further, because of the learning curves of archival use, such records are largely accessible only to the classes of staff and volunteers who organized them (Yakel and Torres, 2003).

Compounding the logistical problems of rural libraries organizing local records is the larger cultural problem of community inclusion. The languishing of records in small and rural libraries and communities comes at the opportunity cost of community activation, resilience, and self-determination. Communities who come together to engage in their own collective memory practices, we argue, are stronger for it. Finally, capacitating small and rural communities to organize their own memory aligns with activist urges toward data sovereignty and community self-determination.

Review of Previous Work

Our project aims to mitigate both the logistical and cultural problems of organizing small or remote community archives, leading to sustainable practices that do not overburden library directors and that engage and tell the stories of fuller communities. In this, we build on a case study of the Park County Local History Archives (PCLHA) in Colorado, which partnered with the Park County Department of Heritage, Tourism, & Community Development and with the library and information science (LIS) program at the University of Denver to preserve “the Local History Archive and to explore the way digital technology can be integrated to promote the unique heritage of the region and to contribute to sustainability efforts” (Matusiak, Schierburg, & Bedard; 2019). We also draw from research by Jon Rieger (“Living Witnesses to Social Change and Family Documents as Community Archive: Reconstructing Social Change in a Small Rural Community,” 2014); David Beel et al. (“The Geographies of Community History Digital Archives in Rural Scotland,” 2015; “Cultural Resilience: The Production of Rural Community Heritage, Digital Archives and the Role of Volunteers,” 2017); Tianjiao Qi (“Rural archives in China over the past 40 years,” 2019); as well as from the work of colleagues in the Iowa Women’s Archives who have collected, organized, and stewarded records from the Rural Women’s Project. Wagner’s and Bischoff’s study, “Defining Community Archives within Rural South Carolina” (2017), particularly focuses our approach with its key takeaways from qualitative “interviews with employees of rural South Carolina cultural institutions to assess the state of their rural community archives” (155). These takeaways include the need for a “clear awareness on the part of rural community archives of their relationship to larger practices of archiving...A continued need for low-cost, low-barrier methods of digital outreach for both preservation and communication...(and) A more direct stream of access to grant funding favoring community archival practitioners over user-based research funding.” Together, the above threads of practice and research speak to the logistical problems and cultural necessity of rural-archival work.

In addition to making sustainable, rural archives for the purposes of doing good local history that increases historical representation, we also view community memory archives as crucial sites for place-making and for engendering feelings of engagement and belonging in the present. This view aligns with recent research by Michelle Caswell (2016; 2018; 2021) and others (Bastian & Alexander, 2009; Bastian & Flinn, 2020; Wallace & Beel, 2021), who have argued and demonstrated that cultural heritage and archival practices, particularly in rural communities, have strengthened community resilience (Beel et al., 2017) and wellbeing (Wallace & Beel, 2021). Crucially, Claire Wallace and David Beel define cultural heritage practices as “Far from being just about the past...cultural heritage is about how (practice) develops into networks, activities and resources, which are rooted in the present and can help shape positive trajectories into the future” (134). Researchers have described community memory practices as working towards community holism, which is also at the center of what Sandra

Littletree, Miranda Belarde-Lewis, and Marisa Duarte propose lies at the heart of Indigenous Knowledge Organization (“Centering Relationality: A Conceptual Model to Advance Indigenous Knowledge Organization Practices,” 2020). “Activating Archives in Remote Communities” internalizes the work of these researchers toward communitarian outcomes that prize holism, participation, inclusion, resilience, wellbeing, and self-determination.

A model project to this end is the *Marion Derecho Digital Archive* (<https://derecho2020.omeka.net/>), a project spearheaded by two SLIS alumni in a small-community library outside of Cedar Rapids engaging residents who collectively experienced the trauma and devastation of the 2020 derecho that incapacitated city infrastructure, including the library itself, as well as displaced residents from their damaged homes. The *Archive* leverages the Omeka web gallery platform to make accessible the many eyewitness accounts, photographs, and oral histories collected by MPL librarians in the wake of the derecho. MPL launched the site with an Oral History Readers Theatre, featuring dramatic readings of the oral histories from the *Archive* on the derecho’s first anniversary, making the *Archive* into an embodied performance experienced collectively. SLIS students, through a course in information organization, partnered with the *Archive* in the spring of 2021 to advise on best practices for collecting, organizing, describing, and visualizing the data collected from the community, and project leaders report that citizen engagement through this project has increased community bonds, feelings of resilience, and collective healing. The *Archive* is one of many projects whose lessons and outcomes SLIS aims to scale nationally with funding from IMLS.

Our project principally intersects two recent interventions in library research and service. The first is the more focused attention given to small and rural libraries. A concerted turn has taken place over at least the last decade to remember small and rural library practice to broader information practice, a turn marked by the IMLS-funded whitepaper, “The State of Small and Rural Libraries in the United States” (2013) as well as by support from programs such as the American Library Association’s Libraries Transforming Communities: Focus on Small and Rural Libraries from 2020. Attention to small and rural libraries and their information practices signal both a historical neglect and an opportunity for schools of library and information science to lend expertise, research, and support to a growing discourse and infrastructure.

“Activating Archives” combines this turn toward small and rural libraries with the coordinated turn toward community-based archives as important sites of community activation and memory, recognized by, for instance, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation’s support of the University of California–Irvine Libraries’ project, Community-Centered Archives Practice: Transforming Education, Archives and Community History (C-CAP TEACH). The growing body of literature addressing community archives and community-based archival practices is geographically situated, however, highlighting case studies in the UK (Flinn et al., 2009; Flinn & Stevens, 2009), Australia, and New Zealand (Welland, 2015). The US-based research has been primarily-based in major metropolitan areas in Southern California (Caswell et al., 2017; Wakimoto et al., 2013; Zavala et al., 2017) and the East Coast (Corbman, 2014; Gieseking, 2015; Thistlewaite, 2000). An exception is [IMLS’s funding of WiLS](#) (formerly Wisconsin Library Services) through the Accelerating Promising Practices program for the latter organization “to mentor a cohort of ten small, rural, and tribal libraries around the country working on community memory projects” (2019), which we aim to build on and scale up starting from the foundations of LIS education and training. Our focus on rural collections provides opportunities to highlight additional collections across the US while informing the practices that best serve collections across rural areas of the country.

The Need for Training

Nearly four in ten public libraries in the US are located in rural communities and serve more than 30 million Americans, and one-third of public library buildings serve populations of 2,500 people or fewer and are staffed by, on average, two full-time-equivalent persons (IMLS, 2013). Yet rural librarians have been neglected in the

iSchool movement of graduate education in library and information science, which privileges computer and data science and “big data” paradigms that largely do not scale down into the practices of smaller memory institutions. Further, professionals interested in rural library work often follow curricular tracks in public librarianship that exclude archival practices. Our project responds to the training needs and limited resources of rural library professionals in the US, who constitute our target group. Our beneficiaries, then, would include present and future denizens in our target group’s service area.

SLIS is uniquely situated to provide training in rural community memory practices, not only as an ALA-accredited program in a rural-library-rich region of the Midwest, but also as a department supported by the University of Iowa’s abiding commitments to community engagement, digital humanities, and public humanities. Our alumni network covers a Midwestern region with the highest percentages of rural libraries in the US outside of Alaska and Vermont (Iowa, 78%; North Dakota, 81.6%; and South Dakota, 78.6%) (IMLS, 2013). Our unique curricular offerings at the intersection of community engagement, library practice, archives and media, and special collections position us felicitously to serve community memory needs for small, rural, and tribal libraries. The co-PIs for this project are, together, specialized in archives, digital records management, rural communities, community engagement, and volunteer management.

The University of Iowa has made a strong commitment to community engagement through the Office of Engagement and the Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities (IISC). This proposal builds from the co-PIs’ previous community collaborations through these University initiatives. During the past five years, SLIS has partnered with rural communities throughout Iowa as well as organizations in the Iowa City area to assess the needs of archival collections housed in public libraries and non-profits. During the Spring semester of 2017, Mattock partnered with the Office of Engagement and rural cultural institutions along the Historic Hills Scenic Byway to conduct preservation assessments of collections held by museums and archives in southeast Iowa. Students surveyed collections at five different museums and interviewed professionals and volunteers about the needs of their organizations and designed a workshop and manual of resources that identified best practices for management of these collections. The workshop was open to all of the participating museums as well as to other community members with an interest in preserving local history. The Mason City Digital Architecture Project (2017) constructed a database and website to store information regarding the architectural history of the city. This digital mapping and digital archives project established a platform for storing historical information alongside contemporary records as the city re-evaluated how to best identify historic structures. The maps and website aimed to engage the community in the history of Mason City while preserving aspects of the community’s heritage that had been lost over time. The 2018 Webster City Genealogy Collection Project and 2019 partnership with the Keokuk Public Library established best practices for two public libraries housing underutilized archival collections in rural public libraries. Students surveyed collections, developed digitization guidelines, and constructed prototype Omeka repositories to provide broad access to these hidden collections. In addition to these major projects, Mattock has consulted with students appraising and organizing archival collections at other community sites such as the Grinnell Herald Register, an independently owned Iowa newspaper, and Public Access Television, Inc. (PA-TV) in Iowa City. In each of these examples, SLIS students and faculty surveyed collections to understand the needs of the materials and the communities accessing the collections, interviewed key personnel to understand localized needs and infrastructure, and made recommendations on how to utilize local resources to successfully complete the projects and build sustainable archives to hold future acquisitions.

SLIS’ situation at the intersection of a rural-library-rich geography, public humanities, and community engagement prime our co-PIs to develop training-in-a-box modules for community-engaged, rural archives. But our flexibility in course delivery as a hybrid program with several related certificates and microcredentials makes it easy for us to adapt to the needs of workers on the ground. While the immediate deliverables from this grant would include Open Educational Resources, a whitepaper, and a webinar, our intermediate aim is to

develop a lightweight, online curriculum to train and connect rural library workers who wish to engage their communities in memory work. This grant will at once produce important deliverables while also anticipating a larger curricular commitment from SLIS.

Project Work Plan

The two-year grant period for “Activating Archives in Remote Communities” will be spent gathering, refining, formalizing, publishing, and distributing best practices for training remote information professionals to do community-archival work that engages and sustains the full demographic plurality of rural US service areas. Our investigation of training methods will include further secondary research, consultation with pre-existing partners, and, principally, engagement with an expert panel of advisors. In the first year of the project, co-PIs and a graduate assistant will update secondary research, organize six plenary meetings of the advisory panel, analyze data, and formalize panel consensus. The second year will largely concern formalization, presentation, and distribution of results. Finally, co-PIs will use results as an analytic for evaluating the capacity of the current SLIS curriculum to support a lightweight, fully online certificate program to assist, train, and network rural information professionals. Our ultimate intervention is a reorientation of LIS curriculum that centralizes community memory work as a site of community activation, inclusion, and resilience, and remembers remote information professionals to the practice. This intervention, we hope, will restore excluded rural denizens to community memory, enhance community records for better and fuller history, and most importantly, engage the community itself in its own memory practices, leading to community wellbeing and resilience.

Our advisory panel is paramount to our investigation and will include practitioners from rural-library-rich areas of the US, including the Midwest, Vermont, and Alaska. These practitioners will join curators, researchers, and memory workers from the US South and Southwest. We have confirmed all eight of the panelists in advance of the grant period.

Joshua Burford is the Director of Outreach and Lead Archivist for the [*Invisible Histories Project*](#), a project dedicated to the preservation of LGBTQ archives and oral histories in the Southeastern United States. Burford’s work is grounded in self-evaluation of best practices and the development of approaches for organizations to be more inclusive of diverse identities. He also brings experience in outreach to rural memory institutions.

Jerald Crook is the Founder and Executive Director of Alabama’s [*Higher Ground Society*](#). The project aims to engage small Alabama communities in the arts and humanities as a means to empower local communities to effectively advocate for needs. The organization is dedicated to active civic engagement and enriching broad access to the arts. A former library employee, he has also served as program coordinator for two state humanities organizations. Presently, he is curating a local exhibition remembering the Black history of Mobile’s Davis Avenue.

Jessica Ieremia is the president-elect of the Alaska Library Association and director of the Sitka Public Library in Sitka, Alaska. She previously worked as a Program Coordinator for the Petersburg Public Library in Petersburg, Alaska, where she spearheaded culturally situated community projects and served as the Cultural Education Coordinator of the Many Voices, One Community IMLS Grant. During her time as the Cultural Education Coordinator, she collected and digitally recorded interviews with community members and tribal elders, which are available online. Ieremia cultivated tribal relationships with the public library by making connections with culture-bearers and specialists to provide cultural programming for both the tribe and the larger community.

Doris Malkmus is an archivist and oral historian who has led several oral history projects, including the “Voices from the Land: An Oral History Project in Iowa” as part of the Iowa Women’s Archives Rural

Women's Project from 2000-2001. She currently serves as the archivist for the LGBTQ Religious Archives Network.

Allie Parrsmith is the director of the West Liberty Public Library, a rural public library in a town southwest of the University. Parrsmith's current efforts at the library include building an archives program to preserve and provide access to the archival records housed in the public library. This work builds on her previous efforts at Washington Public Library (IA), where she helped to build a program to digitize the library's genealogy collection for broader use by patrons.

Verónica Reyes-Escudero is the Katherine B. Willcock Head of Special Collections at the University of Arizona. Through this role, she engages the community through events that highlight the archive's rich holding on the U.S. Mexico borderlands. Her work extends from the University to several community archives in the region.

Monique Tyndall will serve as an independent expert with experience in tribal archives and cultural affairs. She has previously worked in the Museum of Contemporary Native American Art (Institute of American Indian Arts) and the Smithsonian and has served as Tribal Archivist for the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin. Presently she is the Director of Cultural Affairs for the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans.

Jessamyn West is a librarian and community technologist working in rural Vermont with a wealth of experience in rural public libraries and media preservation. West's work is concerned with digital inclusion, the digital divide, and civic engagement. She has worked for Wikipedia and the Internet Archive's Open Library Project. West also writes a column for *Computers in Libraries* and is the author of the book *Without a Net: Librarians Bridging the Digital Divide* (2011).

From the Northeast, South, Southwest, Midwest, and Pacific Northwest, our panelists bring with them a wealth of experience in both geographically and culturally situated memory practices. In selecting practitioners from the Southern US, we used the Invisible Histories Project, an archival collective concerned with engaging the LGBTQ history of the Deep South, as an access point to find memory practitioners who can speak to culturally situated best practices for organizing Southern memory. Our two confirmed panel members from the Invisible Histories Project, Burford and Crook, have worked for and with a diversity of organizations that we consider key stakeholders in our project, such as small and rural libraries, K-12 schools, colleges and universities, and state humanities organizations. Many of these organizations serve large Black and Latinx/o/a constituencies. Jessamyn West is a library practitioner in rural Vermont, which alongside Alaska and the Midwest is one of the most rural-library-rich regions in the country. West's practice mitigates the rural digital divide through advocacy for and instruction in computer literacy for patrons at socioeconomic disadvantage. She is also advising on the digitization of oral histories for a small library in Starksboro, VT. We will draw on her expertise in rural computing instruction as well as digital platform evaluation. Allie Parrsmith, with whom SLIS has previously partnered, will represent small libraries in the Midwest and speak from her experience diversifying, training, and mobilizing a local volunteer base for memory projects. Verónica Reyes-Escudero, in addition to her experience in borderlands collecting, has also published research on the ethical care of Indigenous collections, preserving and expanding access to Mexican collections, and digital humanities and sustainability. Another previous partner, Doris Malkmus, will speak to best practices for engaging and preserving the memory of rural women. Jessica Ieremia's history of serving rural Alaskan constituencies involves facilitating tribal relations with the public library as well as sourcing and repatriating Native artifacts donated to public collections. And Monique Tyndall will advise on best practices for engaging tribal memory and maintaining tribal relations and boundaries that respect tribal data sovereignty. The panel's collective experience stewarding, for instance, Indigenous, Latinx/o/a, Black, queer, and women's records crucially assists our project of

decentering dominant practices and narratives as we assemble research toward a scalable training model for rural information professionals.

In addition to an expert advisory panel, we will also leverage SLIS faculty, colleagues, and partners who represent collecting practices that include diverse perspectives such as those mentioned above. Chiefly, SLIS faculty member Iulian Vamanu researches the cultural heritage practices of Indigenous knowledge workers, curators at the Iowa Women's Archives steward the Rural Women's Project, and Aiden Bettine, who works in special collections at UI Libraries as well as serves as Executive Director of the LGBTQ Iowa Archives & Library. We also draw upon the expertise of SLIS alumni such as Madeline Jarvis, who serves on the SLIS Advisory Board and is the co-author of a book published by ALA Editions about diversifying volunteer groups. Partners such as the ones mentioned here have already informed the co-PI's approach to the grant project and will continue to advise along the way on ad hoc matters.

During the first month of the grant, the co-PIs will hire a Graduate Assistant, targeting an incoming SLIS student with rural work experience interested in committing to the project for the two-year grant period. The SLIS admissions committee has already identified prospective students who could serve in this role for the two years of this project. These students are predominantly first-generation college students from rural, working-class backgrounds who could directly benefit from the financial support of an Assistantship but who also have professional experience and lived experience with the rural constituencies we aim to assist. Moreover, they are interested in continuing professionalization in rural library work, and we view supporting them as a direct means of equity in the profession. Staff from the UI Office of Community Engagement and Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities have already agreed to co-mentor and co-supervise the Graduate Assistant.

Co-PIs will also circulate a Doodle poll early in the grant period to determine consensus times for six panel meetings across the 2022-2023 academic year. The confirmed panelists have already been apprised of their duties to meet six times and participate in an asynchronous Delphi study in the first year of the grant period. Once a consensus time has been reached, the co-PIs will coordinate the first of the advisory panel meetings for September 2022. Given the geographic distribution of our panelists, to reduce the costs associated with the project and accommodate the continued participation of all panel members, all of our panel meetings will be hosted online via the Zoom video conferencing platform. The "Live Transcript" tool will be utilized to create a transcript of each meeting, providing a record of the conversations for data analysis. The Graduate Assistant will edit and preserve these transcripts using Otter.ai transcription software and store the recordings on a departmental server. Discourse from the "Chat" function of Zoom will also be preserved.

The Graduate Assistant will plan all subsequent meetings of the advisory panel and facilitate data collection and analysis under the supervision of the co-PIs during this year. Semi-structured interview questions elaborating on the following queries will facilitate conversations with the advisory panel members to assess the current and future needs of cultural heritage collections in rural libraries. The interview questions for each meeting will be developed prior to each gathering, allowing the previous session to inform the question for the next in an iterative and accretive process designed to make the formalization of the meetings into a Delphi study and whitepaper easier to organize. The findings and conclusions from each meeting will be topic-modeled and distributed to the advisory panel for additional feedback and clarification throughout the academic year. This methodology will ensure that the voices of the advisory panel are continually represented throughout the process and that the key issues are addressed in the findings. The preliminary topics and key questions for each session are as follows, but may change given the trajectory of discourse from one meeting to the next:

Meeting #1, September 2022: Introductions—What memory challenges are unique to rural libraries?
How are rural libraries contributing to community wellbeing?

Meeting #2, October 2022: Collections—What cultural heritage collections exist in rural areas? Who do collections represent, who can access them, and who is missing?

Meeting #3, November 2022: Staffing—What skills are critical to their work? What do potential rural librarians need to know? What do volunteers need to know? What do librarians wish they knew? How can rural librarians work with and beyond the affordances of local historical societies?

Meeting #4, February 2023: Infrastructure—What resources are needed to provide access to collections? What are libraries' technological needs for digital preservation and access? What information-organizational training is needed?

Meeting #5, March 2023: Community—What communities are rural libraries serving? How are those communities changing? How do collections represent communities? How does library engagement enact community formation and belonging?

Meeting #6 April 2023: Summary—How would you design a curriculum for LIS professionals in training? What best practices need to be modified to better suit your collections and community-engagement practices?

In our review of the literature and previous work, we have highlighted research that has already informed our thinking about culturally situated archival practices, including international perspectives (Qi, e.g.), Indigenous perspectives (Littletree, e.g.), and arguments toward community archives as agents of emancipation or liberation for non-dominant populations (Caswell, e.g.). These perspectives and others will continue to condition how we approach the questions that we ask the panel, and what existing projects and practices we include in our research.

After the conclusion of the final meeting, the Graduate Assistant and co-PIs will synthesize discourse and key points from the meetings through content analysis and topic modeling procedures into a short, written document that will serve as the instrument of a Delphi study, aiming to solidify and formalize consensus among panelists on crucial issues such as the following:

- Best methods for delivering training;
- Best practices for organizing community memory and making that memory accessible through in-person and online platforms;
- Key ethics for curating culturally situated collections;
- Best practices for community engagement and volunteer training and management.

The Graduate Assistant will distribute the document to the panelists in May using Google Docs in an iterative process that will ask the panel to come to written consensus asynchronously by the end of July 2023. Co-PIs will continue to facilitate the process after the end of the Graduate Assistant's academic-year contract in May. The panel members will be given a short deadline for turning around responses, amendments, edits, and annotations to the document using Google Docs' comment feature and other affordances of the platform. After every panelist has considered and amended the document, the co-PIs will incorporate changes to the document and recirculate the edited document to the full panel for further amendments until unanimous ratification is met. By the beginning of the Graduate Assistant's second academic year in late August, the project staff will have collected:

- Fully edited meeting transcripts and meeting recordings;
- Responses from the panel to each meeting;
- A written Delphi study unanimously ratified by the panel.

Transcripts from the panel meetings as well as consensus from the Delphi study will constitute the crux of our primary research from the grant period.

The Graduate Assistant's second academic year of service will resume in late August of 2023, and the second year of the grant period will concentrate on formalizing, distributing, and presenting results from the first year in addition to evaluating SLIS curriculum using these results as an analytic and building three introductory

modules of Open Educational Resources designed to increase the capacity of rural information professionals to do community-engaged memory work. In September and October of 2023, co-PIs will present initial findings from Year One at the annual conference of the Association of Rural and Small Libraries as well as the annual conference of the Association for Library and Information Science Education. From November 2023 through February 2024, the co-PIs and graduate assistant will develop and submit a position paper to the *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, which will include our primary research from the advisory panel as well as a literature review of secondary research and an argument for the need of LIS educators to center archival training not only for prospective archivists, but for information professionals going into public library work, especially in rural communities. Along with this position paper, the project staff will develop three introductory modules designed as Open Educational Resources to be hosted on the UI's institutional repository. These modules will be an outgrowth from our findings, and we will feature them in our position paper to *JELIS*. Preliminary ideas for these modules include "An Evaluation of Platforms for Community Archives," "An Introduction to Metadata for Community Archive Volunteers," and "Volunteer Management for Rural Librarians."

During the beginning of the Spring 2024 semester, co-PIs will work with the SLIS curriculum committee to analyze program curricular offerings against findings from the grant research. This analysis will coincide with SLIS's curricular mapping that will already be underway. Co-PIs will examine SLIS course offerings for whether they already have the capacity to include best training practices from our research for rural memory work, or whether new courses would need to be offered. Courses to be examined include Cultural Heritage, Community Engagement, Digital Humanities Theory and Practice, Digital Preservation and Stewardship, and Archives: Theory & Practice. This curricular analysis will determine the feasibility of developing a lightweight, online curriculum for training rural information professionals in community memory work. Our immediate intervention would be a proposal to the curriculum committee for reorienting SLIS curriculum to better prepare our students who are interested in public libraries for community memory work. We anticipate a proposal that would involve the creation of new courses as well as new modules to be incorporated into current course offerings. This proposal would be supported by our position paper submitted to *JELIS*. We hope that SLIS would have the capacity to offer a three-course, modular, online curriculum for rural information professionals who would like to continue working while they train through SLIS to engage their communities in memory work. Depending on the alignment of research findings with the present curriculum, "Activating Archives" may anticipate an Implementation grant for launching a certificate program and funding first cohorts of rural librarians. These cohorts may include students from our MA program who wish to specialize in community archives, but we will endeavor to recruit cohorts who are already engaged in rural library work and who wish to be networked with and trained alongside like professionals looking to complete similar community-engaged memory projects.

In Spring 2024, the project team will continue to share our findings from the grant period by various means. The first of which will be a one-hour, public webinar over Zoom during which co-PIs, the graduate assistant, and volunteers from the advisory panel will serve as panelists presenting key takeaways and best practices for training information professionals in remote memory work. The free, virtual seminar will be designed for current students, alumni, the research community, and professionals working in small and rural libraries. The graduate assistant will edit the transcript of the recorded webinar, and both the transcript and recording will be hosted in the UI institutional repository so that those unable to attend the live webinar will have continued access to the materials. In advance of the webinar, the graduate assistant will also spend February, March, and April of 2024 promoting the webinar through organizational listservs and social media. Co-PIs will use the webinar to promote the project's Open Educational Resources.

By the end of the second year of the grant period, the project staff will have collected:

- A position paper;

- Three introductory OER modules;
- A curriculum proposal;
- A recorded webinar and edited transcript.

In addition to these materials, a summary whitepaper will be included with all open-access project deliverables in the UI institutional repository. Our enduring deliverables from this Forum grant will, finally, include a whitepaper, a Delphi study published in an open-access repository, a recorded webinar, multiple conference presentations, a journal publication, and three modules of OER centering best practices in rural memory work. We will maintain these resources in UI's digital repository under a Creative Commons License that will ensure that professionals will have continued access to the findings from this research. Co-PIs will continue to promote these materials beyond the grant period in further presentations and activities.

Diversity Plan

Our research will reflect memory practices that de-center white, Western archival methods and instead reflect the numerous and mixed methods by which diverse community constituencies self-represent. The Forum grant will also allow us to recruit and compensate an advisory panel that represents region-specific and culturally situated memory practices. We also hope that our research and curriculum will be used widely to help include non-dominant populations in library engagement as well as to include their voices in community histories. Finally, we view small and rural libraries as underrepresented organizations in LIS training and literature that nevertheless serve millions of diverse US patrons. Our focus on small and rural libraries includes particular attention to the populations who likewise get discounted in LIS discourse such as rural Black library users.

Project Results

This project addresses the need expressed in research on community archives for scalable best practices for cultural heritage preservation and access. "Activating Archives in Remote Communities" is an opportunity to include the perspectives of the librarians who are tasked with preserving community memory as collaborators in the development of a curriculum that serves their needs and increases their capacity. We'll provide an adaptable model for community memory and engagement that is directly applicable to the most remote communities and libraries serving broad constituencies of users.

Following the initial grant period, SLIS will use the products and materials from the Forum grant to inform changes to the SLIS curriculum that will train future LIS professionals to effectively manage and advocate for community-based collections in rural library spaces. Additional funding from sources within and external to the University of Iowa will be targeted as potential avenues for providing additional support to implement these changes and develop open-access educational materials to support this work. The training program will distribute the best practices and knowledge identified by the advisory panel and aim to condition professionals to become aware and inclusive of the cultural pluralities that constitute the often vast service areas of small libraries. As courses, syllabi, assignments, and educational resources are developed, they will also be published openly alongside the products of the Forum grant to ensure that other LIS programs may adopt these pedagogical interventions.

Our project aims most directly (1) to increase the capacities of rural library workers to engage in inclusive community memory practices and (2) to advocate for a reorientation of LIS curricula nationwide that centers community memory and remembers small and rural libraries to LIS training and discourse. But our biggest impact, we hope, will be to strengthen rural-community holism, resilience, belonging, and wellbeing by encouraging collaborations on memory projects that will help these communities self-determine and maintain their own cultural heritage sustainably. To us, the most aspirational projects that could spring from our investigation are ones that make librarians and historians of everyone, leading to richer communities and fuller histories.

Activating Archives in Remote Communities - Digital Products Plan

Our deliverables from this Forum Grant will include a whitepaper, the materials from the Delphi Study, a recorded webinar, multiple conference presentations, a journal publication, and three modules of open educational resources centering best practices in rural memory work. All products will be stored and published in the University of Iowa's open digital repository, [Iowa Research Online \(IRO\)](#) under a Creative Commons License. The whitepaper and Delphi study materials will outline the findings from our Advisory Board. These materials will be reviewed by each board member prior to publication to ensure that all panelists are comfortable with the deliverables. We will target a journal for the published paper that will allow the pre-print manuscript to be published in IRO. The recorded webinar, open educational resources, and curricular interventions will also be published and maintained in the IRO along with any future products developed after the grant period, including possible course syllabi.

IRO is maintained by the University Libraries. IRO ensures both access and preservation, providing long-term open access to all of the materials produced as the result of this project. Materials published in IRO can be accessed through the IRO interface, are discoverable through search engines and Google Scholar, and are indexed in the University of Iowa Libraries' catalog, ensuring multiple points of access for professionals and scholars interested in the materials. All materials within the IRO are hosted on a secure server and registered with a digital object identifier (DOI) and persistent URL to ensure permanent access. Each grant product can be uploaded by one of the project directors when they are ready for publication.

Organizational Profile

Your organization's mission or statement of purpose, noting the source, approving body, and date of the official document in which it appears

Under the Iowa Code, Chapter 263 (last updated in December 2021) the stated purpose and mission of the University of Iowa (UI) is to provide “the best and most efficient means of imparting to men and women, upon equal terms, a liberal education and thorough knowledge of the different branches of literature and the arts and sciences, with their varied applications. It shall include colleges of liberal arts and sciences, law, medicine, and such other colleges and departments, with such courses of instruction and elective studies as the Board of Regents may determine from time to time.” In support of this mission, the UI encompasses several critical unites including the University of Iowa Libraries whose key objective is to advance “direct engagement in learning, research, creative work, and clinical care through staff expertise and exceptional collections on our campus and worldwide”. (see University Libraries Strategic Plan 2022-2027)

Your organization's governance structure if your library is located within a parent organization or if your organization is a nonprofit affiliated with a library

The University of Iowa Libraries (UIL) is the largest library system in Iowa and 7th in materials expenditures among U.S. public research libraries (ARL FY17 data). The University's Main Library, Hardin Library for the Health Sciences, 5 branch libraries, and the Law Library contain more than 5 million volumes. The UIL's parent organization is the University of Iowa, and its governance falls under the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost.

Your service area (i.e., communities and/or audiences served, including size, demographic characteristics, and geographic area)

The University of Iowa is a public university that is funded and supported by the State of Iowa, whose primary commitments are to education, research, and public service that aim to benefit the State of Iowa, the nation and beyond. However, as a state funded institution, the university is committed to the benefit and well-being of the State of Iowa, its communities, and all its citizens. Iowa is an upper midwestern state with slightly over 3 million people spread across its 99 counties, with a significant percentage of its population living in rural areas and small towns. From 2020 demographic reports on Iowa's population, the state has over 700 designated communities in the state, with only 42 have more than 10,000 people. Thus, a significant portion of the state's population lives and works in rural areas and communities of less than 10,000 people. Thus, this proposal specifically aims to serve these rural areas and small communities in Iowa and across the nation.

See: https://www.iowa-demographics.com/cities_by_population

A brief history of your organization, focusing on the organizational unit that will be directly involved in carrying out the work

The School of Library and Information Science is one of three academic units reporting to the University of Iowa Graduate College. SLIS accepted the first cohort of students in 1967 and has been continually accredited with the American Libraries Association since 1972. Housed in the University's Main Library, SLIS offers an MA LIS to graduate students interested in careers in academic, public, and school libraries. The majority of the students enrolled in SLIS are residents of Iowa, many working in libraries across the state as they complete their degrees. SLIS is an interdisciplinary program that supports and encourages work across disciplines from the arts and humanities to the social sciences and beyond. The work of students and faculty calls attention to the integral role that information access plays in equity, diversity, and inclusion. Through engagement in education, service, and scholarship, SLIS empowers library and information professionals and promotes the creation of responsible and informed seekers of knowledge.