

**Title:** The Community Archives Center for Tacoma

**Project Summary** | The Tacoma Public Library (TPL) requests a 2-year National Leadership Project Grant (Community Catalyst) in the amount of \$247,462 to develop, implement, and evaluate the Community Archives Center for Tacoma. The project will bring together community groups, organizations, and individuals to carry out a community-driven and participatory process to *broaden participation and inclusion within cultural heritage collections*. This will create *a model for institutions in small- and mid-sized urban areas seeking to enter into collaborative partnerships with diverse groups to produce more equitable archives*.

**Statement of National Need** | For at least five decades, scholars and archivists have illuminated a significant problem with the American historical record: missing from it are the voices and experiences of our marginalized and underrepresented communities<sup>1</sup>. Their histories have not just been excluded from the historical record – they have been actively suppressed. In response, there have been calls to *reformulate archival studies around core values of social justice*, and the field has increasingly pursued efforts to increase inclusion of underrepresented peoples within archives, expand and rethink archival concepts and training to be more equitable, develop community archives, and much more.<sup>2</sup> Despite increased momentum in these areas, though, there remains an urgent need to collect the histories of marginalized communities, co-design archives to share them, and reshape the historical record. An unfortunate byproduct of centuries of oppression means that there is also much work to be done to “get community members to start thinking about the importance of their personal stories to community history and to envision themselves in the archives.”<sup>3</sup> This work is made no easier by a social climate characterized by racial conflict, nor by financial and economic conditions that have eroded support for public and community archives.<sup>4</sup> Communities desperately need strong models for supporting partnerships between public institutions and marginalized residents in pursuit of equitable and just archives.

This need is felt strongly in Tacoma, Washington, making it an ideal site through which to develop such a model. As a port city founded on the ancestral homelands of the Puyallup Tribe, Tacoma has a complex history of both welcoming and excluding its diverse communities. Neighborhoods to the south of the city are both some of the most racially diverse areas in the surrounding county, and some of the poorest. This offers an important site for testing collaborative methods that include the stories and histories of diverse and highly marginalized populations in archives. At the same time, Tacoma has struggled with issues of digital equity, which makes it an interesting case study given recent calls to leverage digital archives to diversify historical records. The Tacoma Equity Index estimates that as many as 20 – 25% of the households in higher needs areas of the city have no Internet access. This requires us to think carefully about hybrid physical and digital solutions that have the broadest reach possible. These conditions ensure that this project will produce a flexible model for archival social justice that can be powerfully expanded outward to other urban communities across the nation.

**Project Design** | We propose the development of the Community Archives Center for Tacoma as a model for *co-producing community archives with historically underrepresented partners*. This research will draw on and extend past work funded by the IMLS. The previously funded pilot grant *Diversifying the Digital Historical Record* produced initial suggestions and guidelines for supporting community archiving. This new project will build from past findings to produce a model for institutions in small- and mid-sized urban areas seeking to enter collaborative partnerships with diverse groups to produce more equitable archives. As a Community Catalyst project, the Archives Center will collect and preserve the stories of historically marginalized people and communities across the city, and it will empower participants through related community-building events.

The core project team will include personnel from TPL and the University of Washington (UW) Information School. TPL has locally-grounded knowledge of the local histories of Tacoma, in addition to

<sup>1</sup> Zinn H. 1977. Secrecy, Archives, and the Public Interest. *The Mid-western Archivist*. 2(2).

<sup>2</sup> Punzalan R, M Caswell. 2016. Crit. Dir. for Archival Approaches to Social Justice. *Libr Qrtrly*. 86(1): 25-42.

<sup>3</sup> Caswell M. 2014. Seeing Yourself in History. *The Public Historian*. 36(4): 26-37

<sup>4</sup> Cifor M, J Lee. 2017. Towards an Archival Critique. *Journal of Critical LIS*. 1(1).

extensive experience working with archival materials on the city. Their Richards Studio collection, for example, contains over 800,000 photographic negatives documenting the history of Tacoma. This includes significant material documenting the many ethnic cultural groups in the city. The University of Washington team brings extensive experience developing community archives (Marika Cifor), partnering with low-resource libraries (Chris Jowaisas), and using participatory approaches to partner with diverse and underrepresented populations (Jason Young). This core team will be supported by a broad range of other Tacoma organizations, to ensure the project engages with wide segments of the population to form a highly inclusive cultural heritage archive.

This project team will carry out three phases to produce the Community Archives Center. During Phase 1, the team will ***engage community members in a participatory mapping process to identify underrepresented histories for inclusion in the archive***. Participatory mapping is a process through which the spatial knowledge of community members is collected, visualized, and shared to produce visually compelling spatial stories. The method has been used to document and share the histories of marginalized urban communities<sup>5</sup>, and the UW research team has extensive experience with the method. We will perform six mapping sessions, engaging 150-200 community members, to identify histories that should be included within the archive. Participants will also be invited to participate in workshops to co-design initial plans for the in-person and online components of the Community Archives Center. During Phase 2, the project team will then ***collect and catalogue materials for the Community Archives Center***. This will include the collection of video narratives from the community; the identification of existing materials from TPL's collections; and more. The team will continue refining its plan for implementation of the Center. These activities will be guided by Phase 1 results and will incorporate continued community input. During Phase 3, the project team will ***implement the Community Archives Center***. This includes a physical exhibit within TPL, an online platform associated with the TPL website, and programmatic events. The events will be evaluated to understand their impact on the community. Throughout, the team will document the process, including lessons learned and best practices. Results will be packaged within a toolkit that other libraries can use to replicate our model. This will be shared widely via community partners and with support of the UW Information School's and TPL's dedicated communication teams.

**Diversity Plan** | Diversity, equity, and inclusion lie at the core of this project - our methods emphasize participatory co-development with historically marginalized communities, and our project will create a generalizable model for making community archives more inclusive and diverse. This work will be supported by a broad range of community partners, selected to connect us to diverse populations across the city. Partners consulted in the creation of this proposal include the City of Tacoma Office of Equity & Human Rights, City of Tacoma Neighborhood & Community Services, the University of Washington-Tacoma Library, the Tacoma Community House, the Tacoma Historical Society, Tacoma Public Schools, the Tacoma Arts Live, the Washington State Historical Society, and the University of Puget Sound Collins Memorial Library.

**National Impact** | This project would result in a ***generalizable model and toolkit*** for cities, towns, and communities across the United States to use to collect and share the stories that have been marginalized by mainstream archives, to begin ***to correct the historical record nationwide***. These efforts can also serve to combat social isolation through community-building events and activities, by helping people to record their stories, decide how they want them represented, and share them through programmatic events.

**Budget Summary** | The proposed 2 year budget is for \$247,462. This includes a total request from TPL of \$191,039. This amount includes \$126,423 for salaries and benefits for 1 full-time and 1 part-time staff; \$20,500 in equipment and supplies; \$20,000 in community participation funds; and \$24,116 for advertising, outreach, and supplies associated with participatory workshops and public forums. \$56,423 will go to a subaward to UW, which will include \$32,270 in salaries and benefits for one faculty, two research scientists, and one student; \$6,243 in tuition support; and \$17,910 for indirect costs.

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<sup>5</sup> Brown M, L Knopp. 2008. Queering the Map. *Annals of the AAG*. 98(2008): 40-58.