



NATIONAL LEADERSHIP GRANTS FOR LIBRARIES

Sample Application LG-259720-OLS-26
Project Category: Community-Centered Implementation

Austin Peay State University, Felix G. Woodward Library

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$99,999
Amount of cost share:	\$0

Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tennessee will establish a dedicated Center for Archives Research & Education, built on the Distributed Archives Model, which fosters one-on-one partnerships between institutional archives and community organizations. The center will expand and strengthen regional collections through a locally focused approach to stewardship. By integrating materials, resources, and space, it will support the long-term preservation of culturally and historically significant items while increasing community engagement through educational programs and workshops. With an emphasis on preservation, accessibility, and collaboration, the center aims to promote sustainable stewardship of the University's archives and special collections. By working closely with community partners, the center will help ensure that these unique resources are preserved, better understood, and made accessible to a wider audience.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of completion

When preparing an application for the next deadline, be sure to follow the instructions in the most recent Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program to which you are applying.

A Center for Archives Research & Education (CARE): Fostering Community through Preserving, Sharing, and Educating Narrative

Introduction

The 250th anniversary of American independence offers libraries and archives an opportunity to reaffirm their role in preserving the history of the communities that make our nation great. Through this project, Austin Peay State University (APSU)¹, serving a community of approximately 11,000 students in Clarksville, Tennessee, and Fort Campbell, Kentucky, an area rich with cultural heritage, proposes to establish the Center for Archives Research & Education (“CARE” or “the Center”). The lead applicant organization, APSU’s Felix G. Woodward Library², conceives of the CARE as a dynamic collaboration with the community to provide strong stewardship for and educational opportunities about the unique and valuable University Archives & Special Collections (UASC), ensuring they are preserved and made accessible to a wider audience. Based on the “Distributed Archives Model,” which “envision[s] one-on-one partnerships between institutional archives and community partners,” the CARE will further develop and expand area collections.³ The two-year, \$99,999.00 Community-Centered Implementation project will be led by the University Archives & Special Collections Librarian and the University Archives & Special Collections Assistant and supported by a team composed of several faculty and staff members at the Woodward Library, including Digital Services Unit personnel. Throughout the project, the Team will maintain open communication with key participants, regularly assess progress, and make necessary adjustments to ensure the project’s success and long-term sustainability. As a result of this project, a knowledgeable Project Team will lead the CARE to preserve, protect, curate, showcase, and grow the University’s Special Collections to share with the local community, region, state, and beyond.

Project Justification

APSU’s Woodward Library is the custodian of the University Archives & Special Collections (UASC), housing thousands of irreplaceable historical and cultural materials. The University Archives are the records and materials of permanent historical value regarding the intellectual, cultural, and social life at APSU. The Special Collections focus on rare and original materials related to Tennessee and Southern Middle Kentucky, especially Clarksville and the surrounding area, comprising the Fort Campbell U.S. Army installation that spans the Tennessee-Kentucky border and the Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area. These collections include, but are not limited to, the *Dorothy Dix Collection*, the *Robert Penn Warren Collection*, the *Clarksville Photographs Collection*, the *Dr. Joseph Milton Henry / Land between the Lakes Papers*, the *Hillman Land & Iron Company Papers*, and the *Rare Book Collection*. Distinguished by their age, fragility, and unique regional significance, these collections require specialized preservation protocols to ensure their survival for future generations. Our UASC contains large volumes of photographs, documents, and slides, along with smaller amounts of audio, video, artifacts, and select bound volumes and manuscripts. The UASC has made strides in digitizing its collections. However, much work still needs to be accomplished in further digitization, preservation, conservation, and education.

The University currently faces challenges in preserving, storing, and providing access to our archival collection. Existing storage conditions for many items in the UASC fall short of professional

¹ <https://www.apsu.edu/>

² <https://library.apsu.edu/>

³ <https://doi.org/10.31274/archivalissues.13204>

preservation standards, putting these irreplaceable items at risk. Environmental monitoring sometimes indicates fluctuating temperatures and humidity levels that exceed recommended archival preservation parameters. Additionally, our spaces lack proper storage for many items, particularly for oversized and unique artifacts. A recent assessment of the UASC revealed that approximately 30% of our rare materials show signs of environmental damage, while another 40% of our collection lacks appropriate storage conditions.

This project represents a locally-focused approach to collection stewardship. By strategically integrating materials, resources, and space, we will ensure the long-term preservation of historically and culturally significant items and engage the community through educational programs and workshops. Our implementation of the Distributed Archives Model will include: soliciting and developing local collections; training staff and community members in archival preservation; using digital preservation protocols for materials; and working toward creating a flexible, multi-use space that can serve preservation, storage, and educational needs, as well as housing a work area for researchers and a viewing room. Our project is inspired by Alabama's Wiregrass Archives at Troy University⁴, and their three missions: "to collect campus historical records, to collect community history...and to coordinate information among similar organizations," as described by Olliff and Dill.⁵ As such, we will look to collaborate with local historical and cultural organizations such as the Montgomery County Preservation Coalition and the Arts & Heritage Council.

The CARE will immediately impact several key target groups within our University community in the areas of access and education. These include dozens of faculty and staff from the Library and History & Philosophy, as well as undergraduate student workers and a graduate assistant from Art, Art History, History, and/or Public History. Additionally, faculty researchers in the humanities and social sciences will benefit from improved access to materials, along with our current student body of over 11,000 (which the University aims to increase to 15,000 in the next several years), particularly those enrolled in relevant academic programs where we plan to incorporate collections into the curricula.

The long-term beneficiaries of this project extend beyond our immediate campus community, reaching hundreds of faculty, students, visiting scholars, and other researchers each year through our digitized collections. The regional communities of Clarksville, Tennessee, and Fort Campbell, Kentucky, are home to approximately 250,000 residents. This population includes historians, K-12 educators and students, and members of cultural heritage organizations, who will gain enhanced access to these valuable collections. The academic community would benefit from our model, particularly other small to mid-sized institutions looking to implement similar distributive approaches. Finally, the archival field itself stands to gain from our project through our contributions to the existing body of knowledge about sustainable preservation practices and the development of new models for resource sharing between University archives and local communities. By adopting this innovative approach, we will not only safeguard our cultural heritage but also create new opportunities for interdisciplinary learning, research, and community engagement.

APSU's Center for Archives Research & Education (CARE) supports the **Program Goal** of the National Leadership Grants for Libraries: *Develop, enhance, or disseminate replicable practices, programs, models, or tools to strengthen library and archival services for the American public*, specifically **Objective 1.3**: *Provide broad access to and preservation of information and collections through libraries and archives*. Our integrated approach with the CARE will ensure the long-term conservation of historically and culturally significant materials while creating dynamic

⁴ <https://www.troy.edu/about-us/dothan-campus/wiregrass-archives/index.html>

⁵ <https://doi.org/10.31274/archivalissues.13204>

opportunities for engagement through educational programming and other events. This project will make immediate improvements in preservation, storage conditions, and access for our target groups while establishing sustainable practices that will benefit a broader audience for generations to come.

Project Work Plan

The two-year project, beginning on September 1, 2026, has three primary phases. Phase I, expected to last through November 2026, will focus on project preparation. Phase II, the next and longest phase of the project, should start in December 2026 and last through December 2027, and will see significant preservation and digitization efforts. With Phase III, which will run from January through July of 2028, the Project Team will focus on outreach, education, and evaluation.

- **Phase I Work Plan**

- Project Setup, Acquisition, and Engagement*

- Form the project steering committee with key participants, schedule regular meetings, and ensure that the committee members are included in project communications (September 2026)
 - Coordinate with the administration on a dedicated space for storing archival materials and plan needed renovations (September 2026)
 - Procure necessary materials, supplies, equipment, and technology for archival preservation and digitization (September – November 2026)
 - Set climate control systems, install archival storage solutions, and establish security measures in the designated space (September – November 2026)
 - Begin fostering collaborative relationships with local historical societies and cultural and heritage organizations (September – November 2026)

- Planning and Assessment Strategies*

- Finalize project scope and objectives, including identifying high-priority items for preservation and digitization (September 2026)
 - Develop a comprehensive assessment plan for preservation, accessibility, usability, demand, and outreach that includes project success metrics (September – November 2026)
 - Targets are currently: usage of archives and collections=25% increase in one year; community engagement=35% increase in the first year; and user satisfaction=85% satisfaction rate
 - Initiate integration of the project into University curricula (September – November 2026)

- Staff Training and Workflow Development*

- Create a staffing model incorporating Library UASC personnel, student assistants, and graduate assistants (September – November 2026)
 - Develop and document digitization workflows (September – November 2026)
 - Train staff on any new equipment and preservation techniques (September – November 2026)

To begin Phase I, the Project Director, University Archives & Special Collections (UASC) Librarian Christina Chester-Fangman, will work closely with the University Archives & Special Collections (UASC) Assistant, Stephanie Klaus, to form the project Steering Committee comprised of key University participants who will offer support in their areas of expertise, including:

- Associate Director of Library Services, Jenny Harris, Assessment;
- Library Special Projects Manager, Adam Shelton, Facilities;
- Library Coordinator of Digital Services, Scott Shumate, Technology / Digitization;

- Library Coordinator of Resource Management, Stephanie Bandel, Cataloging / Metadata;
- Library Communication and Outreach Specialist, Katie Pendleton, Strategic Messaging;
- Library Subject Specialists in History & Philosophy and Art+Design, Kebede Wordofa and Gina Nigro, respectively.

At their first meeting, the Steering Committee will set a regular meeting schedule and a communication plan, finalizing the project scope and objectives, and identifying high-priority items for preservation and digitization. They will then begin procuring the necessary materials, supplies, equipment, and technology for archival preservation and digitization. UASC personnel will collaborate with the Library's Associate Director to develop a comprehensive assessment plan for each facet of the project and the success metrics. We are currently considering the following measures and targets: growth in the usage of our archives and collections (25% increase in one year); development in our engagement with the campus community and beyond (target: 35% increase in the first year); and establishment of user satisfaction with our collections and events (target: 85% satisfaction rate). The UASC Librarian and the Subject Librarians for the Departments of History & Philosophy and Art+Design will review course descriptions and syllabi to integrate archival collections into the University curricula as resources for the campus community. Demonstrating this value will justify institutional support for the CARE. It will be necessary to begin fostering collaborative relationships with local historical societies and arts and heritage organizations, who will help us identify community collection partners and also benefit from our work.

The ultimate goal is to establish a dedicated space within APSU's campus for the Center that can be renovated to house Library archival materials. As we begin Phase I, there will be coordinated campus communication with University administrators to establish this facility. The location would be equipped with climate control systems, archival storage solutions, and security measures to ensure optimal preservation of fragile materials, as well as ample space and parking to accommodate in-person visitors. To begin our preservation and digitization efforts and to demonstrate her support for our archival and community collections, the Director of Library Services, Dr. Martina Malvasi, has arranged space in the Woodward Library for the project. The Library's Special Projects Manager for facilities will work to install archival storage areas, construct a workstation for in-person researchers, and establish security measures in this space until the CARE can find a more suitable permanent home.

Phase I will also include staff training and workflow development. The project Steering Committee will create a staffing model that incorporates Library UASC personnel, student assistants, and a graduate assistant in an academic program such as History, Art, Art History, or Public History to form a cohesive Project Team. The Steering Committee will develop and document digitization workflows. Project Team members will also be trained by the Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA) in any new equipment and standard preservation and conservation techniques, ensuring they are adequately prepared to move on to Phase II.

- **Phase II Work Plan**

Archival Preservation

- Implement preservation techniques for various artifact types (November – December 2026)
- Begin with high-priority items identified by the Project Team (November 2026 – February 2027)
- Organize and catalog collections (November 2026 – December 2027)

Digitization

- Systematically digitize UASC materials using workstations with advanced imaging technologies (November 2026 – December 2027)

- Develop metadata standards and cataloging procedures (November 2026 – February 2027)

Digital Access

- Develop multiple user-friendly access modalities, including audio, video, and written content (November 2026 – February 2027)
- Ensure digital formats adhere to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) (November 2026)
- Populate the Institutional Repository with selected digitized items (November 2026 – December 2027)

Curriculum Integration

- Collaborate with faculty to identify course integration opportunities (November 2026 – May 2027)
- Develop lesson plans and assignments utilizing the UASC and art collections (November 2026 – May 2027)

Community Outreach

- Host scanning days and preservation workshops for community members (November 2026 – December 2027)

Ongoing Assessment

- Conduct regular progress evaluations through quantitative metrics, such as tracking the number of items preserved and/or digitized and collecting and reviewing user statistics to adjust workflows as needed (November 2026 – December 2027)
- Conduct a comprehensive mid-point project evaluation to assess progress toward goals and make necessary adjustments to the project plan (August 2027)

During Phase II, members of the Project Team will carry out significant preservation and digitization activities of the collections, beginning with high-priority items identified by the Steering Committee. The Team will implement preservation techniques for artifacts of varying sizes, shapes, and fragility, and systematically digitize pieces using workstations equipped with advanced imaging technologies to ensure faithful representation. A primary goal will be adding digitized items, as appropriate, to APSU's existing Institutional Repository, *Archive for Scholarly Publication, Innovation, and Research Experience (ASPIRE)*⁶. This effort will broaden access to these cultural assets, particularly for students, researchers, and historians who cannot visit in person. UASC personnel will work closely with the Library's Digital Services Coordinator and Resource Management Coordinator on metadata standards and cataloging procedures. The Project Team will emphasize multiple user-friendly modalities for collections, such as audio, video, and written content, and ensure that digital formats are accessible to people with disabilities, in accordance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

Phase II will also include work on curriculum integration. Professors Chester-Fangman, Wordofa, and Nigro will investigate opportunities to collaborate with classroom faculty on assignments that use archival resources. Currently, the majority of our instruction with these resources is, as described by Yaco, Brown, and Konrad in their 2016 article in *The American Archivist*⁷, "focused on the provision of an orientation session during which archivists or special collections librarians explain their collections, outline any sources that are particularly relevant to the course, and explain finding aids and policies and procedures." However, with our established relationships with teaching faculty in disciplines such as History, English, and Art+Design, we can be more active, integrating the "aggressive outreach techniques" further mentioned by the authors, to include "identifying relevant courses and contacting professors with examples of collections and

⁶ <https://library.apsu.edu/collections/aspire/>

⁷ <https://doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081-79.2.417>

exercises.” Possible courses for curricular integration include *Fundamentals of Interdisciplinary Thinking*, *Art History*, *Historical Methods*, and the *Southern Literature Graduate Seminar*, as well as independent capstone courses for students interested in museum studies.

During Phase II, the Steering Committee will monitor progress through quantitative metrics, such as tracking the number of items preserved and/or digitized, and collecting and reviewing user statistics to fine-tune workflows as needed. The Steering Committee will also conduct a comprehensive mid-point project evaluation in August 2027 to assess progress toward goals and make necessary adjustments to the project plan.

- **Phase III Work Plan**

- Curriculum Implementation*

- Pilot implementation in select spring semester 2028 courses and assess impact (January 2028 – May 2028)
 - Utilize multiple communication channels (library website, campus social media, and local news outlets) to reach different segments of the community, including those in local historical societies and cultural heritage organizations (January 2028 – June 2028)

- Educational Initiatives*

- Create an in-person workshop or online learning module on preservation techniques (January 2028 – June 2028)

- Final Assessment and Reporting*

- Conduct a comprehensive final meeting with the Project Team (May 2028)
 - Gather and analyze usage statistics, community engagement metrics, and user satisfaction surveys (May 2028 – August 2028)
 - Gather qualitative feedback through interviews and focus groups with various participants (May 2028 – August 2028)
 - Prepare final report and recommendations for project sustainability beyond the grant period, including a plan to track usage metrics, user satisfaction, impacts on research output, and community cultural engagement (August 2028)

Phase III will begin with a curriculum implementation pilot in select spring semester 2028 courses. Professor Chester-Fangman will help create research assignments and hands-on, active learning exercises for students using archival collections. In addition to assessing the students' work, they will also request student feedback using Springshare's *LibWizard* survey tool and small focus groups. Some general questions we will be interested in exploring with the students, based on the specific course and assignment, include:

1. How did working with these primary source materials impact your understanding of the course topic? Provide a specific example.
2. What challenges did you face when analyzing archival materials, and how did you overcome them?
3. How did engaging with these primary source materials influence your approach to research compared to using secondary sources alone?
4. Did the archival materials change or reinforce your perspective on the topic you studied? Explain how.
5. If you had more time to explore these primary source collections, what additional materials or themes would you investigate, and why?

Further, Professor Chester-Fangman would want to ask the following types of questions of the faculty members they collaborated with on the assignments for the courses:

1. How did incorporating these primary source materials into your course enhance student engagement and learning outcomes?

2. What challenges, if any, did you encounter when integrating these materials into your assignment, and how did you address them?
3. In what ways did students demonstrate critical thinking or research skills through their interaction with these materials?
4. How would you assess the impact of using primary sources on students' understanding of the topics they explored in their assignments?
5. What recommendations do you have for improving access to and use of these materials in future courses?

In addition to instruction via campus course integration for APSU students, the Project Team will plan engaging activities with the wider community in mind. The Library's Communication and Outreach Specialist will utilize multiple communication channels (Library website, campus social media, and local news outlets) to reach different segments of the Center's target groups and beneficiaries. Opportunities for collaboration with APSU's new Public History program, local historical societies, and community cultural heritage organizations on joint projects will emphasize the distributed nature of the work. The Project Team will develop and conduct in-person open workshops on topics such as basic document preservation and conservation, and properly framing items with acid-free materials. These workshops will be open to the campus and broader community, and provide attendees with immersive learning experiences, enabling them to appreciate the value of cultural preservation. The Project Team will assess the engagement of participants in these workshops by asking them to respond to survey questions such as these at the end of the workshops:

1. What was the most valuable skill or technique you learned during this workshop, and how do you plan to apply it?
2. Which part of the hands-on experience was the most engaging or helpful for your learning, and why?
3. How did the hands-on components of the workshop enhance your understanding of preservation and conservation techniques?
4. Did the workshop change your perspective on the importance of archival-quality materials in preserving personal items? If so, how?
5. What additional topics or skills would you like to see covered in future workshops on preservation and conservation?

Final assessment and reporting will begin with a comprehensive Steering Committee meeting. Members will analyze quantitative data, including usage statistics and community engagement metrics, as well as the findings from the user satisfaction surveys and qualitative feedback from focus groups with various participants, as described above. The project's final report, due in August 2028, will include recommendations for project sustainability beyond the grant period. By implementing detailed plans for activities, involving interested parties, and conducting evaluations, the Project Team can ensure a well-organized, collaborative, and accountable approach.

Project Results

We anticipate three significant results with this project in the areas of preservation, accessibility, and community engagement. First, the CARE will promote good stewardship, ensuring a more sustainable preservation strategy for the University's archives and special collections. Secondly, our preservation activities, including digitization efforts, will lead to broader accessibility, research, and appreciation of the collections. Finally, community members of all ages will benefit from our educational initiatives. Each phase of the two-year project will contribute to measurable outcomes that enhance the University's ability to safeguard and share cultural artifacts and archival materials.

- **Phase I Results:** The preparatory phase will establish the foundation for CARE's success. By the end of this phase, the Project Team will have procured the necessary materials, equipment, and technology to support preservation and digitization efforts. Additionally, the project's sustainability plan will be solidified, ensuring ongoing operations through staffing models that incorporate student workers and a graduate assistant. The UASC Librarian and the Library's Associate Director will finalize the assessment framework, ensuring that project success is effectively measured over time.
- **Phase II Results:** During the longest phase of the project, the Team will carry out extensive preservation and digitization efforts, with appropriate items added to *ASPIRE*. This will expand access to the collections, particularly for remote researchers, students, and historians.
- **Phase III Results:** The final phase of the project will culminate in a workshop on preservation. This public programming will engage a variety of audiences, providing educational opportunities for students, faculty, and community members. The introduction of our educational initiatives will enable a deeper appreciation and understanding of cultural preservation.

Project assessment will demonstrate a significant impact across multiple areas. UASC personnel have recently created a dataset in Springshare's *LibInsight*, a library analytics platform, to track our transactions, allowing us to identify usage patterns that can help demonstrate the value of our collections. We have added over 150 entries to this database, going back to 2022. For this project, we hope to achieve a 25% increase in collection usage in the first year of full implementation. Community engagement is an essential part of our project. We aim to increase participation by 35% through events and collaborations with CARE. The Steering Committee will also develop surveys in order to measure user satisfaction, and we are striving for an 85% satisfaction rate by the end of the project.

The CARE intends to address the critical need for improved preservation and access to the University's and the region's historical materials. By making collections more accessible, both physically and digitally, the initiative will directly support academic research, community engagement, and cultural appreciation. Additionally, our CARE will serve as a model for other institutions by developing scalable preservation techniques, distributed archives, and digital access strategies. To ensure that the project deliverables are readily adaptable by other institutions and communities, the Project Team will develop detailed documentation on their preservation, digitization, and accessibility efforts to be shared online in *ASPIRE*. The Steering Committee will prepare a comprehensive final report detailing project outcomes, challenges, and lessons learned. The UASC personnel will use these documents as the basis for a presentation, case study, and/or research article. Professor Chester-Fangman and Ms. Klaus will plan a presentation proposal highlighting key findings to academic and professional conferences, such as the Annual Meeting of the Society of Tennessee Archivists, the Tennessee Library Association Annual Conference, and the Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists. The two will also draft a case study and/or scholarly article for submission to appropriate publications in the field, such as *Tennessee Libraries*, *The Southeastern Librarian*, *Archival Outlook*, and *The American Archivist*. The University will actively share project outcomes through multiple channels. Access to digitized content will be available in *ASPIRE*. Social media outreach and partnerships with educational institutions will help ensure that the project reaches both its target groups and ultimate beneficiaries, including students, researchers, and the general public.

To sustain the benefits of the project beyond the conclusion of the grant period, our CARE aims to integrate the digital collections into curricula across multiple disciplines, ensuring continued use by students and faculty. A long-term staffing model leveraging student workers and graduate

assistants in relevant academic programs will provide ongoing support at a minimal cost. The UASC personnel will also seek additional funding opportunities, including institutional support, donor contributions, and external grants, to maintain and expand the CARE. Finally, the project's collaborations with community organizations will continue to foster engagement and ensure that cultural preservation remains a priority for years to come.

Austin Peay State University's Center for Archives Research & Education (CARE) is a transformative project that merges the University's archives and local collections to create a sustainable model for smaller, regional universities to leverage limited resources to focus on cultural preservation and community engagement in celebration of heritage and history.

A Center for Archives Research & Education (CARE): Fostering Community through Preserving, Sharing, and Educating
Schedule of Completion, Year 1

	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7	Month 8	Month 9	Month 10	Month 11	Month 12
	<u>Sept. '26</u>	<u>Oct. '26</u>	<u>Nov. '26</u>	<u>Dec. '26</u>	<u>Jan. '27</u>	<u>Feb. '27</u>	<u>Mar. '27</u>	<u>Apr. '27</u>	<u>May '27</u>	<u>Jun. '27</u>	<u>Jul. '27</u>	<u>Aug. '27</u>
<u>Activity</u>												
Setup, Acquisition, Engagement												
Planning / Assessment Strategies												
Staff Training / Workflow Development												
Archival Preservation												
Digitization												
Digital Access												
Curriculum Integration												
Ongoing Assessment												

A Center for Archives Research & Education (CARE): Fostering Community through Preserving, Sharing, and Educating

Schedule of Completion, Year 2

	Month 13	Month 14	Month 15	Month 16	Month 17	Month 18	Month 19	Month 20	Month 21	Month 22	Month 23	Month 24
	Aug. '26	Sept. '26	Oct. '26	Nov. '26	Dec. '26	Jan. '27	Feb. '27	Mar. '27	Apr. '27	May '27	Jun. '27	Jul. '27
Activity												
Archival Preservation												
Digitization												
Ongoing Assessment												
Curriculum Implementation												
Exhibitions and Events Planning												
Educational Initiatives												
Final Assessment and Reporting												