



NATIONAL LEADERSHIP GRANTS FOR LIBRARIES

Sample Application LG-259839-OLS-26
Project Category: Planning

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$187,780
Amount of cost share:	\$0

The University of Nebraska will plan the development of an accessible and usable framework for academic library support of statewide community archives. The goal is to enhance organizational knowledge and create a Community Archiving Knowledge Network across different areas of the University of Nebraska Libraries. The project hopes to develop and enhance existing partnerships with community organizations; and research, produce, and publish a Sustainable Strategies for Community Archiving Programs in Academic Libraries Toolkit with guidance for both archival processes and strategies for digital publication. This work will prepare the University of Nebraska libraries to significantly increase their support of communities that seek to steward local collections and preserve community memory, including infrastructures for providing sustainable digital access to community materials.

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.

Narrative

Introduction

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) Libraries requests \$200,000 to support Planning activities toward the goal of providing a broadly accessible and usable framework for academic library support of statewide community archives. Our project, *“Developing a Framework for Statewide Community Archives Infrastructure,”* will deliberately and effectively create a replicable model for strengthening archival services for the American public. Planning funding will enable us to: 1) enhance organizational knowledge and create a Community Archiving Knowledge Network across different areas of the UNL Libraries; 2) develop and enhance existing partnerships with community organizations; and 3) research, produce, and publish a Sustainable Strategies for Community Archiving Programs in Academic Libraries Toolkit with guidance for both archival processes and strategies for digital publication. This work will emerge from our identity as a public, land grant institution with a responsibility to serve the citizens of Nebraska and beyond, and it aligns with the NLG-L Program Goal and Objective 1.3 (“Provide broad access to and preservation of information and collections through libraries and archives.”). This Planning grant will prepare the UNL Libraries to significantly increase our support of communities that seek to steward local collections and preserve community memory, including infrastructures for providing sustainable digital access to community materials. This effort directly responds to needs we have observed through interactions with various groups in Nebraska and beyond; community centers, nonprofits, small town libraries and museums, tribal organizations, affinity groups, and others have expressed their need for help in preserving and sharing documents and artifacts representing their history. Planning activities will directly benefit our ability to serve these groups, enabling them to better meet community identified needs as they relate to preservation and access of cultural heritage resources. By extension project deliverables will enhance the lives of all Nebraskans, and, through the open source publication of the proposed toolkit, support similar preservation and access efforts at libraries and archives across the United States. This Planning work will create a foundation of knowledge and infrastructure that will enable the UNL Libraries to implement a broadly expanded community archives program in the future, using a model that is replicable in peer libraries across the nation.

Project Justification

“Developing a Framework for Statewide Community Archives Infrastructure” will lay the foundation for accessible, flexible, and sustainable approaches for statewide community archiving initiatives. As such, our project takes an expansive approach to broadening the impact of archival services for the American public, using Nebraska as a testbed. Through the intentional creation of a Community Archiving Knowledge Network—with expertise ranging from donor stewardship and digital archives to open-source web publishing infrastructures and metadata management—and the development of our Sustainable Strategies for Community Archiving Programs in Academic

Libraries Toolkit, this project will support the creation and expansion of community archiving preservation and access initiatives across the country.

Challenge and Opportunity. The UNL Libraries has regularly engaged with community groups seeking to preserve and/or share their cultural history. Often these contacts are through Archives & Special Collections, but other times the connections are through our Center for Digital Research in the Humanities (CDRH) or other digital library programs. For example, the active [Digitizing the History of the Malone Community Center](#) project, led by Charlene Maxey-Harris and Lorna Dawesis an effort to organize and digitize the archives of the organization that has been the central to the African American community in Lincoln, Nebraska, for decades. Archives & Special Collections supports the project through a custodial curatorial model, at the request of the center, and through consulting services to devise custom deeds of gift and metadata solutions that support community needs. Digital Strategies supports the project through the creation and hosting of a custom Omeka S site. Another example is the [Nebraska Stories of Humanity](#) educational website, a project of the CDRH that digitizes family collections related to those Nebraskans who survived the Holocaust or were World War II liberators of Nazi camps. CDRH hosts and provides all technical support for the site, including digitization, metadata, and design. The project was designed using a non-custodial model for physical items, with Archives & Special Collections providing consulting services for families wishing to house and preserve materials safely. The experience of these projects, among others, illustrated both a need and gap: the UNL Libraries does not have a well-developed infrastructure for supporting the work these projects demand, nor do we have a shared understanding about the best practices for doing this work. Furthermore, we could not identify an existing resource that would be adaptable to the particularities of individual projects. Although we have desired to respond robustly to the communities who need support for preserving and sharing their heritage, we have not consistently had the capacity to do so. Our collective experiences with community engaged work, plus our review of the field as described below, illustrated an opportunity to organize, learn, and generate a framework that would bolster our goal of supporting community information needs while also helping other librarians seeking to do the same. The opportunity was further underscored by emerging work with the statewide nonprofit Humanities Nebraska to respond to the needs communities are expressing around the gathering, sharing, and preserving of their stories (see included letter of support). If we could develop a strategy that could help librarians be more efficient and knowledgeable when working with community archive projects, we could significantly raise the prospect of success for these projects. Such success, in turn, would preserve valuable historical materials and, through the process of collecting and sharing, build positive connections among community members and libraries.

Current Practices. Existing community archives programs and related toolkits focus on the highly individualized needs of specific communities. Some, like the community-centered projects developed by the [University of California, Irvine](#), and [Carnegie Mellon University](#), focus specifically on the communities in which they are located. Others center the experiences and needs of specific communities, including models developed at the [Arizona State University](#), the [University of Pennsylvania](#), and non-profit community-based organizations, including [Densho](#), the [Digital](#)

[Transgender Archive](#), [Project Stand](#), and [Documenting the Now](#). Existing toolkits follow similar models, with resources tailored to the specific needs of [identified communities](#), [specific state-based populations](#), [specific types of libraries](#), or [individual families](#) interested in preserving their history.

Project Innovation and Deliverables. This project, in contrast to current practices, focuses on creating good practices for foundational infrastructure rather than solutions for a specific community or technology need—broadening applicability. We posit that although situated knowledge and context is critical for finished products, the foundational framework for all community archiving initiatives are similar enough to justify the creation of a sustainable model that broadly supports creation, preservation, and access to methodological resources at scale. Building on the theoretical frameworks developed in previous projects with more targeted communities and software solutions, our project will produce two unique deliverables. First, this project will create a model for growing a knowledge network focused on supporting sustainable, wide-scale, statewide community archiving initiatives. Although the knowledge network we create will be localized and situated within Nebraska communities, the method for creating the network will be broadly extensible and replicable by practitioners nationally. Second, it will create a toolkit with resources to support development of common archival and technological infrastructure needs in community archiving initiatives that are designed for interoperability and flexibility. Our toolkit will enable project administrators to spend more time working with community creators to preserve and provide access to local archives and less time re-creating workflows, metadata schema, and troubleshooting technical infrastructure.

Beneficiaries and Demonstrating Impact. As mentioned previously, this project stems in part from UNL's identity as a public, land grant institution with a responsibility to serve the citizens of Nebraska (and beyond). Meeting the needs of the state and its citizens forms a cornerstone of the [University's mission](#), with the recognition that many programs and services developed in Nebraska have regional, national, and international significance. As a result, we designed this project to serve two audiences: 1) the information needs of the citizens of Nebraska and 2) the advancement of archival practice at a national level. This Planning project will benefit the information needs of the state and citizens of Nebraska by making significant advances in the provision of broad, open access and preservation of Nebraska's community stories. Preserving these stories is key to preserving communities themselves; a shared history and identity, based in the information that testifies to that identity, strengthens community bonds and supports community resilience. It will also position UNL to fill a significant gap in state-level services offered to Nebraskans as no state or federally supported agency offers infrastructure, educational materials, or support for community archiving initiatives at scale.

In addition to serving the people of Nebraska, this project will benefit librarians, archivists, and community centers throughout the United States through the development of scalable, flexible, and sustainable approaches to community archiving. Throughout the project, we will develop documentation and strategies for creating and sustaining a Community Archiving Knowledge Network dedicated to statewide community archiving. This model, which we will share widely via

listservs, direct communication, presentations and publications as described below, will offer a method for other institutions to adopt and adapt when developing expertise to support community archiving initiatives. The Sustainable Strategies for Community Archiving Programs in Academic Libraries Toolkit will also support libraries and archives practitioners across the United States, offering a context-agnostic approach to the infrastructure required for community archiving. As such, we believe the Toolkit will be the first of its kind. The Toolkit will build on existing context- and community-specific models and enable practitioners across the country to focus efforts on the unique work required of each partnership and community archiving project rather than spending resources (re)creating foundational support and infrastructure with the advent of each new partnership.

Project Work Plan

This Planning project consists of three key phases: 1) developing a Community Archiving Knowledge Network within the UNL Libraries, 2) building relationships with local community experts, and 3) developing and publishing the Sustainable Strategies for Community Archiving Programs in Academic Libraries Toolkit. These phases occur sequentially, with some overlap occurring between Phases 1 and 2 (see Schedule of Completion for more detail).

Phase 1: Develop a Knowledge Network (Months 1-9)

Key Staff. The foundational phase of our project involves development of a Community Archiving Knowledge Network, drawing on expertise throughout the [University Libraries](#) and its [Center for Digital Research in the Humanities](#) (CDRH) to build a community of practice that can support the full range of activities needed for effective work in this area. The UNL Libraries are Nebraska's only comprehensive research library and is a member of the Big Ten Academic Alliance and the Association for Research Libraries. The CDRH has been collaboratively building and sustaining digital humanities projects for twenty years, and its suite of about seventy-five projects is supported by a staff of programmers, designers, and metadata professionals. This team will be led by project directors Melanie Griffin (Chair, Archives & Special Collections) and Andy Jewell (Chair, Digital Strategies, and Co-Director, CDRH), with Traci Robison (Outreach Archivist) and Karin Dalziel (Assistant Director for Technology Strategy) coordinating the work of the Knowledge Network. Network participants will participate in developing strategy, and the membership will be drawn from those with relevant roles in the University Libraries. These participants include the Digital Archivist (Glover), the University Archivist (Ducey), the Digital Stewardship Librarian (Baginski), the Visual Resources Specialist (Wiese), and the Digital Projects Specialist (Koch).

As documented in the attached resumes, these individuals bring a depth of expertise well-suited to the project plan. Co-directors Griffin and Jewell have decades of combined experience in archival work, digital project creation, community engagement, and administrative leadership, and both are currently members of the UNL Libraries executive leadership team. Robison and Dalziel, based on both their organizational roles and professional expertise, are well positioned to provide additional leadership relative to their specialization, and both have direct experience engaging with

community archival projects and digital frameworks for supporting them. The remaining Knowledge Network members include professionals in preservation of digital archives and other digital assets (Glover and Baginski), a highly experienced senior archivist (Ducey), and professionals specializing in digitization and digital project development in content management systems (Wiese and Koch).

Phase 1 Activities. From project initiation, the Knowledge Network will build shared knowledge with the following activities:

1. Meetings with project stakeholders leading existing community engaged projects, such as the recent Council on Libraries and Information Resources-funded [Digitizing the History of the Malone Community Center](#) and the educational website [Nebraska Stories of Humanity](#), described above. These sessions will introduce the Knowledge Network to ongoing work in the region and provide an overview of the approaches used by context- and community-rich models.
2. Organizing and participating in professional development sessions with experienced community-engaged archivists and scholars such as Michelle Caswell (University of California, Los Angeles), Jamie Mears (Library of Congress), and/or Samantha Hill (University of Pennsylvania). These sessions will build the Knowledge Network's expertise and offer expert perspectives on community-engaged theory and practice (Caswell), a national strategy for building technology infrastructure (Mears), and developing meaningful relationships with community partners (Hill). While we have identified Caswell, Mears, and Hill as likely archivists and scholars, final selection will depend on the Knowledge Network's recommendation following Phase 1 first activity, above.
3. Consulting with a community archives specialist around issues related to intellectual property, data sovereignty, legal rights and responsibilities of partners. We have identified Bergis Jules with Second Space Archives Consulting (<https://www2.archivists.org/consultants/second-space-archives-consulting>) as a likely specialist. However, final selection will depend on the Knowledge Network's recommendation as informed by the learning opportunities above.
4. Surveying existing resources and toolkits on related topics, including: 1) managing legal/rights issues in community archives, 2) strategies for noncustodial records management support, and 3) web hosting and content management systems to support inexpensive, user-friendly digital publication. After completion of the survey, the Knowledge Network will identify elements that our project can re-use, elements on which we can build, and areas where we will need to create new documentation.
5. Researching potential community partners to serve as expert reviewers for project deliverables.

Phase 2: Build Relationships with Local Experts (Months 5-12)

Phase 1 above concludes with the identification of potential community partners across the state of Nebraska; Phase 2 then expands relationship-building between these community partners, experts, and project staff.

Phase 2 Activities. Griffin and Jewell will use Phase 1 outputs and make initial contact with potential partners to serve as expert reviewers. Although final selection of experts will be guided by the Knowledge Network's research and recommendation, we anticipate the communities of practice will include county or city historical societies, statewide nonprofit leaders, public librarians, archivists at regional art museums, and community organizers. While we already have, through years of work in the University Libraries and Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, established and meaningful connections with potential local expert contributors, but we recognize and value the need to complete Phase 1 learning and planning before determining the expertise we will need from community partners.

After identifying five Community Stakeholder Consultants who bring broad representation of relevant expertise, we will build a series of structured engagements with this group and the Knowledge Network. These engagements, which will be designed around key elements of the toolkit (see below), will be jargon free to create the opportunity for in-depth conversations with local community leaders on these issues. These engagements will be private and unrecorded (except for notes), with only members of the Knowledge Network and Community Stakeholder Consultants participating, and they will be designed to both elicit valuable information and build a respectful and trusting relationship among all participants. As described in our budget documents, the Consultants will receive an honorarium for their contributions to the project.

We anticipate this work will proceed in cycles and will require iterations; we will plan the Consultant engagements to maximize the meaning and value of the input. Some of this will likely happen after work described in Phase 3 has been completed and community partners are given the opportunity to respond to initial drafts of the toolkit.

Phase 3: Develop and Publish the Toolkit (Months 9-24)

During Phase 3, we will create scalable, flexible, and extensible solutions that support a statewide community archiving initiative. Unlike previous community archives toolkits that prioritize the needs of a specific community or region, the Sustainable Strategies for Community Archiving Programs in Academic Libraries Toolkit foregrounds infrastructure solutions that will empower a broad range of community partners to preserve and provide access to community memory without requiring each partner to (re)build bespoke solutions. By design, the Toolkit will be flexible so that it can meet the varied information and education needs of each partner across the state.

Phase 3 Activities. Building on work completed during Phases 1 and 2, Griffin and Jewell will lead the Knowledge Network in developing documentation for scalable and sustainable archival practices and associated digital publishing models. We will develop the toolkit based on parameters guided by our research and consultation during Phases 1 and 2. Based on initial research and our combined experience with community archiving projects to date, we anticipate producing documentation related to items summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Anticipated Documentation

➤ Certificate of gift templates for community collecting efforts that reflect different custodianship models.
➤ Descriptions and decision points for available custodianship models, ranging from full repository to full community custody, for both physical and digital materials.
➤ Flexible and extensible metadata schema templates that will accommodate a range of specialized taxonomies.
➤ Memoranda of understanding templates for program administrators and community partners.
➤ Resources, workflows, technology kits, and associated gift form templates for community digitization initiatives as a collection development strategy.
➤ Resources, workflows, technology kits, and associated gift form templates for community donations as a collection development strategy.
➤ Resources, workflows, and technology kits to describe available technology solutions and decision points for selecting a content management system for publishing community archival content.
➤ Workflows and good practices for arrangement, description, preservation, and access to digitized and born digital materials stewarded on both community and partner organization servers.
➤ Workflows and good practices for arrangement, description, preservation, and access to physical materials in both a community setting and in an institutional repository.
➤ Workflows and good practices for custodial and non-custodial digital preservation plans.
➤ Workflows and good practices for digitization specifications.
➤ Workflows and good practices for planning related to project life cycle management, including end of project planning.

Rather than producing one definitive approach to each of these workflows and associated documents, we will focus on highlighting decision points for community partners, emphasizing what choices are possible and how those choices will impact subsequent decisions, project outputs, and life cycle management for digital objects and associated publications. We will aim to create the toolkit for a broad audience. While acknowledging the need for resonance with the language of a professional library and archive community, we will also ensure the content is accessible and welcoming of the many different people who make up the active groups seeking to preserve community memory.

We will use an iterative process to write, assess, and revise the Toolkit. Following initial drafting, Griffin and Jewell and fellow Knowledge Network leaders Robison and Dalziel will hold focus groups with the community stakeholders and experts identified in Phase 2. Following the focus groups, Griffin and Jewell will revise toolkit documentation to incorporate the information needs of stakeholders and community experts, taking care to ensure the result is flexible and extensible.

The primary deliverable for Phase 3 is open access publication of the Sustainable Strategies for Community Archiving Programs in Academic Libraries Toolkit on a Drupal website. The website will

be hosted by UNL and meet the University's criteria for security, stability, and succession planning. The resources in the Toolkit will be managed and preserved by the Libraries' digital stewardship program, headed by project staff Baginski and managed under the Libraries' level three (advanced) digital preservation plan, which offers our highest level of preservation support to maintain the viability, integrity, understandability, renderability, and functionality of the original files. Melissa Sinner, UNL Libraries' Web Content & Design Specialist, has years of experience building sustainable, accessible content in the UNL Drupal framework for the Libraries and will be the primary developer of the toolkit publication in digital form.

Upon project completion, the project team will have the tools, resources, and infrastructure necessary for leading and managing a statewide community archiving initiative in Nebraska, propelling the ability of the UNL Libraries to meet the information needs of Nebraska citizens. Moreover, by openly publishing the Toolkit, the project will support communities and similar initiatives across the United States.

Evaluating and Demonstrating Impact

Because our plan involves continual interaction with the Knowledge Network, Community Stakeholder Consultants, and other relevant audiences, a key strategy for evaluation will be the quality of engagement and the tenor of response we get from these interactions throughout the Planning process. If our initial strategies fail to generate the results we seek, we will need to change them. Additionally, we will have opportunity for external assessment through our engagements with the professional community through the activities described below under "Dissemination Plan." Our plan is grounded in interaction and iteration, giving us the opportunity for robust assessment throughout. Beyond the funding period, however, our evaluation will be based on the experience of full implementation: how are the UNL Libraries able to expand services to Nebraska communities, and how has the profession more broadly responded to and used the Toolkit? We know we will have opportunities to answer these questions through ongoing community engagements, and we also anticipate future initiatives to formally study the implementation of the Toolkit.

Project Results

Sustainability. Building a Knowledge Network dedicated to creating a broadly applicable infrastructure for library support of statewide community archiving initiatives will position the UNL Libraries to enhance existing and build new partnerships statewide and launch an ambitious program to facilitate Nebraskans in preserving and providing access to the state's cultural heritage resources. As a direct result of understanding built during this Planning project, archives and digital strategy practitioners at UNL will have the knowledge and ability to operationalize a flexible suite of resources designed to help us meet the unique information needs of each community with whom we work rather than relying on a one-size-fits-most approach. With a range of workflows and custodianship models alongside a suite of achievable technology support developed during a planning phase, we will be positioned to focus subsequent work on relationship building and

determining how to operationalize existing solutions and resources. In short, at the end of the project we will be ready to sustainably and dramatically increase our library's support of community archiving activities in Nebraska while also making resources available for libraries around the country to do the same for their constituents.

As described above, existing community archiving toolkits focus on meeting the needs of identified communities or regions. The Sustainable Strategies for Community Archiving Programs in Academic Libraries Toolkit will fill a gap in the community archiving ecosystem through its emphasis on flexible and extensible infrastructure elements designed to meet the needs of a broad range of stakeholder communities. We will make our Toolkit available for use and re-use on a Drupal-based website free of charge, using a CC BY-NC-SA license. We will take advantage of resources from UNL's digital stewardship program, which will enable us to preserve the Toolkit, provide a stable publishing platform, and migrate it to new technical environments when needed.

Dissemination Plan. Each work phase includes built-in dissemination strategies. At the conclusion of Phase 1, Griffin and Jewell (and potentially other participants) will share strategies and methods for building a knowledge network focused on community archiving theory, philosophy, and practice at a conference such as the Society of American Archivists annual conference. During Phase 2, communication shifts from the national libraries and archives practitioners to focus on stakeholders in Nebraska. We will draw upon existing connections in the UNL Libraries and among the project team, which include strong relationships with relevant statewide nonprofits like Humanities Nebraska (see Supporting Document 1), to identify and reach community stakeholders, share the goals and anticipated deliverables of the project, and recruit expert community members to provide feedback on the Toolkit during Phase 3. At the conclusion of Phase 3, we will publish the Toolkit and broadly announce its availability through established communication channels, e.g., relevant state and national listservs of archives and libraries practitioners; and directly to our community experts who participated in Phases 2 and 3. Over the longer term, we will continue to disseminate the Toolkit to additional community groups across the state and beyond as they become known to us. Griffin and Jewell and/or the Knowledge Network will share their methodology for creating the Toolkit and discuss its significance for practice at professional conferences, such as the Digital Library Federation Forum, and submit an article on the same topic to a journal that supports, at a minimum, green open access, such as *American Archivist*.

Through this Planning grant, the UNL Libraries will be prepared to significantly increase our support of communities who seek to steward local collections and preserve community memory. We will have an infrastructure strategy to guide the formation of partnerships with community organizations and provide sustainable digital access to community materials. The professionals who form the Knowledge Network will be positioned to cultivate and sustain community-based relationships that will enable preservation of and access to Nebraska's unique community histories. Importantly, we will be able to focus on the stories and needs found in each community as the Toolkit and the Knowledge Network's expertise will provide sustainable infrastructure on which we can build.

Timeline to Completion

