NATIONAL LEADERSHIP GRANTS FOR LIBRARIES – RESEARCH GRANT – COMMUNITY ANCHORS
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, SEATTLE AND CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN MARCOS
Supporting Intergenerational Participatory Design Groups for Librarians and Youth for Design Thinking Around Digital Learning

Statement of Need: A team of researchers from The Information School at University of Washington (UW iSchool) and the School of Education at California State University, San Marcos (CalSU) – with local library partners Seattle Public Library (SPL) and San Diego Public Library (SDPL) – requests $296k for our 2-year research project to deepen understanding of libraries as community anchors for *design thinking* practices for creating and implementing digital learning activities for youth and family patrons. Libraries are currently important community anchors for youth and family patrons to engage in digital learning opportunities, such as makerspaces, digital media design, robotics, games for learning, e-textiles, and computer programming. However, most librarians and MLIS students, due to a lack of core curriculum on instructional design and design thinking/methods in MLIS programs, may have little exposure to instructional design and user-centered design (a set of practices that support explicit understanding of users, tasks, environments, and evaluation). Thus, while librarians are tasked to create more opportunities for digital learning, both MLIS students and librarians are ill-prepared to be technology and instructional designers.

Engaging in *intergenerational participatory design* (PD, or co-design) groups through a communities of practice model can be the key for BOTH librarians and MLIS students to engage in user-centered design and design thinking processes. PD is a design method in which users (patrons) engage in the design process with expert designers. The method focuses on supporting democratic, collaborative relationships between users and designers during the design process. By providing agency and opportunities for users to contribute, PD attempts to ensure that users have equal standing with designers while they work together. Libraries serve as important pillars for democracies, and we believe that creating opportunities for patrons to engage in a democratic process of design supports the ultimate mission of libraries. While libraries have engaged in past PD projects with university partners, less is known about 1) training and supporting public librarians to engage in co-design of digital learning activities for their own local contexts towards digital learning and 2) implementing co-design groups for libraries as community anchors that are independent and self-sustaining for public libraries and their resources. Our research on PD in libraries will provide first-hand data for developing an innovative support system and community of practice to work with local and national libraries interested in implementing intergenerational PD groups for digital learning and design thinking.

Project and Significance: The ultimate aim of our research is to create, train, and disseminate a model for libraries to develop their own intergenerational PD groups between librarians and patrons. Research results will be used to 1) create a process in which libraries can engage in PD independently to create digital learning activities; 2) provide a means to create a central hub at UW iSchool and SPL to help train and support librarians engaging in PD across the country; and 3) create materials, workshops, seminars, and presentations to help other librarians engage in PD.

Research Questions: Our research will use a qualitative approach to answer the following questions: (RQ1) What are the affordances and challenges of creating and supporting a communities of practice model for intergenerational participatory design groups as to support design thinking in libraries for digital learning?; (RQ2) How can we improve and build community anchor supports for intergenerational participatory design groups across different libraries, both local and national? (RQ3) What impact do intergenerational participatory design groups have on libraries, children, families, design processes and products, and other factors?; (RQ4) How can MLIS students improve their professional practice with libraries and patrons through engagement with intergenerational participatory design groups?

Prior Work and Collaborations: Our research into PD has been built on a strong foundation of prior successful research. First, for three years, PI Jason Yip has developed a robust on-campus intergenerational co-design group between SPL and children co-designers (ages 6-11), called *KidsTeam UW*. Here, we have engaged in 13 co-design sessions and have created a number of digital learning activities that have been used successfully by hundreds of youth and family patrons at SPL. Second, PI Yip and Co-PI Jin Ha Lee have taken on curricular initiatives for design thinking in the UW iSchool MLIS program. We have created a core course for design thinking and librarians (both local and online). We have also created an MLIS course on PD between librarians, pre-service librarians, and patrons (LIS 598). As part of this course, we have developed a second intergenerational co-design group of neighborhood children, MLIS students, and librarians (*KidsTeam SPL)* hosted at SPL. Finally, Co-PI Sinem Siyahhan has established relationships with public libraries in the San Diego area in the development and engagement of digital learning for families and youth. She is an expert researcher in the area of families, youth, and digital learning.

Proposed Work Plan: Our team comprises of faculty, a Ph.D. graduate student, volunteer MLIS students, and undergraduate researchers to collaborate with library practitioners and other volunteers in the creation of multiple intergenerational co-design groups and the support system needed to implement these groups. In **_Year 1 (phase 1)_**, our team will setup, expand, and investigate how MLIS students, SPL, and children (ages 6-11) will engage in intergenerational co-design groups designing digital learning activities. Based on the foundational pilot work in building *KidsTeam UW and KidsTeam SPL*, the PI will have MLIS students support three different libraries in Seattle to engage and establish co-design groups to design digital learning activities. In **_Year 1 (phase 2)_**, PI Yip and Co-PI Lee will begin outreach to other local libraries nearby Seattle to engage in co-design processes. We will also begin coordinating with Co-PI Siyahhan and setting up intergenerational co-design groups with three libraries in the San Diego area. The SDPL will be the testbed for learning what we can and cannot do to develop a national program for intergenerational co-design groups. To train librarians (both local & national level), we will 1) invite librarians to participate in intergenerational co-design groups at SPL, both in-person or through telepresence robots; 2) provide webinars that will guide librarians through the PD methodologies; and 3) host workshops at the UW for librarians to meet and support each other. Finally, in **_Year 1 (phase 3)_** our team will also outreach to librarians at YALSA, ALA, and other library conferences to begin recruitment of other librarians interested in setting up co-design groups. During Year 1, we will use surveys and interviews of librarians to investigate the viability and need to create intergenerational co-design groups. We will also make site visits and observations of SPL co-design implementations and examine the affordances and challenges of the co-design process for both local Seattle and out-of-state San Diego.

In **_Year 2 (phase 1)_**, we will work with SPL to set them up as a national leader in supporting intergenerational co-design initiatives. Based on our UW iSchool partnership, SPL will act as a hub to support other libraries who are interested in setting up co-design groups. We will have the libraries in the San Diego area partner up with already established co-design groups at SPL for support. We will develop a community of practice around co-design in libraries through regular webinar meetups, continued robotic telepresence co-design support, in-person consultation, and an all-day workshop gathering of all the participants. In **_Year 2 (phase 2)_**, we will use our primary data sources – interviews, videos, photos, field notes, and design artifacts – to develop a guide of best practices for other libraries across the U.S. to setup their own intergenerational co-design groups for digital learning development. The guide will provide librarians with the knowledge, tools, and best practice for the development of intergenerational co-design group to support digital learning. In addition, we will make our LIS 598 curriculum available for other universities serving and training librarians in design thinking. Both the guide and the course curriculum will be evaluated and refined based on the findings of this research study.

National Impact: Our research will build greater skills for librarians and MLIS students in design thinking and user-centered design methods for the creation of digital learning activities. Youth patrons and families will also be able to participate democratically in the creation of digital learning activities for themselves and their communities.

Projected Performance Goals and Outcomes: Our projected performance goals is for Learning: Train and develop museum and library professionals; Support communities of practice; and Develop and provide inclusive and accessible learning opportunities. The Funding Category is Research Grant; Project Category is Community Anchor; and Project Type is Masters-level and Doctoral-level Programs. Research findings will be published in academic and practitioner journals. We will present our research findings at YALSA, ALISE, ALA, WLA, AERA, and other conferences. We will publish practitioner guidelines and university curriculum (local and online) on how to establish a co-design group.

Plan for Diversity: Both libraries in SPL and SDPL serve a large population of youth and families in marginalized communities. Currently, our LIS 598 course has developed a collaboration with a library branch serving youth in marginalized communities, including immigrants, refugees, and lower socioeconomic families. We plan to use the existing partnership, experience, and process at SPL to recruit youth and families from marginalized communities that would benefit from engagement in co-design processes.

Proposed Budget: Total project costs: $295,941 ($229,396 UW; $66,545 CSU). UW budget including CSU subaward: direct costs $211,284, F&A $84,657. CSU Subaward: direct costs $44,661, F&A $21,884. Costs include salaries & benefits ($95,904 UW; $26,161 CSU), consultants & honoraria ($14,400 UW, $7,500 CSU), contractual services ($4,000 UW), Travel ($8,000 UW; $9,000 CSU), Supplies ($6,000 UW; $2,000 CSU), Student tuition ($16,435 UW).