



NATIVE HAWAIIAN LIBRARY SERVICES GRANTS

Sample Application NH-260907-OLS-26

Hawaiian Historical Society

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$150,000
Amount of cost share:	\$13,980

This project will establish and implement a sustainable digitization program to preserve and expand access to historically significant library collections documenting Native Hawaiian history and culture. Funding will support the development of digitization workflows and preservation procedures, processing of approximately 1,160 glass plate and nitrate negative images, and acquisition of the technology and collections management infrastructure needed to support long-term digital stewardship and public access, including computers, servers, secure archival storage cabinets, digitization software, cloud-based preservation storage, and a collections management system. Consultants will assist with the development of the digitization program, establish workflows, and complete activities under the direction of the organization. Expected outcomes include increased preservation of at-risk materials, enhanced access to unique historical resources, and strengthened organizational capacity to provide ongoing library services. Primary beneficiaries include Native Hawaiian communities throughout Hawaii and the continental United States, students and researchers, and Hawaii residents seeking access to local history.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Organizational profile
- Proposal 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.

Organizational Profile

The Hawaiian Historical Society (HHS) is a non-profit organization, library, and archives, established in 1892 by prominent citizens. For over 133 years, HHS remains foundationally committed to advancing accessibility and visibility for our historical collections and responsibility to humanities.

Following its formal assemblage on January 11, 1892, the First Annual Report of the Hawaiian Historical Society would reiterate the mission of HHS as set out by its own Constitution: “the collection, study, and utilization of all material illustrating the Ethnology, Archaeology and History of the Hawaiian Islands.”¹ In 2024, HHS revised its mission: “*E mālama, ho‘omau, a paipai i ke a‘o ‘ana i ka mo‘olelo o Hawai‘i nei*. To preserve, perpetuate, and encourage the study of the history of Hawai‘i.” Our vision: “He ‘ahahui ehuehu e mahi ana i ka ‘ike mo‘olelo Hawai‘i no ka pono o Hawai‘i a me ke ao ākea. To be a dynamic organization that cultivates knowledge of the history of Hawai‘i for the benefit of Hawai‘i and the world.”² Our mission and vision have been supported through community outreach, public programming and events, and published works in English and ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, including *The Hawaiian Journal of History*. This annual, academic journal is the longest standing, peer-reviewed publication to focus on the history of Native Hawaiians and all other cultures in Hawai‘i and the Pacific. HHS also stewards a collection that represents a powerful breadth of historical material and objects from the 1810s to present.

Our historical collections are preserved in a 595 square foot vault containing over 30,000 volumes of publications and over 300 linear feet of manuscripts, photographs, works on paper, and cultural objects. Of these 30,000 volumes, we house over 200 Hawaiian Language Imprints in ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian Language) dating from 1823 to early 1900s printed on local based presses. The significance of these publications highlights the beginnings of the Hawaiian Language from oral to written. This collection represents one example on how we support our lāhui (community) in discovering cultural identities and how we can empower Native Hawaiians to learn their history in their language.

While our services have an international reach, our site is largely accessed by the Native Hawaiian community. Based on usage statistics, we serve 1,300 individuals per year from the island of O‘ahu, neighbor islands, the continental U.S., and international areas. Of these served 845 or 65% identify as Native Hawaiian. These statistics are compiled annually from our conducted surveys, and *Researcher’s Agreements* forms. Since 2023, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs has been a large funding source for our organization. To maintain this funding, at least 60% of our demographics must identify as Native Hawaiian.

Governed by an active Board of Trustees, and staffed by a single Executive Director, HHS relies on its members, volunteers, and interns to carry out its mission and vision. 90% of the thirteen Board of Trustees and the Executive Director identify as Native Hawaiian. Additionally, 80% of interns and volunteers also identify as Native Hawaiian. This diversity has provided the organization with multiple pathways to foster relationships with other institutions that support the Native Hawaiians.

¹ First annual report of the Hawaiian Historical Society for the year 1892, Hawaiian Historical Society, 1893. <http://hdl.handle.net/10524/86>

² Strategic Plan, Hawaiian Historical Society, 2024 <https://hawaiianhistory.org/about/strategic-plan/>

Project Narrative

'Ike Lau: Expanding Knowledge Through Digital Access Project

1. Project Justification

The Hawaiian Historical Society (HHS) was established at a significant time in Hawaiian history (1892) and our identity formed by weathering transitions and challenges in governance, accessibility, and the very means by which we develop historical narratives. Our organization continues to thrive for over 133 years due to our flexibility, adapting, and creative ways of navigating forward. In part, our navigation is in response to our community's needs. The project, *'Ike Lau: Expanding Knowledge Through Digital Access*, was developed based on community feedback and would provide HHS an opportunity to increase community outreach, while preserving irreplaceable historical material. The project would allow us to build a sustainable, digital infrastructure that will assist in digitizing our collections.

In 2024, we distributed close to 600 surveys for community input to develop our strategic plan. Out of 600, we received 127 responses (21%). In an open-ended question, 30% surveyed (38 individuals) commented that access to digital resources should be a priority. An additional 38% (48 individuals) were not aware that HHS had a library and archives or that they could access the historical material in person to conduct research. An individual even wrote, "I didn't realize I was welcomed here."

We recognize that libraries and archives have stereotypes and a negative connotation as being gatekeepers; which is prevalent in the compiled data. The lack of awareness of our historical material, services we provide, and comfortability in our space is concerning to our organization, especially since these components are part of our mission and vision— "...to encourage the study of the history of Hawai'i."

In today's world, discoverability is tied to the virtual realm. On a global scale, the libraries' and archives' market size is expected to grow at a 5.5% rate from \$80.32 billion to \$104.11 billion in 2030 attributed to the rise of digital libraries, immersive virtual library experiences, and smart infrastructure integration.¹ In conjunction, the Public Libraries Survey (PLS) from 2023 states that electronic use in public libraries increased to 1.68 [million] usage.² These datasets further support HHS' internal surveys to suggest that user demand for digital services is growing and that to stay relevant, HHS must develop remote services.

The proposed two-year project, *'Ike Lau: Expanding Knowledge Through Digital Access* will address this challenge by creating digital workstations, researchers' workstation, methods and standards for digital processing, and the ability to digitize and preserve 1,160 images from HHS' glass plate and nitrate negative collections. The first year will be spent working with specialists to purchase hardware and

¹ *Libraries And Archives Market Report 2026*, The Business Research Company, 2026.

<https://www.thebusinessresearchcompany.com/report/libraries-and-archives-global-market-report>.

² *Public Libraries Survey, 2023*, Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2023.

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USIMLS/bulletins/3f09e4a#:~:text=Public%20libraries%20served%20over%20155,who%20deliver%20essential%20library%20services>.

software for digital processing as well as develop a *Digital Preservation Policy*, *Digital Products Plan*, and *Digital Processing Manual* including user guides, workflows, and access procedures. The second year HHS will implement policies and procedures to successfully digitize and create metadata for 1,160 images. All methods and standards will be edited based on “real-life” scenarios. At the end of the project, HHS will have a sustainable and cyber-secured digital infrastructure and the beginnings of digital collections.

The glass plate negative collection contains 663 images of historic Hawai‘i from the late 1850s to 1920s. This collection also features images by Ray Jerome Baker, a significant American photographer that owned a studio in Honolulu from 1910 until his retirement in 1960. He is famously known for photographing the land, people, and plants of Hawai‘i. Images of the ‘āina (land) will support place-based knowledge resources that encourage cultural heritage and environmental consciousness. To Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians), places provide an opportunity to make sense of, understand, and connect to the natural and cultural surroundings. It is the concept of Aloha ‘Āina that connects Kānaka Maoli to the cosmos, the ‘āina (land), and the lāhui (each other). Referring to Baker’s images, the lāhui (community) can gather a visual understanding of these emotive and historical spaces, especially if that place no longer exists or has been dramatically altered through human or natural environmental changes.

The nitrate negatives contain 497 images by ethnologist and photographer, Theodore Kelsey, who moved to Hawai‘i in the early 1900s when he was a child. Although not of Native Hawaiian descent, he dedicated more than 50 years documenting and preserving Native Hawaiian culture and was a consultant to the Hawaiian scholar and cultural practitioner, Mary Kawena Pukui. His passion was to photograph people and had a studio on the island of Hawai‘i. The majority of his surviving images reside in HHS’ collection. At least a third of HHS’ researchers each year request access to these images for academic research, publications, and genealogical research. This collection represents a significant opportunity for Native Hawaiians to find their ancestors and connect with their mo‘okūauhau (ancestry).

Collectively, these two collections has the power to highlight the physical changes of our islands from the 1850s to 1920s that also tell a story of the social and political transition from the Hawaiian Kingdom to the Territory of Hawai‘i. Besides the cultural and historical significance, these two collections were selected based on preservation and accessibility concerns. HHS’ glass plate negatives have no prints or other copies. There are no metadata records for the images, and we do not fully know what images there are with the exception of Ray Jerome Baker’s negatives. Currently, this collection is not accessible due to its fragile material. Additionally, nitrate negatives pose a collection risk as they are extremely unstable and highly flammable. This type of film can combust under the right conditions. HHS has one print copy of each negative, but this project is time sensitive regarding digital preservation.

Target Audience

The primary audience of interest for the collection are Native Hawaiians in Hawai‘i and across the diaspora on the continent. According to the 2020 census, there are 680,442 Native Hawaiians in the U.S. and 319,807 or 47% live in Hawai‘i, while 360,634 or 53% live on the continent. Additionally, the Native Hawaiian population is growing five times faster on the continent than on the islands of Hawai‘i. With the

diaspora population growing, the need for virtual resources to support cultural connections is becoming crucial.³

Another audience are Native Hawaiian students at the university levels, doing research on Native Hawaiian culture and history. For the last five years, HHS has had a strong partnership with University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Native Hawaiian Student Services through internships and quarterly information literacy workshops.

On a broader scale, the general public is yet another target audience. Outlined in the Hawaiian Historical Society’s (HHS) By-Laws, one of the objectives is “...the cultivation among the citizens of Hawai‘i of an interest in and knowledge of the history, folklore and customs of Hawai‘i.” HHS has the potential to reach 1.46 million “citizens of Hawai‘i” not to mention a global audience with this project.⁴

Program Goals

Our objective is to build pathways for Native Hawaiians and support their research endeavors on their personal journey towards connecting with mo‘omeheu (culture). *‘Ike Lau: Expanding Knowledge Through Digital Access* has the capabilities to remove organizational barriers and provide access to historical material that encourages cultivation of knowledge and knowledge sharing for the benefit of Hawai‘i and the world. He ‘ahahui ehuehu e mahi ana i ka ‘ike mo‘olelo Hawai‘i no ka pono o Hawai‘i a me ke ao ākea.

This project aligns with the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) *Goal 2: Improve Kānaka Maoli well-being* in that this project will provide digital services to primary sources that are unique to our organization and currently have limited access. The content of the collections selected will promote a sense of space, place, and identify—encouraging community and civic dialogues. Additionally, with the ability to digitize, HHS will be able to strategically expand partnerships with other repositories globally to increase equity and access across platforms. This project also relates to IMLS *Goal 3: Provide access to and preservation of information and collections*. Currently, the glass plate and negative nitrate collections pose a preservation concern. By digitizing collections with active deterioration, HHS can stabilize the historical material ensuring their preservation and perpetuation of Hawai‘i’s culture for future generations. In turn, this project will provide discoverability of our organization and the resources we steward to further encourage community engagement and create a space for shared narratives. *‘Ike Lau: Expanding Knowledge Through Digital Access* will ultimately help break down barriers so that no one will feel as if they are not wanted.

³

Detailed Look at Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Groups, United States Census Bureau, 2023.
<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2023/09/2020-census-dhc-a-nhpi-population.html>

⁴

Ibid.

2. Project Work Plan

The project will be implemented by the Executive Director, Librarian and Archivist of the Hawaiian Historical Society working closely alongside Archival Consultant, DeSoto Brown, and Digital Asset Manager, Nathaniel Smith as well as Archival Technician II, Morgan Edelman. Collectively, the skill sets of the team bring over 50 years of project/grant management, leadership of policy implementation, and archival experience.

Year One:

Months 1-3: Phase 1 (Preparation for project)

1. Meet with Project Team to review: project scope, timeframes, and deliverables, roles and responsibilities.
 - 1.1 Executive Director (ED) will meet with Digital Asset Manager (DAM) to define the purpose of *Digital Preservation Policy*, *Digital Products Plan*, *Digital Processing Manual* including user guides, workflows, and access procedures.
 - 1.2 DAM to research hardware and software programs and meet with the IT consultant for selection of equipment.
 - 1.3 DAM to write *Digital Preservation Policy* with guidance and input from ED and Archival Consultant.
 - 1.4 The ED will announce the project to the membership and community at large with a newsletter to be produced and distributed.
 - 1.5 At the end of each quarter (phases), the project team will convene to assess the progress made, and the ED will submit necessary progress reports as outlined by IMLS.

Months 4-6: Phase 2 (Writing policies and creating workstations)

2. DAM, ED, and Archival Consultant to complete draft *Digital Preservation Policy* and meet with IT consultant for review of Policy.
 - 2.1 ED to work with the Board of Trustees to finalize *Digital Preservation Policy*.
 - 2.2 ED to purchase all digital hardware.
 - 2.3 DAM to write *Digital Processing Manual* with guidance and input from ED and Archival Consultant.
 - 2.4 ED to schedule removal of all digital hardware and office equipment. Receive all digital hardware and work with the IT consultant to install and build digital processing workstations.

Months 7-9: Phase 3 (Installing Software, Training, and Writing workflows)

3. ED to work with the Board of Trustees to finalize the *Digital Processing Manual*.
 - 3.1 ED and Archives Technician II to train on software and hardware.
 - 3.2 ED and Archival Consultant to develop metadata standards for the project.
 - 3.3 DAM and Archives Technician II to write workflows with guidance and input from ED and Archival Consultant.
 - 3.4 ED and Archival Consultant will select and order the necessary archival preservation supplies to process the collections.

Months 10-12: Phase 4

4. DAM and ED will finalize all reports as outlined above.
 - 4.1 Project Team will hire Archives Technician I.

4.2 Archival Consultant will train ED, Archives Technician I, II on rehousing, cleaning, and prepping glass plate negatives for digitization.

4.3 At the end of the twelfth month, the ED will report the progress made to the Board of Trustees, membership, and community at large. A newsletter will be created and distributed.

Year Two:

Months 13-15: Phase 5

5.1 ED and Archives Technician II will train Archives Technician I on scanning glass plate negatives.

5.2 Archives Technicians should scan on average 90 images per week, and input data known into the metadata spreadsheets.

5.3 Archival Consultant should be able to identify 60 images per week and complete the metadata spreadsheets.

5.4 Once a week the Archives Technician I will post to all social media outlets for the “Then & Now Tuesdays,” featuring a specific image and historical stories on the place as well as the project for the remainder of the project.

Months 16-18: Phase 6

6. Archival Consultant and ED will meet to review the quality of the scanning and the metadata information.

6.1 Once quality assurance of digital collection is finalized, Archives Technician II with guidance from ED will upload glass plate negative images and metadata into the selected software database.

6.2 Project Team including DAM will meet to discuss workflows and to see if all aspects of the policy and procedures are working. DAM will adjust accordingly. DAM to write the *Digital Products Plan*, and access procedures with guidance and input from ED and Archival Consultant.

6.3 Archival Consultant will train ED, Archives Technician I, II on rehousing, cleaning, and prepping nitrate negatives for digitization.

Months 19-21: Phase 7

7. ED and Archives Technician II will train Archives Technician I on scanning nitrate negatives.

7.1 Archives Technicians should scan on average 90 images per week and complete metadata spreadsheets.

7.2 Archival Consultant and ED will meet to review the quality of the scanning and the metadata information.

7.3 Once quality assurance of digital collection is finalized, Archives Technician II with guidance from ED will upload glass plate negative images and metadata into the selected software database.

7.4 ED will hire an IT website designer to update the website with access to all project materials.

Months 22-24: Phase 8

8. All uploaded materials will be reviewed by ED and Archival Consultant to ensure the completion of the project.

8.1 All policies and procedures written during the project will be finalized. 5 copies will be printed of all materials.

8.2 ED will draft launching page information and will provide information and database links to website designers to create a user interface.

8.3 At the end of the project, the ED will report the progress made to the Board of Trustees, membership, and community at large. A newsletter will be created and distributed.

8.4 ED to plan and implement a program for the project to launch public access to the online collection.

Project Team

As a Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian), **Cynthia Engle** is honored to be the Executive Director of the Hawaiian Historical Society. Ms. Engle will act as Project and Grant Administrator and will provide archival support. Ms. Engle has over 13 years of project management, library, and archival experience. She will utilize her skillsets to help where needed in all facets of the project. She will also act as the liaison with the Board of Trustees and other stakeholders in approving all documents.

DeSoto Brown holds the position as Librarian on Hawaiian Historical Society's Board of Trustees and is also the archivist and historian for Bishop Museum. He brings over 45 years of archival experience to the project and will act as lead archivist.

Nathanael Smith is the Digital Asset Manager for Bishop Museum and has over five years of experience organizing, securing, and distributing digital content for repositories. He will take lead on developing the Hawaiian Historical Society's digital infrastructure including all plans, policies, and procedures.

Morgan Edelman has four years of experience with preservation and digitization of historical material at three different repositories. She will take lead with scanning the negatives and will supervise the other archival technician. She will also assist with developing and drafting workflows and processing procedures.

Our key staff or consultant team as identified above also act as our key stakeholders. Collaboration with colleagues from our discipline ensures that our plans, policies, and procedures align not only with archival standards, but those of our local repository communities. The Board of Trustees as governing body will be incorporated throughout the entire project process as meetings are held monthly.

After the first year of the project, the finalized *Digital Preservation Plan* will be shared at our annual Membership and Community Meeting. Although we are open to feedback, specific experts are needed to draft these plans, and shared stakeholder opinions may not be viable. However, we plan on incorporating more stakeholder input for digitization projects beyond the scope of this grant project. User statistics and community needs in conjunction with preservation needs will help us to identify the priority of future digitization projects.

Anticipated Risks & Mitigation

Our goal is to deliver the project on time and within budget. Therefore, our assumption is that HHS has all the necessary staff, resources, and time to accomplish this goal. However, HHS identified the factors that could hinder the project implementation and created a contingency plan to minimize interruptions to project progress:

- Aligning technology choices with HHS’ financials: To prevent failure beyond the project terms, the DAM and IT consultant must select hardware and software that can be maintained within budget constraints. All proposals must be approved by the Executive Director before any equipment is purchased or installed.
- Recruiting and hiring an additional Archives Technician: If a second consultant is not hired, the projected work can be distributed to the Archives Technician II and the Executive Director.
- Deterioration of negatives and poor-quality scans: Although HHS has conducted preliminary condition assessment on all negatives, there is a potential risk that the images are more distorted than originally documented. However, with the experience of the entire project team, quality assurance will be at its highest when scanning images. This might just prolong the original timeframe; however, additional time has been added into the schedule.

3. **Project Results**

The intended results include a sustainable, digital infrastructure for HHS. End products consist of: *Digital Preservation Policy*, *Digital Products Plan*, *Digital Processing Manual* including user guides, workflows, and access procedures as well as two physical digitization processing workstations and a researcher’s workstation to provide access for individuals that may not have remote access offsite.

As a result of building a digital infrastructure, HHS will digitize over 600 glass plate negatives and over 400 nitrate negatives, create metadata, and make available these collections via an online database, accessible on HHS’ website.

Access to this information addresses the crucial need for increased access to primary sources for purposes of knowledge sharing for Native Hawaiians to develop a more comprehensive understanding of their history, heritage, and identity. This has the potential to instill pride in our k̄anaka of who they are as Natives Hawaiians; which will in turn improve their quality of life and civic responsibility to their lāhui.

We define success as both increased access and meaningful engagement demonstrated through rising website and database usage, expanded reach to Native Hawaiian communities locally and in the diaspora, positive user feedback, increased membership and participation, and clear evidence that the digitized collections are being used to support research, genealogy, education, and the strengthening of cultural connections.

Our membership comprises approximately 600 individuals with at least 75% living in Hawai‘i. Our email list-serv is open to the public as well as membership and includes over 1,300 contacts. The membership also receives the quarterly newsletter, *Nā Mea Kahiko*, in addition to the emails. Staff and volunteers are also trained in actively engaging with individuals in-person from reference appointments (400 individuals annually) scheduled onsite, at our events (160 individuals annually) as well as outreach events including Hawaiian Missions Houses Annual Craft Fair (1,000 individuals annually). To summarize, our current reach through our existing forms of communication can reach at least 3,500 individuals.

A social media campaign, “Then & Now Tuesdays” will be launched during the project’s second year to promote awareness of the project and its progress as well as build anticipation for its launch and the

public program. This campaign will feature scanned images from the negative collections on places (then) with accompanying historical context and information on the place now. Posts will also report significant findings and problems encountered during the project. A similar campaign was used for a previous grant project, and the interaction also helped with crowd sourcing of information that assisted the development of metadata. The campaign will be initiated on HHS' Instagram and Facebook, which has the potential of reaching over 25,000 individuals.

This social media campaign will encourage an open dialogue between the public and HHS and help with discoverability of our organization and our collections. The response to the social media posts will also provide an indication of the interest in the collection as well as provide analytical insights in planning for future digitization projects beyond the grant terms.

At the end of the project, there will be a public program via Zoom to launch the public accessibility to HHS' new database and HHS' general resources provided to the community. Additionally, the Executive Director will leverage our existing partnership with the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to include an article in a future issue of the *Ka Wai Ola*.

As a small repository, we understand the difficulties of drafting and implementing procedures. Therefore, all templates created will be made available to other repositories as guidelines and toolkits.

The benefits of this project will provide HHS with standards, processes, and methodologies that can be used for all future digitization projects. The second year of this project will provide the time and resources needed to apply these methodologies to "real-life" scenarios by digitizing two single collections. Thus, allowing HHS to alter any necessary components to ensure efficiency of our internal standards.

Digitization of collections has been identified as a crucial priority in HHS' Strategic Plan. The Board of Trustees has committed to the longevity of this project, specifically allocating funds beyond grant terms. Additionally, the documents created under this project will allow HHS to successfully submit future grant proposals and seek external funding.

HHS has already secured a \$30,000 contract with Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) to digitize our historical broadsides to make available on OHA's *Papakilo* database. With this project, we will now be able to provide access on our digital platform. This suggests an interest in digitizing more of HHS' historical material for global access and highlights the importance this project has on the continuation of our 133-year-old legacy and our ability to significantly impact Native Hawaiians and the community at large.

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