Drexel University College of Computing and Informatics

## Exploring New Frontiers in Archival Education

Drexel University's College of Computing and Informatics (Alex H. Poole), in partnership with the Catholic University of America's Department of Library and Information Science (Jane Zhang), and in consultation with the Archival Education and Research Initiative (AERI), the Academy of Certified Archivists (ACA), and the Society of American Archivists' Committee on Education (CoE), its Graduate Archival Education Subcommittee (GAES), and its Archival Educators Section (AES), requests $149,994 to hold a two-year Laura Bush 21 **National Forum Grant** to **build capacity** for **lifelong learning** in **Master's level** archival education.

**Statement of Need.** A recent IMLS report identified knowledge and skills gaps shown by LIS graduates and underscored the need for curriculum changes to stay abreast of evolving practice as well as multifaceted strategies for recruitment, training, and retention (Sands et al. 2018). The goals and deliverables of the proposed Forum align with these priorities as well as with the seven "essential ideas" recently propagated in the IMLS Strategic Plan 2018-2022.

Archival education has witnessed unprecedented growth, consolidation, and legitimacy since the 1990s. But the challenge of educating archivists has assumed unprecedented urgency in the era of the information society and Big Data. Archival educators must embrace an unmatched social, cultural, and technological responsibility for training, mentoring, and retaining the next cohort of practitioners. It is thus imperative to create a sustainable educational framework and infrastructure that allows the community thoughtfully, reflexively, and dynamically to build capacity vis-à-vis these urgent professional needs.

More specifically, archival educators face three broad pedagogical challenges. First, educators must prepare their students technologically. Archivists now face challenges stemming from digital preservation, electronic records, digital curation, digital forensics, privacy and security, cultural informatics, information systems, records migration and digitization, audiovisual materials, and web design. Second, students need educational programs that welcome diversity and inclusivity, especially race/ethnicity and socioeconomic class. Key issues include global awareness, reflexivity and transparency, community engagement and service learning, social memory, social justice, advocacy and activism, the digital divide, human rights, ethnic strife, and truth and reconciliation, public scholarship, collaboration, and interdisciplinarity. Third, archival educators must address infrastructural concerns: the lack of a standardized curriculum undercuts efforts to prepare students for future practice. Vexing issues include in what program education should occur (LIS, History, or Public History), how to structure curriculum, best practices for internships/practicums, strategies for robust distance education, and the role of certification and accreditation (e.g. Bastian & Yakel 2005; Benoit III and Force 2019; Cook 2000; Cox 2007; Cox et al. 2001; Force and Zhang 2016; Gilliland 2011; Pluralizing the Archival Curriculum Group 2011; Tibbo 2007; White and Gilliland 2011; Zhang 2016).

There has been a lack of dialogue on these issues among educators and practitioners, however; this Forum will do much to remedy this communication and collaboration gap. We shall seek input and representation from a wide swath of diverse expert stakeholders, e.g. SAA's 30 Sections (especially those focused on racially/ ethnically underrepresented groups), from the AERI Working Group, from the 64 programs offering archives content identified by GAES, and from ACA, GAES, CoE, and AES stakeholders.

Archival educators and practitioners in various career stages must rise to the challenge of preparing themselves to address these developments; this National Forum Grant is foundational in so doing. First, it will discern the current state of archival education and key gaps in it based on an extensive environmental scan. Second, it will develop strategies to bridge those gaps. Third, it will propagate actionable recommendations.

**Project Design and work plan**. This National Forum Grant includes three parts—an environmental scan, a national forum, and outcomes—each of which brings together the expertise of Library and Information Science, History, and Public History educators and practitioners. Over the course of the project, quarterly meetings will be held with an Advisory Board that will be majority-minority. Key consideration in recruiting participants include race/ ethnicity and socioeconomic class as well as disability, age, gender, language, and geography.

1) *Environmental scan*: project personnel will establish a baseline by reviewing the archival syllabi for the courses currently offered by the 64 programs in the United States and Canada that offer archival courses.

This will be aligned with a comprehensive review of the literature on educational futures and challenges in archival science and cognate disciplines (e.g., Library and Information Science, Records Management/Information Governance, Computer Science, Data Science, and History). Second, project personnel will conduct a survey of faculty associated with these 64 programs to gauge specific institutional concerns and priorities. These will constitute a rich resource for forum discussions and recommendations.

2) *National Forum symposia*: casting a wide net, the symposia will include 45 diverse archival educators and practitioners from Library and Information Science, History, and Public History programs. Hosted by Drexel University and by Catholic University, respectively, two one-day symposia will be held: one at the end of the first year of the grant, the other at the end of the second year. Symposium attendees will discuss syllabi and survey results and major challenges and opportunities, brainstorm strategies and solutions, and set forth concrete measurable plans and recommendations regarding curriculum development and content, further funding opportunities, and "radical and systemic collaboration" (Erway et al. 2015, 8) across disciplines and fields, professional organizations, institutions, and local communities. The event will be live-streamed as well as recorded for open release to achieve the widest possible reach.

**Broad Impact and Outcomes**. Exploratory in its phase of maturity, the proposed Forum will produce six outputs facilitating improved research and practice: a white paper, a report for department chairs and other senior administrators, exemplary curriculum models, a website, a special issue of *The American Archivist*, updated SAA *Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies*, and a similarly updated SAA Directory of Archival Education. Generalizable and scalable, outputs will be disseminated gratis through the project website. They will highlight skills and competencies; learning outcomes and course objectives; suggested readings, assignments, and assessments that focus particularly on archival diversity and inclusivity; strategies for collaboration, outreach to new audiences, and recruitment, especially to marginalized populations; and priorities for future research and funding. Results will be presented at conferences, through conventional publication channels, and through social media to reach the widest possible audience not only in archives, but also in libraries and museums. Finally, formative and summative evaluations will proceed through annual surveys of symposium participants.

Experienced educators and researchers, the PIs are ideally suited to take on this project: a prize-winning diversity scholar, Poole is immediate past chair of GAES, chair-elect of AES, an immediate past member of the Committee on Education, and the host for AERI 2020. Zhang is current chair of GAES, a current member of the CoE, and current chair of the ACA Examination Development Committee.

**Diversity Plan.** Diversity, equity, and inclusion are absolutely crucial priorities in the Forum's approach and its collaborations both short- and long-term. The Forum is a key step toward broadening participation and enhancing workforce diversity. PIs, Advisory Board members, and the intended participants and beneficiaries of the project include diverse racial/ethnic, socioeconomic, gender, geographical, national, institutional, and disciplinary perspectives. Project outcomes, moreover, will foreground diversity and inclusivity in recruiting, retaining, and mentoring diverse students, especially students of color, in archival education (Poole, 2017). Perhaps the only risk in this project is ensuring sufficiently diverse participation in the Forum; this will be mitigated by focused recruitment.

Preparing archivists to deal with a historically unprecedented technologically-saturated and culturally diverse society, the proposed project will ensure that the archival profession is future-ready. The project will involve and benefit national stakeholders in LIS and allied fields, including educators; students; professional organizations; academic, public, and private institutions and their employees; and the communities in which they work.

**Budget Narrative.** Total direct costs include stipends for the co-PIs ($22,920), travel and accommodations for attendees ($55,980), venue costs ($5,000), and subsequent travel funds for the co-PIs to present results, conduct outreach, and evaluate and track outcomes ($8,640). Additional costs include fringe ($3,303) and indirect ($54,151).