

**Civic Data Literacy for Libraries: A Civic Switchboard Institute****University of Pittsburgh**

The School of Computing and Information, the Western Pennsylvania Regional Data Center, and the University Library System at the University of Pittsburgh request **\$248,315.11** to host a nationwide workshop series on Civic Data Literacy for Libraries. This series will implement and expand the use of the [Civic Data Education Series](#), which was developed with IMLS support. Library workers are often not trained to support civic data as an information resource and library roles around civic data are still emergent, highly relationship-based and local. Regional workshops will provide library workers with foundations, skills, and new connections, which will help them to begin library civic data work with open civic data.

This project aligns with LB21 Program Goal 3: to enhance the training and professional development of the library workforce to meet community needs. This project builds on previous IMLS-funded work that recognizes the importance of library workers as *civic data intermediaries*, or people who connect community members to civic data and help them to use civic data. Through workshops, this project will position a broader and geographically dispersed community of practice to meet the needs of their communities through civic data roles. By implementing and refining our Civic Data Education Series, our work will address Objective 3.2. Our project is also in alignment with Objective 3.4; library workers can advance access to and use of civic data, an example of digital inclusion and equity.

The core project team includes: Eleanor Mattern (PI), Aaron Brenner, Chelsea Gunn, Liz Monk, and Marcia Rapchak. This project will be carried out in partnership with local libraries and organizations that are doing civic data work. These partners will serve as the regional hosts for the Civic Data Literacy for Libraries workshops: Providence Public Library in Providence, RI; North Carolina Central University in Durham, NC; Notre Dame University in South Bend, IN; Rice University in Houston, TX; and Portland State University in Portland, OR. Pittsburgh, PA, the location of the Civic Switchboard team, will also serve as a workshop site and we will offer one entirely online workshop.

**Project Justification**

Globally, governments and civic organizations are making data about our communities – or “civic data” – available as “open data.” This opening of data is motivated by goals of government transparency and accountability, civic participation, and innovation ([Attard et al., 2015](#)). Meeting these goals, however, is constrained by users’ lack of awareness of the availability of data, data literacy barriers, and lack of comfort with data ([Yoon & Copeland, 2020](#); [D’Ignazio, 2017](#)). Moreover, open civic data can be used in ways that harm, rather than benefit, communities and, in particular, minoritized individuals (e.g. [Benjamin, 2019](#)). While library engagement with open civic will not eliminate all potential harms, libraries as intermediaries can support broader and meaningful community use, including the use of data to interrogate systems and structures that impact individuals.

This proposed project expands on successful work by team members focused on building the capacity of libraries to work as civic data intermediaries and developing civic data educational materials. The Civic Switchboard project identified civic data roles for libraries, including developing patrons’ civic data literacy, creating and publishing civic data, and providing expertise on data management in consultation with data creators ([Civic Switchboard Guide, 2022](#)). As a subsequent project, the Civic Switchboard Data Literacy Team developed the Civic Data Education Series, a collection of open educational materials aimed at two learner groups: library workers and library science students.

This proposal requests funds to support nationwide Civic Data Literacy for Libraries workshops, which will expand the reach of these open educational materials and build a community of practice. We will employ a regional workshop model designed by the NEH-funded Sustaining DH project ([Sustaining DH, 2019](#)), which allowed for the delivery of a workshop multiple times across the United States in geographically dispersed locations. A regional workshop model reduces the travel burden for participants, and allows workshops to be kept smaller, with more attention to the specific needs of participants. Through this project, six regional workshops, and one online workshop, we will broaden a community of practice around civic data work in libraries. In addition, we will work with hosts to design additional modules based on their local work with open civic data, thereby expanding the Civic Data Education Series.

In addition, this project will have impact beyond civic data literacy and services, as it will inform instructional design approaches. We will study how to support reuse of open educational materials, using the workshops and project period to investigate instructional design strategies that support use by both individuals who may engage with materials through a “train the trainers” model and individuals who may access the materials and wish to deliver them. During the

development of the Civic Data Education Series, we held focus groups with public librarians who, after attending data literacy workshops, shared that they were unsure in their ability to redeliver expertly the training to colleagues in their library. As library professionals continue to build open educational materials in support of LB21 Program Goal 3, there is a need to better understand how to design for reusability, approach the “train the trainer” model in effective ways, and develop guidance for effective professional development that can inform our field.

### **Project Work Plan**

This implementation project will have three phases: 1. Workshop Organization; 2. Workshop Delivery and Assessment; 3. Development of Guidance for Open Education Resources and Iteration of Civic Data Education Series. Phases 1 and 2 will involve close partnerships with our host organizations: Providence Public Library (main contact: Jack Martin), North Carolina Central University (Alex Chassanoff), Notre Dame University (Matthew Sisk), Rice University (main contacts: Catherine Barber and Katie Wang), and Portland State University (Nancee Hunter).

In Phase 1, we will develop a workshop agenda that draws from the Civic Data Education Series. In addition, we will work with our partner organizations to design a workshop component based on their own work with open civic data. Each regional workshop, then, will have a unique component with its own learning objectives and activities and will add to the existing Civic Data Education Series. We will collaborate with our partner organizations to set a schedule for the regional workshops, arrange logistics, and invite library workers to attend the regional workshops. In Phase 1, we will develop assessment tools for the workshops and a research plan for our inquiry on open education. In Phase 2, team members will travel to facilitate six regional workshops, will assess the workshops and partner-contributed modules, and implement the research plan on open educational resources. We will also deliver one entirely online workshop in Phase 2. Finally, Phase 3 will involve developing instructional design guidance for open education, outreach on this guidance, and iteration of the Civic Data Education Series. Community building will cut across Phase 2 and 3; we will focus on building a community of practice for civic data librarianship, by inviting all workshop participants into ongoing Civic Switchboard community activities, including community of practice calls and the Civic Data Operators Group.

### **Diversity Plan**

With this project, we will implement and expand the Civic Data Education Series. This series is designed to build both civic data and critical data literacies. Informed by the work of Ruha Benjamin and the Ida B. Wells Just Data Lab, danah boyd & Kate Crawford (2012), Data for Black Lives (D4BL), and Lauren Klein & Catherine D’Ignazio (2020), these regional workshops will support library workers in evaluating how datasets and data uses can perpetuate systems of harm. We will foreground communities in civic data work in libraries.

The regional workshops and the civic data community of practice will support library workers in serving as civic data intermediaries in their communities. We will be intentional in our outreach to workshop participants, with directed invitations to library workers who serve diverse populations and who are members of minoritized communities. Our partners will contribute to the outreach process, offering further insight into local communities.

### **Project Results**

This project will implement and expand the existing Civic Data Education series. We will partner with our workshop hosts to develop six additional modules that will be added to the series, which will be assessed through the project. Through the workshops and supporting community of practice, library workers will develop, iterate, and share civic data services and roles for their libraries, growing the prevalence of libraries as civic data intermediaries in our field and strengthening regional networks. This project will also result in guidance on usable and implementable open educational resources that can inform future instructional design projects completed as part of Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian grants and more.

The requested budget amount of \$248,315.11 will support: stipends for workshop institutions for host duties and module development [\$10,000]; travel stipends for attendees [\$45,000]; workshop catering [\$12,000] and laptop [\$2,000]; team members’ workshop travel [\$15,000]; direct and fringe costs associated with team members’ time [\$102,191.05]; and indirect costs [\$62,124.06]. The host partners have agreed to offer space for the workshops at cost-share.