



LAURA BUSH 21st CENTURY LIBRARIAN PROGRAM

Sample Application RE-259453-OLS-26
Project Category: National Implementation

University of Arizona Libraries

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$299,454
Amount of cost share:	\$2,269

Building on the success of the Digital POWRR (Preserving Digital Objects With Restricted Resources) cohort-based training model, the University of Arizona Libraries will expand digital preservation training in collaboration with an experienced network of educators, practitioners, and advisors, many of whom have previously contributed to Digital POWRR training initiatives. While awareness of digital preservation risks has grown, accessible pathways for moving from assessment to action remain limited. This project addresses that gap by expanding a proven face-to-face program into two complementary formats: an immersive five-day Digital POWRR Academy and a pilot Digital Preservation Summer Institute. The project will reach current and emerging digital preservation practitioners working in libraries, archives, and other cultural heritage organizations, particularly those serving in hybrid or non-traditional roles.

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.

Expanding the Reach of Digital POWRR's Digital Preservation and Stewardship Training to Meet Critical Workforce Needs

Introduction

As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, the digital evidence of our national heritage - from local community archives to statewide historical records - faces a quiet crisis of loss and neglect. Across the country, practitioners in rural, regional, and under-resourced libraries, archives, and other cultural heritage organizations are tasked with stewarding irreplaceable digital materials without sustained access to practical training or institutional authority, placing essential historical memory at risk. The University of Arizona Libraries seeks \$299,454 in Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian National Implementation funding, with \$2,269.84 in institutional cost share, to launch the Digital POWRR Academy and a pilot Digital Preservation Summer Institute, two complementary workforce development models to transform isolated practitioners into a resilient, confident cadre of digital stewardship professionals. This project directly advances *LB21 Goal 2: Train and retain current library and archives professionals*, and *Objective 2.1: develop training programs that enable the library and archival workforce to meet the evolving needs of their communities*. Partnering with the Digital Preservation Coalition for curriculum consultation and drawing on the experience of specialists from Northern Illinois University, Indiana University, the University of Minnesota, the University of Iowa, the University of Kentucky, the University of North Carolina, the Texas Digital Library, and independent consultants, the project will produce updated, openly available curriculum materials, deliver two Academy cohorts and a Summer Institute pilot, and measurably strengthen digital stewardship capacity across under-resourced institutions nationwide.

Project Justification

Need, Challenge, and Opportunity

Libraries, archives, and other cultural heritage organizations across the United States are facing a widening gap between their growing responsibility to care for digital materials and the institutional capacity required to steward them effectively over time.¹ Digital content is now produced at scale across nearly every organizational context, yet many institutions - particularly small, rural, regional, and non-elite organizations - lack dedicated digital preservation staff, formal training pathways, or sustained access to expert guidance. As a result, responsibility for digital stewardship is frequently assigned as an afterthought to individuals who are isolated, self-taught, or balancing digital preservation work alongside multiple other roles.² In many of these organizations, digital stewardship is not a discrete position but is an added responsibility layered onto broader archival, curatorial, digital collections, or public services roles, particularly in smaller or under-resourced organizations. Research on the evolving cultural heritage workforce has consistently documented this pattern of hybridization, in which staff are expected to assume complex digital responsibilities without formal training pathways or sustained institutional support.³ Moreover, even when organizations are sufficiently resourced to hire dedicated digital preservation staff, these practitioners often lack the institutional authority, decision-making power, or sustained support necessary to effect meaningful change, creating a situation where responsibility outstrips both individual expertise and organizational capacity.

Digital POWRR (Preserving digital Objects With Restricted Resources) has intentionally documented and addressed these workforce challenges over more than a decade through its cohort-based research, training initiatives, and embedded evaluation activities. Through structured program evaluation and participant feedback, POWRR has consistently identified patterns of role ambiguity, unrealistic workloads, and insufficient institutional support that impede effective digital stewardship. These insights are reinforced by field-wide survey data: for example, the *2021 National Digital Stewardship Alliance Staffing Survey* found widespread issues related to unclear roles, unrealistic

¹ *Protecting America's Collections: Results from the Heritage Health Information Survey* (Washington, DC: Institute of Museum and Library Services, Feb 2019) and Oya Y. Rieger, Roger C. Schonfeld, and Liam Sweeney, *The Effectiveness and Durability of Digital Preservation and Curation Systems* (Ithaca S+R, July 19, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.31699>.

² Jones, Stacey, Jaime Schumacher, and Danielle Taylor. "Confidence, Community, and a Course of Action: Takeaways from 10 Years of Digital POWRR Training." Paper presented at *iPRES 2025: The 21st International Conference on Digital Preservation*, Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand, 2025.

³ Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC). "Taking the Temperature of Digital Collections Management and Preservation: NEDCC Surveys Current Practices." (2020). Accessed February 10, 2026. <https://www.nedcc.org/about/nedcc-stories/survey-of-current-digital-preservation-practices>

workloads, and limited organizational support for digital preservation activities,⁴ and the Digital Preservation Coalition's *2023 Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey* highlighted high levels of stress, fatigue, advocacy burden, and professional isolation among practitioners responsible for digital stewardship.⁵ Together, this body of evidence reveals a workforce under significant strain, yet still expected to make high-stakes decisions about long-term access and risk mitigation amid limited resources and institutional uncertainty. Yet despite growing responsibility, many practitioners report inadequate access to structured training pathways or ongoing professional development, suggesting a significant gap between the demands of the work and available support.

Accordingly, demand for digital preservation training remains high. The *National Digital Stewardship Alliance's 2021 Membership Survey* identified educational and training opportunities as the most desired enhancement to NDSA membership, with over 60 percent of respondents selecting this priority.⁶ Similarly, the Society of American Archivists' *A*CENSUS II* survey - one of the largest workforce studies conducted in the field, found that digital preservation was the most frequently selected topic for desired professional development, identified by more than half of the 5699 respondents.⁷ This reflects thousands of practitioners in the United States alone who are actively seeking training in digital stewardship, underscoring both the perceived importance of these skills and the extent to which existing training opportunities have not met workforce needs. Consistent with this practitioner demand, the *A*CENSUS II: Archives Administrators Survey*, which focused specifically on archival decisionmakers, found that 81 percent of administrators ranked digital preservation and digital asset management among the most desired skillsets in current and future hires. Together, these findings demonstrate both practitioner demand and institutional recognition that digital preservation competencies require continued investment.⁸

At the same time, this moment presents a critical opportunity. Awareness of digital preservation risks has increased substantially, and many institutions are actively seeking practical, scalable ways to move from aspiration to action. What is lacking is not interest, but accessible, confidence-building training that equips practitioners to make informed decisions, advocate effectively within their organizations, and implement sustainable practices appropriate to their local context. From the empirical insights derived from past program evaluation and the deep expertise built over a decade of Digital POWRR initiatives, the POWRR project is uniquely qualified to meet this need by expanding and adapting its training model to address current workforce challenges.

Background and Track Record of the Digital POWRR Project

Since its launch in 2011, the Digital POWRR (Preserving digital Objects With Restricted Resources) Project has developed into an internationally recognized training and capacity-building initiative focused on strengthening digital preservation practice in under-resourced cultural heritage institutions. Supported through multiple federal grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Digital POWRR has delivered multi-day institutes, regional workshops, webinars, and cohort-based programs serving thousands of practitioners across the United States (See *Supporting Document 1* for a timeline and description of POWRR's funding history). Over the past decade, POWRR programming has reached institutions of varied size and type, with sustained engagement from small, rural, regional, and independently governed organizations.

⁴ National Digital Stewardship Alliance Staffing Survey Working Group, *2021 Staffing Survey Report* (August 2022), <https://osf.io/emwy4/3990>

⁵ Digital Preservation Coalition, *Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey: Findings Report* (York, UK: Digital Preservation Coalition, 2023), <https://www.dpconline.org/digipres/implement-dp/mental-health>

⁶ Samantha Abrams, Rachel Appel, Chianta Dorsey, Stacey Jones Erdman, and Jessica C. Neal, *2021 NDSA Membership Survey Report* (National Digital Stewardship Alliance, December 2021), <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/Y4KPU>

⁷ Makala Skinner and Ioana G. Hulbert, *ACENSUS II: All Archivists Survey Report** (Ithaka S+R Research Report, August 22, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.317224>

⁸ Makala Skinner, *A*CENSUS II: Administrators Survey* (New York: Ithaka S+R, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.318227>

Across these initiatives, the initiative has consistently emphasized pragmatic, action-oriented learning grounded in real institutional constraints. Central to the Digital POWRR model is the concept of “good enough” digital preservation: an approach that recognizes the realities of constrained staffing, funding, and infrastructure, and supports practitioners in making defensible, context-sensitive decisions. Rather than positioning digital preservation as a purely technical or compliance-driven endeavor, POWRR training frames digital stewardship as an applied professional practice that requires judgment, prioritization, and organizational navigation. This philosophy, first articulated in the project’s foundational white paper⁹ and refined through successive grant-funded initiatives, has resonated strongly with practitioners working across diverse institutional contexts. POWRR training draws on widely adopted community standards, models, and tools, but introduces them in applied, accessible ways rather than as abstract compliance exercises. Experience has demonstrated that practitioners benefit most when technical frameworks are translated into real-world decision points that reduce intimidation and clarify next steps. Participants frequently report that the primary barriers to implementation are not lack of exposure to standards, but uncertainty about where to begin, limited confidence in decision-making, and isolation from peers who can help contextualize their choices.

Findings from the IMLS-funded Digital POWRR Peer Assessment Program (2021–2025) further reinforced the importance of this approach. The Peer Assessment Program supported 36 professionals representing public libraries, community colleges, historical societies, community archives, and universities in conducting structured digital preservation assessments using established community frameworks. Participants engaged in facilitated cohort meetings, completed formal self-assessments (NDSA Levels and DPC-RAM), conducted peer assessments using the NEDCC toolkit,¹⁰ and received modest implementation funding to support initial preservation actions. The program incorporated external evaluation and structured reflection activities designed to measure not only technical learning but confidence, collaboration, and institutional follow-through. Evaluation data from the project demonstrated that structured cohort models and facilitated peer exchange reduced professional isolation, normalized uncertainty, and increased participants’ confidence in applying assessment findings within their home institutions. Participants consistently reported that learning alongside peers facing similar constraints supported not only skill acquisition, but also professional identity formation and sustained implementation of preservation practices months after formal instruction concluded.¹¹ Post-event case studies authored by participants document concrete outcomes, such as the adoption of new policies, development of workflows, and successful advocacy for resources, which demonstrate how cohort-based learning translated into real institutional capacity building.¹²

Over time, Digital POWRR training has come to function as informal infrastructure for the digital preservation field. Practitioners routinely reuse POWRR materials, adapt curriculum components for local training, and recommend POWRR programs to colleagues. To date, Digital POWRR has been delivered by a distributed instructional team whose primary professional appointments lie outside the project itself; this structure has ensured strong field grounding and practical relevance, but has necessarily limited the scale and frequency of offerings. Because POWRR programs are tuition-free and often provide travel support, participation has required an application process to ensure fair selection and responsible allocation of federal funds. Across recent Institutes and cohort-based programs, applicant pools have

⁹ Jaime Schumacher, Lynne M. Thomas, Drew VandeCreek, Stacey Erdman, Jeff Hancks, Aaisha Haykal, Meg Miner, Patrice-Andre Prud’homme, and Danielle Spalenka, *From Theory to Action: Good Enough Digital Preservation for Under-Resourced Cultural Heritage Institutions*, (2014), <https://huskiecommons.lib.niu.edu/allfaculty-peerpub/1056>

¹⁰ *Digital Preservation Assessment Handbook and Digital Preservation Peer Assessment*, Northeast Document Conservation Center, 2019, accessed February 2026, <https://www.nedcc.org/assets/media/documents/DPA/nedcc-DPA-hndbk-6.24-web.pdf>

¹¹ Stacey Jones, Jay Gattuso, Jaime Schumacher, Kyle Henke, Carol Kussmann, Sam Meister, and Danielle Taylor, *Beyond the Checklist: Healing, Connection, and Capacity-Building Through Digital Preservation Peer Assessment: A White Paper Prepared for the Institute of Museum and Library Services for the Digital POWRR Peer Assessment Program* (July 2025), <http://hdl.handle.net/10150/677915>

¹² Stacey Jones, ed., *Digital POWRR Peer Assessment Program Participant Case Studies* (July 2025), companion to *Beyond the Checklist: Healing, Connection, and Capacity-Building Through Digital Preservation Peer Assessment* (2025), <https://hdl.handle.net/10150/677916>

routinely exceeded available capacity by three to four times, demonstrating sustained and significant demand for accessible, immersive digital preservation training. Community interest has persisted between funded cycles, reflecting both the model's demonstrated value and the field's ongoing need for workforce development. The proposed project represents a strategic next phase in this trajectory. Rather than simply extending prior programming, it advances Digital POWRR toward a more structured and sustainable workforce development platform: one that consolidates lessons learned across multiple federal investments and pilots a scalable model for longer-term delivery. In doing so, the project builds directly on prior IMLS support while positioning Digital POWRR to serve the field more consistently and effectively.

To address the field's ongoing need for diverse, focused training, the proposed Digital Preservation Summer Institute (DPSI) pilot directly responds to the demonstrated demand for immersive, practical workforce development beyond introductory sessions. The DPSI model is designed to serve larger and more diverse cohorts while preserving instructional depth, peer exchange, and sustained engagement: characteristics that distinguish immersive summer institutes in related fields, such as the Digital Humanities Summer Institute,¹³ Rare Book School,¹⁴ and the ARLIS/NA–VRS Summer Educational Institute.¹⁵ In contrast to the short or conference-based workshops that predominate in digital preservation training, DPSI's multi-day structure allows participants to engage in concentrated learning, build professional networks, and explore intermediate and advanced practice areas in context. The pilot will gather structured data about participant priorities, preferred formats, and institutional capacity to support participation in intensive training, and will also solicit feedback from practitioners who do not attend, ensuring that future iterations are responsive to broader field needs and constraints. This evidence will inform exploration of delivery and cost models that balance accessibility with long-term sustainability. By studying these variables rather than presuming a single approach, the project advances a data-informed pathway for expanding workforce development capacity beyond the period of performance.

As a result of the field's persistent reliance on short webinars, conference-based sessions, and introductory workshops, many practitioners experience a "missing middle" in professional development: opportunities that move beyond basic concepts without requiring long-term degree programs, formal certification pathways, or substantial financial investment. This absence of accessible, intermediate-to-advanced training constrains skill progression, limits sustained peer connection, and hampers practitioners' ability to translate learning into practice. While existing programs such as certification courses and conference workshops serve important roles, they do not consistently provide the immersive, cohort-based engagement that practitioners need to confront complex digital stewardship challenges in context. The proposed Digital POWRR Academy and Digital Preservation Summer Institute work in tandem to fill this structural gap. The Academy offers a focused, cohort-based intensive that strengthens core competency and confidence, while the Summer Institute pilot expands that model with modular, skills-focused workshop tracks that support deeper specialization and peer learning. By building on a proven training philosophy and explicitly designing for reflection, peer exchange, and real-world application, this project advances a scalable and adaptable pathway for sustained workforce development that meets practitioners where they are and prepares them for the evolving demands of digital stewardship.

Workforce Focus and Beneficiaries

The primary beneficiaries of this project are current and emerging cultural heritage practitioners working in libraries, archives, museums, historical societies, and related organizations whose responsibilities include digital

¹³ Digital Humanities Summer Institute (DHSI), "About DHSI," University of Victoria, accessed February 12, 2026, <https://dhsi.org/about/>

¹⁴ Rare Book School, "About Rare Book School," University of Virginia, accessed February 12, 2026, <https://rarebookschool.org/about-rbs/>

¹⁵ ARLIS/NA and VRA, "ARLIS/NA–VRAF Summer Educational Institute (SEI)," accessed February 12, 2026, <https://www.arlisna.org/arlisna-vraf-summer-educational-institute-sei>

stewardship. Participation is not limited by formal credentials or job titles. Consistent with prior Digital POWRR programs, the Academy and Summer Institute are intentionally accessible to individuals who have assumed digital preservation responsibilities regardless of whether they hold specialized degrees or dedicated preservation roles. The Digital POWRR Academy will primarily serve practitioners working in resource-constrained environments who seek structured, immersive training to build foundational confidence, practical decision-making skills, and sustainable implementation strategies. Many Academy participants will be operating in hybrid roles, balancing digital stewardship alongside other professional responsibilities. The Digital Preservation Summer Institute (DPSI) will benefit practitioners seeking focused skill development at intermediate or advanced levels, including those who already maintain some digital preservation infrastructure but require deeper technical or strategic expertise. By offering multiple workshop formats, the DPSI broadens access to specialized training that is not consistently available through existing programs.

Secondary beneficiaries include the institutions and communities these practitioners serve. Strengthening staff capacity in digital preservation directly supports improved risk assessment, more informed resource allocation, and increased sustainability of digital collections. Over time, this contributes to greater continuity of access to digital cultural heritage materials across diverse institutional contexts. By equipping practitioners at different stages of professional development, the project supports workforce growth that is both inclusive and scalable, strengthening digital stewardship capacity at local, regional, and national levels. The current environment for libraries and archives is characterized by financial uncertainty, staffing instability, and increasing expectations around digital access and accountability. In this context, training that focuses narrowly on tools or standards is insufficient. Practitioners need support that acknowledges the realities of their work: competing priorities, limited authority, and the cognitive and emotional load of being responsible for irreplaceable digital materials.

By integrating technical instruction with structured reflection, peer exchange, and explicit attention to navigating uncertainty, this project advances a realistic and sustainable model of workforce development. It positions digital preservation not as an unattainable ideal, but as a set of achievable, context-sensitive practices that can be implemented incrementally and responsibly. The proposed project builds directly on prior IMLS investment in Digital POWRR, translating proven approaches into new formats designed to meet today's workforce challenges. In doing so, it advances IMLS's mission to support libraries and archives as essential infrastructure, powered by a prepared, resilient, and confident workforce.

Project Workplan

The proposed project will be carried out over a two-year period (September 1, 2026 – August 31, 2028) and organized into six sequential and partially overlapping implementation phases: (1) curriculum refinement and planning; (2) recruitment and participant preparation; (3) Year 1 Academy delivery; (4) refinement and Summer Institute development; (5) Year 2 combined Academy and Digital Preservation Summer Institute delivery; and (6) evaluation, dissemination, and project closeout. This phased structure allows the project team to build directly on the established Digital POWRR Institute model, pilot and refine an expanded Academy format, and intentionally test a scalable Summer Institute framework informed by practitioner demand and evaluation findings. Throughout the project, the PI will provide overall leadership and coordination. An external evaluation consultant will guide formative and summative assessment activities. An Advisory Council composed of experienced digital stewardship professionals will meet twice annually to provide structured input on curriculum relevance, field alignment, and sustainability considerations.

Phase 1: Project Initiation and Curriculum Development (Fall 2026)

The project will begin with a Curriculum Development Summit bringing together core POWRR instructors to review and extend the existing 2.5-day Digital POWRR Institute curriculum (see *Supporting Document 2* for the most recent schedule). The Summit will be held via Zoom to save on travel funds and to allow dispersed participation. The

Academy model will build directly on this established structure, carrying forward core instructional components while expanding into a five-day immersive format that incorporates additional instructional depth, structured reflection, and cohort-based engagement. During this phase, the project team will:

- Review and update existing Digital POWRR instructional materials
- Identify areas requiring expanded technical instruction or applied exercises
- Develop new modules aligned with retreat-based and cohort-based learning
- Map the five-day Academy schedule, balancing foundational content and advanced application (see *Supporting Document 3* for a potential version of this.)
- Integrate lessons from the IMLS-funded POWRR Peer Assessment Program, including structured reflection and decision-making under uncertainty
- Collaborate with the external evaluator to establish evaluation benchmarks, participant learning objectives, and feedback instruments

The Advisory Council will convene via Zoom in Fall 2026 to provide strategic input on curriculum direction and workforce alignment prior to finalization of the Year 1 Academy structure.

Phase 2: Recruitment and Participant Preparation (Spring 2027)

Following curriculum finalization, the project will conduct national recruitment for the participants of the inaugural five-day POWRR Academy. Consistent with prior POWRR programs, participation will not be restricted by formal credentials or job titles. Recruitment will prioritize practitioners working in libraries, archives, and cultural heritage organizations with limited access to sustained digital preservation training. Key activities include:

- National outreach through professional networks, listservs, and partner organizations
- Review and selection of participants through an application process
- Allocation of travel scholarships as needed
- Distribution of preparatory materials and structured self-assessment tools
- Coordination of lodging, instructional materials, and logistical arrangements

The Advisory Council will reconvene in Spring 2027 to review final curriculum materials and provide feedback prior to Academy delivery.

Phase 3: POWRR Academy Delivery (Summer 2027)

The Year 1 POWRR Academy will be delivered as a five-day residential training program emphasizing immersive instruction, peer exchange, and applied learning. The Academy will be held at the Loyola University Retreat and Ecology Center (LUREC) in Woodstock, Illinois, near Chicago O'Hare International Airport. LUREC's residential model, combining lodging, meals, and multiple instructional spaces at a lower cost than traditional conference venues, supports both affordability and the retreat-based cohort engagement central to the Academy design. (See *Supporting Document 4* for more information on LUREC). Participants will:

- Engage with applied digital preservation concepts in pragmatic, context-sensitive ways
- Complete guided exercises supporting institutional decision-making
- Participate in small cohort discussions to encourage peer exchange and normalization of shared challenges
- Contribute to structured evaluation and feedback activities

A central scaffold for the Academy will be an expanded version of the POWRR Plan - a structured planning framework that has been used in prior Digital POWRR Institutes and the IMLS-funded Peer Assessment Program to guide participants from assessment to action (see *Supporting Document 5* for previous POWRR Plan templates). The POWRR Plan prompts participants to document institutional context, identify preservation priorities, articulate strengths and constraints, and define short- and longer-term implementation goals. For the Academy model, this framework will be

refined to incorporate structured peer feedback, facilitated revision sessions, and a brief end-of-program presentation in which participants articulate their proposed next steps. Each participant will also receive a dedicated one-on-one consultation with a cohort mentor to review and strengthen their POWRR Plan, ensuring individualized feedback and actionable refinement prior to returning to their home institution. This layered structure: reflection, peer exchange, mentor consultation, and follow-up, operationalizes the project's emphasis on translating knowledge into practical action while allowing flexibility for the curriculum development team to adapt the tool to the needs of each cohort. Formative evaluation data will be collected throughout the Academy. The evaluation consultant will attend in person to support observation and data collection.

Phase 4: Refinement and Expansion Planning (Fall 2027–Spring 2028)

Following Year 1 Academy delivery, the project team will analyze evaluation data, participant feedback, and instructor reflections to refine curriculum materials and instructional approaches. This iterative review process will guide both improvements to the Academy and development of the pilot Digital Preservation Summer Institute (DPSI).

During this phase, the project team will revise Academy curriculum based on Year 1 findings; identify advanced and specialized skill areas suitable for Summer Institute workshops; curate and invite instructors aligned with those priority topics; structure the DPSI schedule to allow multiple concurrent workshops of varying lengths; and conduct field surveys to assess demand, priority skill areas, and potential tuition models for future sustainability.

The DPSI will be designed as a flexible, concurrent workshop model offering multiple instructional tracks over five days (see Supporting Document 6 for potential configurations). This structure allows for various combinations, including short topic-specific workshops, multi-day immersive intensives, or a blend of advanced collaborative practice forums and technical sessions. Workshop topics and instructors will be identified primarily through targeted outreach to experienced practitioners whose expertise aligns with documented workforce needs. If necessary to ensure balanced coverage or broaden participation, a limited and focused call for workshop proposals may be issued. The Advisory Council will meet in Fall 2027 to review Year 1 outcomes and provide input on DPSI structure, and again in Spring 2028 to review final Year 2 programming plans.

Phase 5: Combined POWRR Academy and Digital Preservation Summer Institute (Summer 2028)

In Year 2, the project will host a refined POWRR Academy alongside the pilot Digital Preservation Summer Institute, both at the LUREC facility in Woodstock, IL. The Academy will benefit from Year 1 refinements, while the Summer Institute will offer multiple concurrent workshops designed to address intermediate and advanced digital preservation topics. This combined format will support participants at different stages of professional development, encourage cross-pollination among instructors and attendees, and generate structured data about training demand, affordability, and sustainability models.

The DPSI will pilot a structured multi-track format designed to support intermediate and advanced practitioners. Workshops may range from one-day technical intensives to multi-day applied practice labs. Instructors will be selected based on subject-matter expertise and their ability to translate complex technical topics into actionable strategies. Evaluation will assess not only participant learning outcomes, but also which structural configurations best support sustained professional growth, feasibility for future iterations, and feasibility of future cost-recovery models.

Phase 6: Evaluation, Dissemination, and Project Closeout (Throughout; Finalized August 2028)

Evaluation will be embedded throughout all phases of the project. The external evaluator will guide the development of assessment instruments, analyze formative and summative data, and support preparation of a publicly available synthesis of findings. Final project activities include the compilation and analysis of evaluation data across both years, the preparation of a public-facing summary of findings and lessons learned, the publication of updated curriculum

materials through the Digital POWRR website, dissemination of lessons learned through conference presentations, professional publications, and network outreach, and the submission of required final reports to IMLS.

Project Personnel, Roles, and Governance: The project is led by the Principal Investigator in collaboration with a distributed team of instructors, consultants, and advisors who collectively bring deep expertise in digital preservation practice, workforce training, and community-based capacity building. This collaborative structure reflects the long-standing Digital POWRR model, which emphasizes shared ownership, peer learning, and instructor-practitioner engagement rather than centralized delivery.

Principal Investigator: Stacey Jones, Digital Preservation Librarian at the University of Arizona, will serve as the project's Principal Investigator and Director, and will provide overall leadership and coordination; including curriculum oversight, consultant management, budget administration, reporting, and dissemination. Jones brings more than a decade of experience developing and leading nationally recognized Digital POWRR training initiatives. She served as PI for the IMLS-funded Digital POWRR Peer Assessment Program (2021–2025) and previously held multiple leadership and instructional roles across earlier federally funded POWRR projects. Her sustained involvement across successive phases of Digital POWRR uniquely positions her to guide the project's evolution into an expanded Academy and Summer Institute model.

Digital Preservation Coalition: The Digital Preservation Coalition is an international nonprofit membership organization that advances sustainable digital stewardship through workforce development, advocacy, and knowledge exchange. Its curriculum expertise and professional development resources will support adaptation and enrichment of the Academy and Summer Institute instructional design. The DPC will serve as a project partner, providing expert consultation on adapting components of its *Novice to Know-How* curriculum for in-person delivery within the POWRR Academy and Summer Institute models. DPC staff will advise on instructional scaffolding, applied exercises, and alignment with international preservation competency frameworks. This collaboration ensures that the project integrates globally recognized training resources while tailoring them to U.S. workforce contexts.

Curriculum Designers and POWRR Instructors: Experienced Digital POWRR instructors will serve as curriculum designers and lead instructors for the POWRR Academy. These individuals have extensive experience delivering Digital POWRR Institutes and related training programs and will be responsible for refining instructional content, facilitating in-person sessions, and supporting cohort-based learning activities. These individuals include Jaime Schumacher, Senior Director of Digital Scholarship at Northern Illinois University; Danielle Taylor, Digital Preservation Librarian at Indiana University; Carol Kussmann, Digital Preservation Analyst at University of Minnesota; Natalie Baur, Lead, Digital Library Initiatives at University of Iowa; and Andrew McDonnell, Digital Archivist at University of Kentucky. Schumacher and Taylor have been involved with POWRR initiatives since 2012, serving in various core leadership and instructional roles. Kussmann and McDonnell attended POWRR events in the past and later were brought on board to serve as instructors.

Digital Preservation Summer Institute Instructors: Additional instructors will be engaged to lead specialized workshops during the Digital Preservation Summer Institute. Instructors will be selected based on demonstrated expertise in specific areas of digital preservation and their ability to translate technical concepts into applied, context-sensitive practice. The instructional team and Advisory Council will identify priority topic areas informed by prior POWRR evaluation data and Year 1 Academy feedback. Workshops may be led by experienced Digital POWRR instructors as well as additional subject-matter experts drawn from the broader digital stewardship community. If needed to ensure a balanced and comprehensive program, a targeted call for workshop proposals will be issued to invite additional qualified instructors. All proposed workshops will be reviewed by the project team to ensure alignment with the Institute's learning objectives and pedagogical approach.

Technical Consultant: Jay Gattuso, Senior Digital Forensic Analyst with the New Zealand Police will serve as the project's technical consultant, and will provide ongoing advisory support related to digital preservation tools, workflows, and infrastructure considerations. This role ensures that curriculum updates and instructional content remain grounded in current practice while remaining accessible to practitioners working in varied institutional environments. Gattuso previously served as Digital Preservation Analyst at the National Library of New Zealand, and has provided instructional services at two POWRR institutes.

Evaluation Consultant: Professional library consultant Stephanie Gerding will serve as the project's external evaluator, leading formative and summative evaluation across the grant period. Working with the PI, she will refine assessment instruments and analyze pre- and post-event data on participant learning, confidence, applicability, and the effectiveness of the retreat- and cohort-based model. Brief daily pulse check-ins during multi-day training events will track pacing, clarity, psychological safety, and readiness to apply concepts, allowing real-time instructional adjustments. Follow-up data will be collected at 30, 90, and 180 days after each training to document implementation progress and barriers, including POWRR Plan completion and use, initial preservation actions, policy/workflow changes, tool adoption, and internal advocacy or partnership steps. Gerding previously served as evaluator for the IMLS-funded Digital POWRR Peer Assessment Program, bringing continuity and deep familiarity with the Digital POWRR model.

Advisory Council: An Advisory Council composed of experienced professionals from across the digital stewardship community will provide strategic, milestone-based guidance throughout the project. Council members include Courtney Mumma, Deputy Director of the Texas Digital Library, with extensive experience in digital preservation training and community engagement; Sharon McMeekin, Director of Preserve Together and former Director of Workforce Development at the Digital Preservation Coalition, bringing deep expertise in field-wide training strategy and capacity building; and Alexandra Chassanoff, Assistant Professor at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, with vital research and teaching experience in digital stewardship education. The Council will meet virtually twice per year to review curriculum direction, participant engagement strategies, evaluation findings, and sustainability considerations, and will provide additional asynchronous feedback as needed. Their collective expertise in adult education, workforce development, and community-centered training will ensure that project decisions are informed by field needs while allowing instructional development to remain flexible and responsive. *(Please see Resumes.pdf for more on staff backgrounds, and Supporting Document 7 for letters of support and commitment)*

Project Results

Intended Results and Deliverables: The proposed project will produce a set of concrete, field-ready outcomes designed to strengthen digital preservation workforce capacity at a national scale. Primary deliverables include:

- A refined and expanded Digital POWRR Academy curriculum, incorporating new instructional modules, structured reflection exercises, and cohort-based learning activities;
- A piloted Digital Preservation Summer Institute model, offering multiple concurrent workshops of varying lengths to support intermediate and advanced skill development;
- Updated instructional materials and facilitator resources made openly available through the Digital POWRR website for reuse and adaptation;
- A publicly available synthesis of evaluation findings and lessons learned, documenting participant outcomes, instructional priorities, and implications for future training models; and
- A scalable, evidence-informed training framework that can be refined and adapted beyond the grant period.

Together, these deliverables respond directly to the need for sustained, practical digital preservation training that supports practitioners working under real institutional constraints.

Participant Outcomes and Workforce Impact: The project's results are intentionally aligned with challenges identified in national workforce surveys and prior Digital POWRR research, including role ambiguity, professional isolation, and limited access to sustained training. By combining immersive instruction with peer exchange and structured reflection, the project equips participants not only with technical knowledge, but with the confidence and judgment required to take action under conditions of uncertainty. Participants completing the POWRR Academy and DPSI will demonstrate increased confidence in assessing preservation risks, practical implementation strategies, stronger professional networks, and familiarity with adaptable tools and frameworks.

Assessing Demand and Informing Future Training Models: As a pilot initiative, the Digital Preservation Summer Institute is designed to generate evidence about demand, skill priorities, and feasible delivery models for intensive digital stewardship training. In addition to assessing learning outcomes, the project will collect structured feedback to inform future iterations of the Institute and related programming. Post-event surveys will assess participant interest in attending future Summer Institute offerings; priority skill areas at intermediate and advanced levels of practice; preferred instructional formats, durations, and sequencing; institutional capacity to support participation in intensive training; and the feasibility of tuition-and-scholarship models that balance affordability with long-term sustainability. Survey instruments will use ranges and scenario-based questions to avoid assumptions about future costs while providing meaningful data about affordability and access. Findings will be synthesized into a publicly available summary documenting demand, instructional priorities, and potential pathways for sustainable delivery.

Adaptability, Dissemination, and Sustainability: All instructional materials developed will be openly shared and designed for reuse across varied institutional contexts. The modular structure of the Academy and Institute components supports adaptation as standalone workshops, integration into other programs, and reuse by instructors beyond the project team. Results will be disseminated through online publication, professional presentations and workshops, and written reports. By documenting effective practices and field feedback, the project positions Digital POWRR to continue serving as an enduring training resource rather than a one-time intervention, reinforcing IMLS's mission to support practical, sustainable workforce development. Project results will be disseminated through multiple channels, including online publication of curriculum materials, conference presentations and workshops, professional publications, and informal knowledge-sharing through professional networks and listservs. The project approaches sustainability as an iterative process grounded in evidence and practitioner feedback. By piloting and evaluating multiple delivery formats, the project positions Digital POWRR to continue serving the field as a stable training infrastructure rather than a one-time intervention.

Libraries, archives, and cultural heritage organizations are navigating a period of heightened responsibility and constrained capacity, in which digital materials continue to grow while training pathways and institutional support remain uneven. The proposed project responds to this reality by extending a proven, practitioner-centered training model into a format designed for sustained learning, peer connection, and practical action. Building on more than a decade of Digital POWRR work, and on prior IMLS investment in cohort-based, confidence-building professional development, this project offers a scalable approach to digital preservation training that acknowledges real-world constraints while equipping practitioners to move forward responsibly. By piloting a retreat-based academy and a field-wide summer institute, the project strengthens the digital preservation workforce not through prescriptive solutions, but through adaptable practices, shared expertise, and durable professional networks. In doing so, it advances IMLS's mission to support libraries and archives as essential infrastructure, sustained by a skilled and resilient workforce prepared to steward digital cultural heritage into the future.

Expanding the Reach of Digital POWRR's Digital Preservation and Stewardship Training to Meet Critical Workforce Needs – Schedule of Completion**2026****2027****SEPT****OCT****NOV****DEC****JAN****FEB****MAR****APR****MAY****JUN****JUL****AUG**

Project initiation and consultant onboarding												
Update POWRR Website												
Create evaluation framework and instruments												
Plan Curriculum Development Summit												
Conduct Curriculum Development Summit												
Document curriculum revisions and development priorities												
Develop recruitment and outreach materials												
Advisory Council Meeting #1 - review suggested Academy structure, outreach plan												
Development of new curricular modules												
Prepare Academy instructional materials												
Recruit, review applications and select POWRR Academy participants												
Allocate participant travel scholarships												
Disburse travel stipends												
Distribute pre-Academy materials and assessments												
Finalize Academy schedule and instructional materials												
Advisory Council Meeting #2 - review final curriculum												
Develop participant onboarding and check-in process												
Deliver POWRR Academy (pilot)												
Disburse instructor honoraria												
Collect formative participant and instructor feedback												
Document lessons learned from Academy pilot												

2028

AUG

Analyze Academy evaluation data	
Revise curriculum based on findings	
Develop DPSI model and call for workshop proposals	
Advisory Council Meeting #3 - review Academy evaluation & DPSI plan	
Refine POWRR Academy curriculum	
Release call for DPSI workshop proposals	
Review and select DPSI workshop proposals	
Finalize DPSI schedule	
Recruit, review applications and select POWRR Academy participants	
Release sign-up mechanism for DPSI workshops	
Prepare refined instructional materials	
Advisory Council Meeting #4 - review final curriculum & schedules	
Finalize logistics for Academy and Summer Institute	
Disburse travel stipends to participants	
Deliver POWRR Academy (refined implementation)	
Deliver DPSI pilot	
Disburse instructional honoraria	
Collect/analyze participant feedback	
Analyze evaluation and demand data	
Synthesize Advisory Council and participant feedback to inform final deliverables	
Prepare public synthesis of findings and lessons learned	
Publish updated curriculum materials on POWRR website	
Disseminate results through professional channels	
Prepare and submit final grant report	