

**The HBCU Library Alliance + Digital Library Federation Authenticity Project***Fostering Dynamic Fellowship Cohorts, Strategic Organizational Partnerships, & Authentic Community***PIs:** Executive Directors Bethany Nowviskie (DLF) & Sandra Phoenix (HBCU Library Alliance)

**Statement of Broad Need:** In partnership with the HBCU Library Alliance and with the generous support of IMLS, the Digital Library Federation hosted a 2017 DLF Forum Pre-Conference on ways that digital libraries might better represent diverse communities and experiences through their collections, better support learners from minoritized groups through digital pedagogy, and more effectively nurture and sustain a dynamic workforce of librarians of color. These broad, national needs are well supported in the literature and grow ever more acute in our current political climate and as American demographics evolve. (Librarianship remains a pervasively white profession, unreflective of our overall national population of students and citizens.) IMLS funding enabled 24 Fellows from Historically Black Colleges and Universities to attend 2017's Pre-Conference and DLF Forum, where their contributions greatly enriched cross-community exchange among digital library professionals and laid the groundwork for future collaboration between our membership organizations. From the opening moments of the Pre-Conference to the closing panel of the Forum, Alliance and DLF leaders identified *authenticity*—the fostering of genuine, equitable, mutual learning and sharing that is both true to our individual communities and to the future we want to create together—as the core value of our partnership, an ongoing systemic need, and the overarching goal of any future collaboration. The authentic project we now propose additionally fosters needed community across library organizations and institutions; encourages participation in national conversations of people of color in the field; amplifies and supports their meaningful ideas and projects; and creates networks of mentors and peers for career advice and support. True to the digital library endeavor, our proposal addresses both Curating Collections and National Digital Platform IMLS priorities, but we are submitting it under the NDP category because of its contribution to building a more diverse and inclusive next-generation digital library workforce, and because of the potential for advances—infrastructural and technological, social and systemic—to the national platform through our Authenticity Fellows' microgrant projects.

**Project Design:** The Authenticity Project has the following goals: to 1) provide DLF Forum travel bursaries allowing practitioners from Alliance member libraries (hitherto largely shut out of participation for lack of travel funds) to intersect with and enrich the broader digital library community; 2) establish reciprocal mentoring and networking relationships among librarians and technologists in both organizations; 3) encourage DLF members to engage with Alliance activities, by offering opportunities to learn from project reports by future HBCU Fellows at the Forum and by creating networking opportunities that foster authentic personal relationships; 4) enable DLF leadership (staff and advisory committee members) to attend Alliance membership meetings and Alliance leadership (staff and board of directors) attend the Forum and allied meetings for mutual exchange and strategic planning between our organizations; and 5) deepen and enrich inter-institutional exchange among our members by incentivizing collaboration among DLF and Alliance member libraries, through Fellow-led micro-grants for joint projects of strategic importance to both organizations. The project we propose therefore takes seriously the notion of promoting authentic engagement at multiple levels: interpersonal, institutional, and membership-organizational. This grant would support 3 cohorts of Authenticity Project Fellows, 15 in each program year, from 2019-2021. Fellows will come from HBCU libraries. Their awards will include facilitated mentoring (with each fellow matched to two volunteer mentors: one from the Alliance and another from the DLF community, and given quarterly discussion topics); access to an always-available Slack space, email list, and quarterly synchronous, online video-networking sessions for Fellows, mentors, and eventual project partners; access to seed money through a microgrants program, to foster leadership among our fellowship cohorts and lead to deeper and broader collaboration among DLF and Alliance member institutions; and full travel and registration support for the DLF Forum and Learn@DLF workshops. Fellows who win additional project funds will have an opportunity to present on their work; all will be invited to networking opportunities alongside their mentors and community leaders, and will have ongoing

access to online discussion spaces to promote connections across cohorts, among our memberships, and long beyond the active period of their fellowship years.

**Diversity Plan:** Support and inclusion of traditionally underserved, and underrepresented communities and practitioners, in the broadest scope and through an intersectional lens, is central to this project. From project planning, to recruiting mentors, collecting applications and selecting fellows, implementing the fellowship, and assessing data, every stage of this program requires critical engagement and thoughtful opposition to intersecting, structural biases and systems of oppression present within the LIS community. The project also necessitates a continued, authentic partnership between the HBCU Library Alliance and DLF. As with our previous round of DLF HBCU Fellows, a committee made up of Alliance and DLF practitioners will carefully choose fellows, advise on the mentoring and microgrants programs, and help to monitor progress and outcomes. Research on diversity initiatives in LIS organizations indicates that there is much work to be done (Boyd, Blue, and Im, 2017; Hathcock, 2015; Johnson, 2007; Vinopal, 2016). As April Hathcock notes in “White Librarianship in Blackface: Diversity Initiatives in LIS”, “[o]ur diversity programs do not work because they are themselves coded to promote whiteness as the norm in the profession and unduly burden those individuals they are most intended to help.” With strong Alliance intellectual leadership and the advice of an advisory board of leaders within both organizations, we will carefully consider application and communications processes, mentorship recruitment, community building initiatives, and microgrant selection in order to contribute to the ongoing work of those practitioners, institutions, and communities that are “bringing true diversity and anti-racist practice to the profession” (Hathcock, 2015).

**Broad Impact:** The outcomes of this project have clear relevance to the current and future health of the profession and to the ability of HBCUs and predominantly white institutions to collaborate more fruitfully, equitably, and authentically on digital library efforts that benefit us all. On the level of individual beneficiaries, this project is designed to build safe and supportive spaces within the fellowship cohort as well as foster meaningful relationships between LIS professionals at all stages of career cycles. Organizational impact is imagined at two levels: between and among partnering institutions that participate in Fellows’ microgrant projects, and between the Alliance and DLF as membership organizations. Finally, the Authenticity Project aims to contribute to a more intersectional, intergenerational, and inclusive digital library community writ large, as Fellows, mentors, conference attendees, and project collaborators are encouraged and pragmatically supported to see themselves as part of a genuine and ongoing Alliance+DLF partnership, extending beyond the scope and term of this grant. The estimated budget that follows funds 15 fellows annually, totaling 45 fellows who will receive mentorship, travel, networking, and practical project and leadership experience over the course of the program. The Authenticity Project would invest \$180k over the three years in direct fellowship funds and inter-institutional microgrants, supporting collaborative endeavors. The project will also engage a minimum of 30 and maximum of 90 people as mentors, and benefit hundreds of conference-goers and microgrant project participants over the course of the three years. It is also designed to contribute to the ongoing, positive transformation of both our organizations.

**Budget:** The grant will support 15 fellows per year (45 in all) with travel and registration awards to the DLF Forum and a Learn@DLF workshop day = *\$90k total*. We will provide DLF Forum registration bursaries or travel subsidies for at least 10 volunteer mentors per year, to offset need = *\$14,250 total*. Members of each year’s cohort of Fellows will be eligible to apply for inter-institutional project seed money, with \$30k available per year = *\$90k total*. We are budgeting *\$18k* to enable 3 members of the HBCU Library Alliance leadership and Board of Directors to attend annual DLF Forums and Authenticity Project meetings during 3 years of the grant, and a further *\$9,600* to enable 3 members of DLF’s leadership and Advisory Committee to attend two Alliance conferences. DLF staff time for program administration, including managing application processes, mentorship matching, communications and scheduling, and other logistical and financial aspects of the program is estimated at *\$18,545* (heavily subsidized with cost-shared time; funding only 10% of one program associate). New video conferencing infrastructure for Fellows is estimated at *\$720* and materials/supplies/printing/mailings at *\$500*. We are also requesting indirect costs of *\$8,325* at our federally-negotiated rate. Total: *\$249,940.43*