Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media

Creating Local Linkages: Training Public Librarians to Facilitate Doing Digital Local History
Laura Bush 21 Century Librarians, Preliminary Proposal

Statement of Need

Genealogy and family history is a major way people engage with the past, and public libraries are logical places for those patrons to begin this kind of research. They hold local collections, research space, and internet access. In ideal circumstances, those public libraries would also offer their patrons the opportunity to consult with and learn from a librarian who is equipped with the research and historical thinking skills necessary to support the community in doing local history. The Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media (RRCHNM) <chnm.gmu.edu> at George Mason University (Mason), with support from the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) <dp.la>, is requesting roughly $700,000 over three years (50% cost-shared) for a Laura Bush 21st Century Librarians project grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, under the Curating Collections priority, to create and administer a professional development curriculum for public librarians that will train them to help their local communities capitalize on digital collections to pursue and expose local histories.

The nexus of interest in history and public library resources represents a major opportunity to connect the public to the complexities of their local history, and to their local public library's collections, anchoring communities through a shared investigation of the past. These connections and conversations can occur when public librarians have the skills to help their patrons make sense of the primary and secondary historical materials at their disposal. Moving beyond the narrow focus on family lineage to address questions of migration, economic development, politics, race and ethnicity, leisure, religion, and cultural phenomena, programming that facilitates local history work can increase opportunities for lifelong learning, community engagement, and patrons' connections to place and to one another. Unfortunately, far too few public library professionals are equipped with an understanding of local and history methods.

Project Design

With a twenty-two-year year track record of using the web to improve the teaching and learning of history, and in professional development, RRCHNM is perfectly positioned to provide the professional development that public librarians need to support vibrant local history work among their patrons. In partnership with the DPLA, RRCHNM will engage librarians around the country in a range of historical research methods and digital history skills, and teach them how to train others in those skills, thus helping their patrons to capitalize on the unique local collections and to make use of the vast materials aggregated through the DPLA.

Based on a extensive experience in providing online and face-to-face professional development in the teaching and learning of historical thinking skills and digital methods, RRCHNM is seeking a Laura Bush 21st Century Librarians grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, under the Curating Collections priority, to**:**

1. create a robust **open-access online curriculum** consisting of five modules of screencasts and step-by-step tutorials that will introduce public librarians to the core elements of researching and publishing local history using digital tools;
2. teach an eight-week **online course** 4 times that uses that curriculum to certify public librarians as skilled in doing digital local history (each course will serve at least 50 public librarians, totaling 200);
3. lead 4 full day **face-to-face workshops** in concert with DPLA content and services hubs over 2 years on doing local digital history in public libraries (each workshop will serve at least 25 public librarians); and
4. author and publish a **guide for librarians to support public programming** to teach library patrons historical methods.

These activities, taking place between May 2017 and April 2020, will **train at least 300 public librarians** to better work with their own collections, and also to do significant local history programming with their constituents.

National Impact

In the course of this project, RRCHNM and DPLA **will train at least 300 public librarians in the skills and methods of digital local history** through asynchronous online instruction and face-to-face workshops. This

professional development curriculum will have key outcomes for the participating public librarians, their institutions, and their communities:

Participating librarians will gain skills to help their patrons to curate the vast digital history sources available to them; will be equipped to assist their patrons in expanding their history work beyond the narrow searches for information about ancestors to engage with larger questions about the local social, cultural, and political context of the past; will gain key digital skills and familiarity with widely adopted open source digital tools and nationally recognized platforms, including *Omeka* <omeka.org, omeka.net> and *Zotero* <zotero.org>; and, will learn how to work with the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative schemas and how data standards and interoperability are key to sustaining local history collections.

Public libraries (with or without participating staff) will have access to the full compliment of curriculum resources in perpetuity so that they can organize and run their own professional development courses; will gain an increased capacity to involve their patrons and local communities in the work of collections stewardship; and, will have local history collections that are described a way that conforms with DPLA's metadata standards (DCMI), making them more likely candidates for inclusion through DPLA content hubs.

Members of local communities will learn from their librarians how to be active creators and curators of their own history beyond doing basic genealogical work; will contribute their interpretations on local topics, demonstrating how histories are comprised of multiple perspectives; will increase their digital literacy by making their local histories more visible through digital publication; and, will have an increased capacity to connect and assess the local impact of and on national events.

Work Plan

Year 1 activities will include the design of the content for the five curriculum modules; design certification assessment elements; design and development of the course management system using WordPress and BuddyPress; drafting of patron curriculum materials; and publicity and outreach through DPLA networks.

Year 2 activities will include the first and second face-to-face workshops for 25 participants; Course Session 1 (Fall) for at least 50 participants; Course Session 2 (Spring) for at least 50 participants; drafting the *Guide to Teaching Local Digital History Methods*; and ongoing publicity and outreach.

Year 3 activities will include the third and fourth face-to-face workshops for 25 participants; Course Session 3 (Fall) for at least 50 participants; Course Session 4 (Spring) for at least 50 participants; the publication of the *Guide to Teaching Local Digital History Methods*, and ongoing publicity and outreach.

Budget

The total cost for the project will be roughly $700,000 over three years. **RRCHNM is requesting $350,000 in funds from IMLS.**

The bulk of the funding will go to support the curriculum development, course administration, and workshop instruction. This work will be performed by RRCHNM staff, including Dr. Sharon Leon (Director of Public Projects), Dr. Sheila Brennan (Director of Strategic Initiatives), Dr. Stephen Robertson (Director), Megan Brett (Digital History Associate), and a graduate research assistant. Additionally, the services of a web designer and a developer will be required to create the online course delivery system in the first year.

The requested salaries total roughly $185,000, plus $55,000 in fringe benefits. We also request $6,000 to subsidize the travel costs for two instructors for the four workshops. Advisory Board stipends (4) will total $6,000. Finally, George Mason University's federally negotiated in-direct rate for this work is 38.7% ($97.000).

The majority of rest of the costs for the project will be provided in-kind by George Mason University, including $180,000 in salaries, plus $43,000 in fringe benefits. Additional pledged costs include graduate student tuition and health care ($30,000) and the in-direct associated with the cost-share, which will total $86,000.

Finally, the DPLA has pledged $15,000 of cost-shared support for work with the content and service hubs for outreach and workshop planning.