

*The University of Texas at Austin, School of Information*

## **Reaching Those Who Served: Recruiting and Preparing Military Veterans for Careers in Librarianship**

The University of Texas at Austin's (UT-Austin) School of Information (iSchool) proposes a three-year project grant to (1) collect information on strategies to **recruit** military veterans into library and information science (LIS) master's degree programs; and (2) **admit** and provide financial support for a dozen military veterans to make substantial progress in completing a master's degree through one of three ALA accredited programs. The iSchool will serve as the lead institution; Dr. Lorlene Roy will serve as PI. Our two partner organizations are the Library and Information Science Program at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa (UH-M) and the School of Information at San Jose State University (SJSU). The main objective for **Reaching Those Who Served** is to identify and test approaches to recruiting military veterans into LIS programs. The anticipated results will be our sharing of recruitment strategies with other LIS programs and the admission of veterans into the three partner locations at UT-Austin, UH-M, and SJSU. We are requesting \$489,503 in grant funding.

### **Background: Need and Impact**

According to a 2015 study, "Libraries at the Crossroads" by the Pew Research Center, nearly 95 percent of American adults age 16 and older say that public libraries should "definitely" (74 percent) or "maybe" (20 percent) offer programs for veterans or active duty military service people. (Horrigan 2015) In 2014, we received a small planning grant from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) for "Libraries and Veterans: Identifying Services and Possibilities." At the beginning of the grant we found references in the literature to about ten library veterans programs. We conducted interviews of many of those involved in these cases. In May 2016, we conducted a new literature search and identified more than 80 cases. Libraries offered a wide range of services for active members and veterans of the armed services, reserves, and National Guard as well as their families. That result alone tells us that more public libraries are launching, maintaining, and expanding services for veterans.

While we were immersing ourselves in identifying and understanding the planning and delivery of services for military veterans, we also heard from librarians who were veterans. A number of the librarians we interviewed were military veterans. In addition, we were approached by professional librarians or library support staff who were veterans in the audiences of our presentations at conferences including our panel on "Serving Those Who Served" at the 2016 Public Library Association Conference in Denver. Others stopped by our poster session at the 2016 ALA Annual Conference. From these conversations we learned that, not only are libraries essential partners in library services for veterans, but, given their motivation to serve others, veterans are excellent prospective students for graduate LIS programs. Strategies to reach this potential recruitment pool are, however, somewhat unclear. When did they make the decision to begin their LIS studies? How did they tap financial resources such as the GI Bill? What resources are available to prospective students who have exhausted their GI Bill support? The impact potential of this project could involve informing all LIS programs about successful ways to recruit military veterans into their programs.

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### **Project Design**

Through **Reaching Those Who Served** we will: (1) study avenues for recruiting veterans into LIS programs; and (2) provide financial support for a total of twelve veterans to enroll in three LIS programs. UH-M is located where there are a large number of military bases and compounds representing each of the armed forces—Army, Marine Corps, Marines, Air Force, and Coast Guard. SJSU provides the option for students to complete their programs entirely online no matter where they live. The iSchool, the lead institution, is the site of a previous IMLS planning grant directed by the PI, the daughter of a Bronze-Star Korean War veteran who has contributed to services for veterans including SongwritingWith:Soldiers. Roy has also served on the iSchool's Admissions and Awards Committee and recently completed a two-year term as the Graduate Advisor, a role that included verifying students' programs of studies with the Veteran Certification section of the University's Office of the Registrar.

**Studying Recruitment:** There are numerous studies that point to the settings, motivation, and life patterns that lead someone to enter LIS as a career. We are interested in learning how military veterans 'find' our field and the processes they follow in enrollment, including at what point in their military career they make this decision, how they cover their financial responsibilities, how they select their program, and the services they have access to or might have benefited from. We will gather this information throughout the three years of the project through interviewing LIS professionals who are also veterans, including our alumni and colleagues, as well as contacting admissions staff/faculty at LIS programs. We learned through the 2012 IMLS planning grant that many librarians post reflections about their military experience on national holidays that recognize military service, such as Veterans' Day. These colleagues may be part of our interviewee pool. The project's duration will be from July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2020.

**Admission:** We will review the project locations' recruitment processes to assess how we have reached veterans in the past. In addition, we will follow advice we learned through the 2014 IMLS planning grant to (1) investigate informal/word-of-mouth approaches; (2) identify local services that host universities might already be offering for veterans; (3) identify community partners; and (4) coordinate our efforts with other organizations serving veterans. We will test these approaches in admitting a dozen veterans into our group, four at each of our programs. Admissions will be staggered, beginning in fall 2017. We will work to engage with prospective students with diverse backgrounds through our formal and informal networks. Roy is Anishinabe/Ojibwe and has substantial experience working with tribal nations. We will disseminate our findings through presentations at conferences and meetings as well through professional publications as well as maintain a strong social networking presence on Facebook and Twitter.

**Budget:** The total costs of the project will be \$489,503 with \$84,061 contributed as cost share. This budget supports four categories of expenses. **Personnel** costs are: salaries, wages, and fringe benefits for the quarter-time Graduate Research Associate (\$35,999) along with one month salary support plus fringe for the PI (\$19,894). Expenses to attend **travel** requested by IMLS (\$4,000 for each of three years, \$12,000 total). **Tuition support** for the four UT-Austin students totals \$155,009. Each of the two **subcontractees** would receive \$100,000 to support the expenses of the four students that will attend their programs at UH-Manoa and SJSU. The indirect costs rate is calculated at 56.5% and totals \$66,607.