

Project Title: Valuing Library and Archives (LA) Labor: Assessing Internship Implications for the LA Community

Project Summary: Dr. Marika Cifor (Information School, University of Washington) proposes a *Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian* program Early Career Research Development project, *Valuing Library and Archives (LA) Labor: Assessing Internship Implications for the LA Community*, that addresses Goal 1: Recruit, train, develop, and retain a diverse workforce of library and archives professionals and associated Objectives 1.1 and 1.3. This \$317,757 project is a 3-year empirical investigation into the implications of internships for recruiting, training, developing, and retaining a diverse workforce prepared to engender social wellbeing through U.S. libraries and archives (LA). Based on a pilot study of LA professional education internships, the project will answer the following research questions:

–**RQ1:** What are the incidence and structure of internships within LA (a) education programs and (b) institutions? What is the ratio of unpaid vs. paid internships?

–**RQ2:** What needs do internships meet for LA stakeholders (*student and early career workers, employers, faculty, and administrators, granting agencies, community partners*)? What do stakeholders consider internships' value to be in: (a) skill and professional development, and (b) community engagement capacity? How does compensation impact the perceived value of intern training, career development, and satisfaction?

–**RQ3:** What are the costs and benefits of internships for LA community engagement capacity and workforce equity, particularly for workers from minority populations? How do internship programs in partnership with local organizations promote diversity and community engagement, and how could they be scaled up in sustainable ways?

Project Justification: It is widely accepted that internships are important in LA professional training and correlate positively with career prospects. Yet the potential costs, particularly of unpaid internships, for cultural and socioeconomic diversity and inclusion, and to community engagement capacities are understudied. Competition for positions means that entry-level applicants must exhibit markers beyond educational qualifications. The cost of entry to LA for many is a willingness and ability to undertake internships—employment of finite duration that includes a learning component. The PI's pilot content analysis study of 178 LA and museum graduate-level programs revealed that 147 (83%) require internships within core or specialization curricula. In LA institutions internships are also commonplace, frequently grant-funded, and often utilized for recruitment of persons from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds. Preliminary findings show inconsistency in learning and training opportunities and in structures, including remuneration. In 2017, for example, of 1,982 Smithsonian Institution interns, only 875 (44%) received a stipend. There is increasing advocacy for contingent labor's value and to improve working conditions, including abolishing unpaid internships and establishing community development internships. However, there are no LA-specific internship standards, and extant literature is empirically limited or outdated. Evidence from other sectors shows outcome differences by remuneration, with paid internships resulting in greater job prospects, future earnings, and satisfaction. Some economists assert unpaid internships depress wages and undermine meritocracy. With insufficient data on prevalence and structure [RQ1, RQ2] and benefits and costs for diverse and underrepresented communities [RQ3], stakeholders are unable to develop internships that are consistently beneficial and that make progress towards professional needs for equity and community engagement.

Increasing capacity for community engagement that crosses racial, socioeconomic, gender, sexuality, and ability barriers requires recruiting, training, and sustaining a diverse, culturally competent LA workforce. With insufficient resources to train and support adequate, qualified staff, many institutions turn to unpaid interns. An unstable, short-term workforce poses risks to institutions' sustainability, and constrains LA abilities to create positive social change by building strategic partnerships with non-profits, organizations, and communities. Research on contingent labor reliance (including LG-73-18-0236-18) shows that instability and under-compensation contribute to low morale, burnout, and a lack of diversity, which limit professionals' abilities to participate in or lead programs responsive to community challenges. Internships likely pose similar capacity challenges. More than 85% of LA professionals are white. Such disparities are an urgent problem and will become increasingly so in the future. A major response has been to diversify student bodies on the premise of promoting future diversity and inclusivity. Evidence from other sectors indicates that under- or un-compensated work perpetuates inequities. Students frequently bear internship credit hours cost and must complete them during workweeks, an obstacle when working full-time or in less-flexible jobs. When struggling to access opportunities, low-income and first-generation students are less likely to accrue internship benefits including improved job prospects and career development. Additionally, unpaid interns do not qualify for federal discrimination and harassment protections, which disproportionately affect minorities. This project will result in comprehensive data on internships' extent and structure, implications for community engagement, and on outcome disparities between paid and unpaid positions and for minorities. The project's findings will advance *research, curriculum* and *professional practice*.

Project Workplan: This study combines quantitative survey-based and qualitative ethnographic approaches to collect and analyze data on LA internships' incidence and structure [RQ1], needs fulfilled and value [RQ2], and short- and long-

term implications for diverse and underrepresented LA stakeholders and efforts to engender social wellbeing through partnerships with non-profit and community organizations [RQ3]. Phase I, building from the pilot study, includes surveys of 300 students and early career professionals, and of 50 internship program supervisors, mentors, and founders, a purposive sample recruited from SAA, ALA, PLA, ARL, and DLF listservs. Recruitment will target participants from sub-groups that empower underrepresented persons. The surveys will address issues such as quantity of and compensation in internships completed [RQ1], and participant's needs and perceptions of internship value and outcomes [RQ2]. Thirty focus group and in-depth interview participants will be recruited from the survey. Four focus groups of students and new professionals will be held virtually or at conferences in the first year [RQ2, RQ3]. In year 2, the PI will hold four focus groups, two with faculty and two with employers and community partners [RQ2, RQ3]. During Phase I existing evaluative data sets will be collected from four partner internship programs. In Phase II, we will analyze all collected data to inform interviews with leaders and current and former participants of four preprofessional internship programs with innovative approaches to diversity and community engagement through capacity-enhancing partnerships with local non-profits and organizations [RQ2; RQ3]. Exemplar programs are both past and ongoing including: the *Public Library Association Inclusive Internship Initiative*, *Library of Congress' Student Diversity and Inclusion Internship Program*, *Association of Moving Image Archivists' Diversity and Inclusion Fellowship*, and *Association of Research Libraries Fellowship for Digital and Inclusive Excellence*. Additionally, we will observe and gather data through participation in virtual/live program events for ongoing PLA and LOC programs. In Phase III, we will complete and disseminate internship standards and guidelines in line with community feedback. A graduate student researcher (GSR) will assist the PI; the PI will mentor the GSR on data collection and analysis and publication. Five experts from public and academic LAs have been selected as advisors for their expertise on diversity and labor issues.

The PI teaches archives, records management, and gender, race, and technology. Her expertise is in diversity and inclusion in LA, information ethics, and her research on archives and LA pedagogy is award-winning. Building on her research agenda and using mixed methods, Cifor will investigate access, professional values, and ethical labor practices for internships with the potential to greatly benefit American archives and libraries, and the communities who work in and with them. This project advances her research agenda expanding it to address LA labor concerns.

Diversity Plan: The project focuses on the lack of racial, socioeconomic, cultural, and gender diversity in LA and efforts to redress it through community engagement. PLA, LOC, AMIA, and ARL community partners include tribal, rural, and minority-serving LAs. To highlight diverse voices, the PI will sample individuals with underrepresented identities in collaboration with LA groups empowering minoritized persons. The project engages and benefits underrepresented students and professionals. The GSR, Itza Carbajal, is a first-generation Latinx PhD student, this funding supports her research development and progression. The PI will also apply results to redesign curricula to enable experiential learning to better serve diverse and underrepresented students and enhance students' skills, including cultural competency.

Project Results: In Phase I (9/2022-12/2023), PI will secure IRB approval; develop survey instruments and focus group, interview, and observation protocols; recruit for and complete survey and focus groups; collect existing evaluative data from partners; meet annually with advisory board and present preliminary findings at conferences and on project website. During Phase II (1-12/2024), the PI and GSR will code data collected; conduct site visits; gather community input on and synthesize findings. Phase III (1-8/2025), includes hosting SAA, DLF, and ALA workshops and a Twitter-based CritLib discussion; publication of results in peer-reviewed scholarly journals; an open educational report (OER) for use by LA educators; a white paper revised with community feedback outlining internship guidelines, including developing programs, onboarding interns and community partners, fair compensation and expectations, and assessment and evaluation, and an accompanying interactive webinar; project website; and final report to IMLS.

While supporting the IMLS strategic plan goal of promoting *lifelong learning* (goal 1), the project additionally supports the agency goals of *building capacity* (goal 2), *increasing access* (goal 3), and *achieving excellence* (goal 4) (IMLS, 2018). It will result in benchmarks, including standards, for LA labor practices that employers and community partners can apply to design internships to meet these needs. Actionable knowledge as to how internships are structured across institutions to support diversity, inclusion, and community engagement will also have an immediate pedagogical impact.

Budget: The estimated total for this 3-year project is: \$317,757 (no cost share; 55.5% F&A MTDC). This includes direct costs (3 yrs): \$47,596 PI salary & benefits; \$159,682 GSR support; \$10,200 domestic travel (data collection & research dissemination for PI, GSR); \$2,600 conference registration; \$1,500 research stipends (focus group participants & advisory board).