

RE- University of Nevada, Las Vegas

*LibParlor Online Learning: An Open and Interactive Curriculum for LIS researchers*

**Overview:** The University of Nevada, Las Vegas in collaboration with the Pennsylvania State University, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and Smith College seeks \$236,793 in funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services through a three-year Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program Lifelong Learning project grant. Funding will be used to develop *LibParlor Online Learning* - an openly available and adaptable interactive online curriculum of learning modules that include readings, activities, and planning exercises to build capacity for academic Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals to conduct and publish rigorous original research. This work will supplement existing MLIS curricula and professional development programs in order to create equitable learning opportunities for librarians of diverse backgrounds. The content can be completed as individual modules or as a comprehensive curriculum that results in a complete project proposal, a certificate, and Continuing Education Units. This project will serve to expand the [Librarian Parlor](#) (LibParlor) project, an online blog launched in August 2017 that curates posts from LIS workers and students, from a variety of institutions, on how to conduct and publish research. In its first three years, LibParlor published 130 posts from 90 writers and garnered over 77,600 website views. The blog has gained national recognition and is embedded in MLIS syllabi and graduate research assistant trainings, proving it is regarded as a high-quality resource for those beginning LIS research.

**Funding Category:** *Project* | **Project Type:** *Continuing Education*

**Broad National Need:** New LIS professionals face challenges when conducting and publishing research due to [inconsistent MLIS education requirements, lack of well developed resources, and varying levels of institutional support](#), leading to uneven representation in the literature. While IMLS-funded programs such as the Institute for Research Design in Librarianship (IRDL) and the Research Institute for Public Libraries (RIPL) provide the necessary opportunity to learn research methodologies, they can only reach a small number of participants each year. *LibParlor Online Learning* will build upon the spirit of these programs by forging equitable and mutually beneficial collaborations to create an openly accessible curriculum for LIS researchers in academic libraries. As co-founders and editors of this blog representing various institution types, we have spent three years discussing the barriers to research with members of the LIS community and developing a network of experienced researchers. We are uniquely positioned to create an online resource that improves research training for academic library workers.

**Lifelong Learning Project Category:** This project supports the lifelong learning project category by empowering and educating academic librarians in various stages of their careers by strengthening their skills and building their capacity to conduct rigorous, original academic research. This will enable them to discover more about their field and in turn continuously improve their communities.

**Diversity plan:** Purposeful attention to diversity and inclusion will be integrated into the project at every phase, from initial planning to iterative assessment. One of the major project goals is to democratize the often privileged information around research and publishing in order to diversify LIS literature. Additionally, we will prioritize conferences and platforms for marginalized communities during outreach and public comment periods.

**Projected goals and outcomes:**

- Conduct a needs assessment of academic LIS workers through surveys and online discussions to identify key areas of difficulty in conducting research in order to identify module topics for the curriculum.

- Collaborate with expert partners, namely LIS researcher-practitioners with specialized experience, to create learning modules that include open access readings, reflective activities, and planning exercises.
- Curate completed learning modules into a full curriculum that will be available for reinterpretation, adaptation, and expansion by the LIS community.
- Improve and diversify LIS literature by democratizing privileged knowledge about LIS research in order to educate and empower interested academic LIS workers.
- Build capacity for academic LIS professionals to conduct and publish rigorous original research that will directly impact practice and their ability to serve the needs of their communities.

**Project Design and Schedule:** This project grant will support three phases: (1) needs assessment and planning, (2) curriculum creation, and (3) implementation, piloting, and outreach. During each phase, we will solicit ideas from the LIS community and conduct outreach to incorporate community input that will iteratively refine the project.

**Phase 1: Needs Assessment and Planning** [September 2021-March 2022] Following a needs assessment, we will host a curriculum planning forum with project staff and a representative group of intended users in order to clarify assessed needs and identify expert partners with whom we will co-create learning modules. We will share our findings and projected curriculum via online communities for feedback.

**Phase 2: Curriculum Creation** [March 2022-March 2023] We will collaborate with expert partners, namely LIS researcher-practitioners with specialized experience, to create an online curriculum using openly available software, readings, and tools. Project staff will seek feedback and meet at a conference to discuss project updates, challenges, and next steps.

**Phase 3: Implementation, Piloting, and Outreach** [March 2023-March 2024] A cohort of participants will pilot the comprehensive curriculum in an online, asynchronous format, and offer insight regarding its strengths and limitations. Project staff will travel to conferences to share updates and generate awareness and discussion, intentionally soliciting perspectives from underrepresented communities.

**National impact:** This resource will elevate the quality of research in the field, supplement MLIS curricula, and offer a free tool for LIS professionals to continuously improve their research skills. The development of this curriculum stands to benefit the LIS profession nationally and internationally. Expert partners will be chosen from geographically diverse areas, and the open online format enables the project to reach LIS professionals all over the country and the world while encouraging reinterpretation, adaptation, and expansion.

**Project staff:** Project lead and Principal Investigator: *Chelsea Heinbach*, University of Nevada Las Vegas. Co-Principal Investigators: *Hailley Fargo*, Penn State University; *Charissa Powell*, University of Tennessee Knoxville; and *Nimisha Bhat*, Smith College Libraries. **Advisory Board:** *Erin Ackerman*, College of New Jersey; *Zara T. Wilkinson*, Rutgers University, representatives familiar with common barriers to research; *Jason Clark*, Montana State University Library, expertise in grants focused on creating curricula. *Dr. Rachel Fleming May*, MLIS faculty member. *Joelle Pitts*, Kansas State University, expertise in creating online modules.

**Budget:** Our request for \$236,793 will support a planning forum (43,817)\*, stipends for expert partners (50,000), stipends for pilot curriculum participants (10,000), stipends for advisory board members (12,500), travel for project updates, feedback, and outreach (40,000)\*, software (1,300), and indirect funds (56,331).

\*These budget items can be reallocated if CDC guidelines continue to advise not traveling or gathering due to COVID-19.