

The Ferguson Library, Stamford, Connecticut

LB21-FY21

The Ferguson Library submission to the IMLS Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program
LB21

Project Title: Reading for Accessibility and Inclusion

The Ferguson Library of Stamford, Connecticut proposes an 18-month Planning Grant to Build Capacity in our libraries. We propose to improve Continuing Education for library workers to increase equity and access in Lifelong Learning for people with disabilities and barriers that impact their ability to read. We request \$99,914.22 from the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program to meet our goals.

This Planning Grant proposal is focused on improving libraries' services for people with disabilities and reading barriers. We propose to build understanding and to develop educational resources for library workers that will improve library services at the national level. We will conduct a broad-based needs assessment; develop a guiding roadmap to foster accessibility; and pilot a sample training module that trains library workers in modern accessible reading technologies and digital services. This project will be supported by 10 partner organizations representing a diverse set of libraries around the country and ebook industry stakeholders.

Statement of Broad Need

People with barriers to reading traditional printed books face challenges in education, employment, social inclusion, civic engagement, and even simply in reading for enjoyment. Reading barriers can include visual impairments, learning differences like dyslexia, and mobility limitations that prevent them from holding or turning the pages of a book. The Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity estimates that dyslexia affects as much as 20% of the population¹, and Cornell University reports 2.3% with a visual disability². Library users with these and other reading barriers come through our physical and virtual "doors" every day seeking to access information, stories, and learning opportunities. All types of libraries in all locations in the country want and need to serve them.

Over the past five years we have seen revolutionary change in digital publishing and reading applications that can help libraries do just that. The popularity of ebooks, spurred even more by the pandemic, have given them a place on nearly every library shelf. Revenue from U.S. ebook sales tops 1 billion dollars in recent years³. This success helps encourage publishers to consider new features and improvements to the reading experience. Ebooks and mainstream digital readers now integrate features that allow persons with disabilities or reading barriers to access books. Digital books and information are no longer locked in fixed formats that work only for the perceived mainstream. Improved file formats and customizable reading applications on modern devices allow for personalized reading options for *all* readers. Libraries prioritize access and accessibility as a part of our core values and goals and can be learning hubs for people to discover new ways to read.

¹ Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity FAQ page, <https://dyslexia.yale.edu/dyslexia/dyslexia-faq/>

² Cornell University Disability Statistics 2018 data, <https://www.disabilitystatistics.org/reports/acs.cfm?statistic=1>

³ Statista "Book sales revenue in the United States in 2017 and 2018, by format April 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/473144/half-year-book-sales-revenue-format-usa/>

Library workers can use ebook features and reading applications to strengthen reading services and to build an inclusive library environment. Many ebooks and reading tools can be customized on mobile smartphones, tablets and desktop applications that libraries and community members have easier access to, instead of expensive library equipment. Awareness of and comfort with these technologies remains limited amongst library users and the library workers who can help. Our field must address library workers' needs for targeted information and support to understand these tools and their relevance for the readers in their community. Training can improve library workers' knowledge of common reading barriers and how different ways of presenting content, using accessible file formats and reading applications, can make it easier for people to read.

Equity and Access for Lifelong Learning: Personalized reading options for all readers

Many accessibility features and improvements to ebooks are designed to address reading barriers. Even better, the classic "curb cut" rule applies here as well. Just as curb cuts in sidewalks are necessary for people using wheelchairs to cross the road, they are also extremely useful for people pushing strollers and people using crutches or canes. Formats, features and personalization options that may be critical for a person with a disability or reading barrier to access a book are also widely applicable to anyone's needs and preferences.

Modern book formats and commercial reading applications have made significant strides to introduce built-in customization options. These options make it possible to personalize the reading experience for individual needs, using tools that are generally available for libraries and patrons, without investment in specialized equipment. In fact, personalization for reading matches the global trend toward personalization of all digital experiences that library communities have in their daily lives. A few examples of these settings include:

- Personalization settings allow people with dyslexia to select a dyslexia-friendly font, and those with low vision to make color contrast and font size adjustments. Others may prefer or experience less eye fatigue with color schemes like the popular "dark mode" on laptops and smartphones.
- Tools like "read aloud" use Text-To-Speech engines to read content aloud. People who are blind use this audio content, and the read aloud function can provide extra language support to people with learning differences and people learning to read and write in English.
- During the pandemic, library facilities were closed, and it was challenging for public and specialized libraries to adjust to meeting the needs of patrons in a fully remote environment, particularly community members with reading barriers. There now exists an important opportunity to support people using home devices for reading at any time they are unable to come physically to a library location.

Libraries can use these resources for equity, access, and inclusion of persons with disabilities and users with many different types of needs.

Continuing Education for Library Workers to Build Capacity of Libraries

Ebooks and reading applications: Library workers can use knowledge of ebook formats, reading applications, and personalization settings to help customers identify reading applications and personalization that they might benefit from trying. Like all new skills, building a knowledge base for accessibility and personalization of reading requires coordinated training using tenants and proven practices of adult learning.

- Many existing informational or training resources for library workers can be expanded on to include personalization options. Existing resources provide a solid overview of the more specialized resources and equipment that a library can purchase or recommend to its users. IMLS-funded Project Enable and the former ALA division ASGCLA's Library Accessibility Toolkits, are examples of these. Training materials can be expanded from this foundation to focus on tools and customizations inherent to newer operating systems, used on web browsers, or embedded into mobile applications.
- Training resources can be expanded to reflect national best practices and become available to a country-wide audience. Successful local programming can provide information more widely to library workers, who have not yet had any exposure to accessible reading tools.

Library collections: Libraries have the power to shape their collections to support this work. Libraries can make use of free or low-cost providers of ebooks in accessible formats. They can also make their own library collections more accessible by prioritizing the purchase and/or licensing of books and materials in accessible formats like EPUB 3. The EPUB ebook industry format has been promoted by national organizations such as the Book Industry Study Group, seeking to improve accessibility in publishing. Libraries spend 27% of their budgets on electronic materials including ebooks⁴ and need to make sure that they are paying for content that can be used by all library users, especially since the number of digital books borrowed from libraries and schools increased 20% from 2018-2019⁵ and by over 30% in 2020⁶. Library workers can use metadata and third-party reviews to identify titles in their collections or in their purchasing pipeline that will enable personalization. Accessibility and personalization options are increasingly available, and must be actively sought and demanded of publishers by library workers who know and understand the needs of their communities.

Tools that can support people with reading barriers to access library materials, achieve their learning goals, and develop a love of reading are increasingly available within ebooks on the market and on common digital devices. Ebooks purchased or licensed by libraries can be read by any patron using personalization options in mainstream reading tools. There are additional options for people with reading barriers that meet the criteria for free resources from the National Library Service (NLS) or Benetech's Bookshare, for example. (NLS has announced plans to update and expand their guidelines for eligibility, and this project will incorporate those new guidelines into the roadmap and training language when they become available.) The knowledge to use these tools is critical for a modern library service seeking to advance equity and inclusion for local communities.

Project Design

This project is designed as a first step toward a larger goal. It is a goal of ubiquitous use of modern book formats and customizable reading tools that support people with disabilities and other reading barriers at all libraries nationwide. An 18-month collaborative planning phase and training pilot aims to

⁴ Washington Post, "E-books at libraries are a huge hit, leading to long waits, reader hacks and worried publishers" <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2019/11/26/e-books-libraries-are-huge-hit-leading-long-waits-reader-hacks-worried-publishers/>

⁵ Statista, Digital books borrowed from libraries and schools in the United States from 2017 to 2019, by type, Jan 2020, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/250007/downloading-or-borrowing-e-books-on-a-public-library-website-in-the-us/>

⁶ OverDrive, 33% Growth for Digital Books from Public Libraries and Schools in 2020 Sets Records <https://company.overdrive.com/2021/01/07/33-growth-for-digital-books-from-public-libraries-and-schools-in-2020-sets-records/>

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develop the skills and expertise of library workers to use accessible and personalized reading supports in library services.

The three project objectives are 1. Uncover trends and priorities of library workers' knowledge, challenges, and needs for serving their library members with a variety of reading barriers through a needs assessment. 2. Develop a preliminary roadmap for how the national library community could improve library workers' knowledge and library services for people with reading barriers. 3. Craft and pilot the first in an intended series of scaffolded and actionable training modules for library workers to increase their comfort level with accessible ebook formats and reading tools.

Project Design: Leadership and Staffing

The project will be led by Project Director Susan LaPerla of The Ferguson Library. A free public library in Stamford, Connecticut since 1911, The Ferguson Library has a history of innovation for equity and access to digital materials. This includes a partnership with Stamford Public Schools to give every student a digital library card to access ebooks and databases. The library also lends Wi-Fi hotspots and Chromebooks to families, and sends the bookmobile to neighborhoods and parks without a nearby library facility to provide internet access. Highly relevant to this project, The Ferguson Library has also made available to the public Optelec Readers and computers installed with special software and keyboards for use by community members with mobility and vision issues. Even with these specialized devices available within the library branches, we have found that many in our community with disabilities rely on remote access to our e-resources.

We aim for the needs assessment, roadmap, and training module to be rooted in the needs of public libraries like The Ferguson that serve a diverse audience of library users. At the same time, we seek the input and partnership of university libraries and specialized libraries as well. A Steering Committee will be convened to advise the project and to activate their networks in support of the project goals. The Steering Committee of 10 like-minded peers will include representation from local, state, university, and specialized libraries, and relevant stakeholders such as ebook vendors. Eight (8) of Steering Committee members are confirmed from libraries in five (5) states, including one university press and one ebook industry partner. Some of the institutions represented on the Steering Committee have experience with the aspects of accessibility and inclusion addressed in this project and others are ramping up their knowledge and initiatives. At the start of the project, the Steering Committee will be tasked with recruiting representatives for the remaining slots that bring perspectives or diversity that the Committee identifies as gaps. Confirmed Steering Committee members are listed here and in the *Key Project Staff and Consultant* document.

- California Braille and Talking Book Library: Mike Marlin, Director
- Connecticut State Library: Maria Bernier, Chair, ADA Committee of the CT Library Association
- Hartford Public Library (Connecticut): Nancy Caddigan, Adult Education Transition Specialist
- Michigan Publishing / University of Michigan Press: Emma DiPasquale, Library Engagement Manager, ACLS Humanities Ebook Collection / University of Michigan Press Ebook Collection
- Montana State Library: Marilyn Bennett, Outreach and Electronic Resources Librarian
- University of Montana Maureen & Mike Mansfield Library: Teressa Keenan, Head, Bibliographic Management Services; Metadata Librarian and Accessibility Liaison
- University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill: Dr. Sandra Hughes-Hassell, Professor at The School of Information and Library Science and author of the IMLS-funded "Project Ready"
- EBSCO Information Services: Robert Smith, Platform Product Manager, Accessibility

Finally, the project will be supported by Benetech, the California-based nonprofit that created the Bookshare accessible ebook library and is a leader in accessibility standards and innovation. Benetech's Project Coordinator will support the Project Director and the Steering Committee on project management, communications, meeting logistics, and pilot organization over 18 months. Benetech's Technical Lead for R&D and the Born Accessible initiative, Charles LaPierre, will write and design the training module to synthesize the growing amount of information about accessibility that library workers can use to support their communities' reading activities. He will advise on the pilot and revise the module based on the learning experience of the participants. An explanation of Benetech's credentials is included in the attached file titled *Supportingdoc1.pdf*.

Project Design: Activities and Timeline

The 18-month project will follow this sequence beginning on September 1, 2021:

1. The first priority for this project will be to conduct a needs assessment survey with 100 library workers (Objective 1). The goal of the survey will be to uncover trends and priorities for library workers' knowledge, challenges, and needs to serve their library members with a variety of reading barriers. The survey will be developed by The Ferguson Library with technical guidance by Benetech and input from the Steering Committee in the first two months of the project. It will be anonymous, asking only for respondents to indicate the type of library at which they work, and to answer questions about their level of knowledge, comfort, and challenges in the area of accessible ebooks and using reading customization options to serve library users with reading barriers or personalization preferences.
 - a. The survey will be distributed directly to library workers at the organizations of the Steering Committee and other email distribution lists that Steering Committee members are affiliated with. It will also be open to any library worker nationwide, promoted through social media posts and newsletter placements in library association newsletters.
 - b. The survey will be promoted and remain open for 2 months leading up to the end of 2021. We will reopen it briefly in January 2022 if the response rate is under 100.
 - c. The Project Director will lead the analysis of the survey responses with support from Benetech's Project Coordinator, and will present highlights and trends to the Steering Committee for shared learning. This analysis will also inform the plans for the roadmap (Objective 2) and the training module (Objective 3). Highlights and trends will be incorporated into performance reporting.
2. The Steering Committee will meet virtually approximately each quarter over the course of the project. The first official Steering Committee meeting in October 2021 will follow a kickoff call at project launch so that Committee members can meet each other and suggest invites for the remaining slots. The October meeting will be used to agree on norms and processes for the group and to review the survey questions. The second meeting in January 2022 will be used to review the data from the needs assessment survey.
 - a. As a general practice, each meeting will include a review of the project Schedule of Completion and our progress against it to flag any challenges early and work to resolve them.
 - b. Steering Committee meeting notes will be taken and organized for all meetings; they will be shared with Steering Committee members as an effective practice for group alignment and will be used to prepare the performance reports for this grant.

3. Development of the training module will commence in the winter of 2022. Development of the training module will be led by Benetech to take advantage of their longstanding expertise in inclusive technology, accessibility standards, and promotion of access to information for all. We will be able to build on and tailor training content that Benetech has developed, grounding the materials in the trends surfaced by the needs assessment. Significant input from the Project Director and feedback from the Steering Committee over several meetings will add the perspectives of a wide range of libraries as to the prioritization of content in this training module, scaffolding of the content, and examples that library workers can relate to. Benetech will also ensure that the module itself is fully accessible to library workers that face the same reading barriers as the members we seek to serve.
 - a. The training module will be structured as an ebook, published in formats that facilitate transformation and ingestion into the widest range of learning environments. These formats will include Word, HTML, and the EPUB 3 format that we seek to raise awareness of with this project.
 - b. The content and level of complexity of the module will be responsive to the needs assessment and to the input of the Steering Committee. A proposed outline includes the following aspects: The training will introduce library workers to a brief historical context and technology progression for the current formats of accessible ebooks; visible and invisible reading barriers will be described along with the importance of supporting members with accessible options; trainees will be oriented to the features inherent in the EPUB 3 format of the training module itself as well as popular reading applications; key types of personalization settings will be shared including images of their look and feel and instructions for adjusting these settings on one's own devices for practice; copyright of materials will be addressed; accessibility metadata standards and implementations will be explained, and best practices and examples for exposing accessibility in catalogs will be demonstrated; lastly, activities to serve library members with these tools on library-owned or personal devices will give library workers actionable next steps to bring their learning into practice.
 - c. The training module will be a newly curated resource to support library workers, developed from existing information about the topic areas in the above outline. Benetech will draw from library-focused resources (Project Enable and ASGCLA's Library Accessibility Toolkits); from global accessibility standards and guidelines (World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and International Organization for Standardization EPUB specifications, InclusivePublishing.org, DAISY webinar series, the W3C Publishing Community Group metadata user experience guide); and presentations and trainings that Benetech has delivered (CSUN and Accessing Higher Ground conference workshops on EPUB publication format, reading applications for personalization, accessibility metadata, trends in accessible publishing and standards).
4. Development of the roadmap will begin in spring 2022 while the training module is underway, and we will incorporate learnings from the needs assessment and the expertise of the Steering Committee. The roadmap will be a call to action for libraries to prioritize accessible formats and the personalization of the digital reading experience into library services. Structured as a white paper, it will describe the trends found in the needs assessment and in other relevant research and will issue guidelines for short and long-term actionable next steps for libraries to use available technologies in support of library users. This can include recommendations for further development on more complex topics such as accessibility metadata, for example.

- a. The Project Director will facilitate the development of this roadmap with input from the Steering Committee over several meetings. Key points of the discussion and development of this roadmap will be captured in the meeting notes and incorporated into the roadmap and into performance reporting, as appropriate.
- b. The roadmap will be hosted on The Ferguson Library website in November 2022.
5. The training module will be piloted in Fall 2022 with 50 library workers recruited by the Steering Committee from their organizations and networks. All efforts will be made to recruit a set of pilot participants with diverse levels of exposure to the concepts of the training, geographic and urban/rural diversity, and diversity of the type of library they are affiliated with and community they serve.
 - a. Pilot participants will be given the module and asked to work through the self-paced training over a six-week timeframe.
 - b. Taking inspiration from the PLA Project Outcome model, pilot participants will be asked to complete a pre- and post-survey in the weeks before and after completing the training. The survey will measure overall changes in awareness, knowledge, or confidence in the training topics. Participants will also be asked to answer feedback survey questions after completing training and after trying at least one of the suggested implementation activities. This feedback about the clarity and usefulness of the material, and their experience putting it into practice, will inform revisions.
 - c. Steering Committee members, when appropriate, will check in with pilot participants to encourage their completion of the pilot and help direct any questions or issues to the Project Director's team and Benetech team, who will be available to support participants on the module and the surveys.
 - d. Pilot participants will be known to project organizers, so that they can be contacted as needed to complete the pilot. However, responses to the pre/post and feedback surveys will not be connected to name or contact information. In survey responses, pilot participants will be asked only to share the type of library that they work at, so we can explore any trends or differences between the experience of library workers at different types of libraries.
 - e. Feedback highlights and trends will be incorporated in the performance reporting.
6. The training module will be revised by the Benetech team in late 2022 and early 2023. A summary of the revisions will be shared with the Steering Committee for final approval of the module. The module will then be made publicly available in February 2023 for any library to incorporate into its professional development plan or any library worker to use as self-directed instruction.

Project Design: Dissemination of Information and Resources

This project will result in resources for library workers to be freely available to all. The Ferguson Library will publish the resources produced by this project on their website as they are completed by the project. The highlights of our needs assessment analysis will be prepared for February 2022; the roadmap for how the national library community can improve library services for people with reading barriers in November 2022; and a self-paced training module in February 2023, after it has been field tested by dozens of library workers.

All of these resources will be actively promoted, in particular through the geographically diverse networks of the Steering Committee to stimulate dialogue and encourage participation in future

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stages of this work. The training module especially will be the focus of promotion and of conference presentation submissions. The Ferguson Library will target library conferences like ALA's annual and midwinter conferences, and Benetech will apply for accessibility conferences like Accessing Higher Ground. Steering Committee representatives will be invited to join the submissions. The Ferguson Library will approach library associations to share these resources: NELA (New England Library Association), IUG (Innovative Interfaces User Group), ALA (American Library Association), PLA (Public Library Association), and the state library associations of Connecticut, California, Montana, Michigan, and North Carolina where our Steering Committee is represented.

Both OCLC's WebJunction and the Niche Academy have invited us to share the module with them upon its completion. WebJunction is the premier online learning site for the library community nationwide. Our contacts there are Kathleen Gesinger, Learning Community Manager; and Kendra Morgan, Senior Program Manager. Niche Academy is an accessible online learning platform that serves public and academic libraries, as well as individuals and organizations who serve people with disabilities. Jim Wilson, Senior Library Advisor, has committed to hosting the module. Links to these sites will be incorporated into the Connecticut State Library's Division of Library Development page for professional development:

<https://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/dld/professional/othertraining>

We approach this planning process as the first phase of a long-term effort to catalyze new library practice. The three objectives we seek to accomplish in this planning grant are ambitious, but are focused on a well-defined issue of accessible formats and reading tools. Each objective builds on the one prior to streamline these efforts. Our plan is to pursue follow-on funded projects to develop additional training modules, to reach thousands of library workers with training and guidance, and to showcase the growth in the use of accessible books and personalization tools to support people with diverse reading needs.

Diversity Plan

This project will include representation from five (5) states in four (4) regions of the United States and from three (3) types of libraries that serve distinct and diverse sets of community members. Library workers from the communities of the Steering Committee will be recruited to share their perspective in the needs assessment survey and to pilot the training module. The needs assessment survey will also be open to library workers from any location or type of library in the country. They will be encouraged to participate through widely-read newsletters and email distribution channels such as PLA's (Public Library Association), ALA Connect and state library listservs. Given this purposefully wide diversity in geography and in the service model of the libraries on the Steering Committee in particular, we expect the needs assessment to reveal trends that are applicable nationwide.

Demographics: The project is led by The Ferguson Library serving Stamford, Connecticut, a state with a surprisingly diverse population that reflects that of the nation overall. Confirmed Steering Committee members also hail from the Midwest in Montana and Michigan, the South in North Carolina, and the West Coast in California. These states have varying demographics: Montana state demographics include nearly 7% of people who identify as Native American or Alaskan Native; California is a "majority-minority" state; and Connecticut's population is 35% non-white. In Connecticut and the other represented states, disenfranchised populations, such as recent immigrants who do not yet read and write in English and people with disabilities or learning

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differences, struggle to gain access to resources, even when in close proximity to areas of wealth or relative privilege. The partner libraries in this proposal are working in earnest to address this issue within the context of our local communities. Project leaders will approach regional and affinity associations for survey promotion through email distribution lists to broaden participation by type of library and underrepresented groups. We will approach the NELA (New England Library Association), CLA (Connecticut Library Association), IUG (Innovative Interfaces User Group), ALA (American Library Association), and PLA (Public Library Association).

Focus population: Key to this project is a focus on the needs of people with barriers to reading print and to using inaccessible digital systems and materials. The Steering Committee and informal advisors include people with visual impairment and those who serve library communities of people with blindness, with dyslexia, with mobility impairments, and with other needs for reading supports, such as people learning English. The Steering Committee represents public library branches, state library systems and the Braille and Talking Book library within a state system. All of these types of libraries serve people who can benefit from a broader set of reading tools, and the project deliverables will reflect these diverse types of libraries. The Ferguson Library, with support from consultant, Benetech, will ensure that all aspects of the project are inclusive and accessible. The survey platform will also be tested for accessibility and conform to WCAG 2.2 and 508 requirements. The training module will be prepared using Microsoft Word and finalized as HTML and EPUB 3, two formats rated highly for accessibility. Project communication, including Steering Committee meetings, will be conducted through email and through Zoom video conferencing, which offers the option to dial-in without using a screen and has been tested for accessibility by Benetech. A focus on supporting people with disabilities aligns with many local initiatives, such as Stamford's current city-wide efforts to reaffirm the rights afforded in the ADA.

Additional diversity, equity and inclusion needs: Not all people have the same access to digital resources; this is true for library users, library workers, and Steering Committee members. As described above, the project focuses on digital resources that work on a variety of mainstream devices within the library and community members' homes. The training module will address options to support community members with simple devices or limited access to the internet to find a path to reading. In addition, the project itself will be conducted in a way that is mindful of digital limitations for Steering Committee members and staff. For example, Zoom works seamlessly on mobile or computer and offers users without a stable internet connection an option to call in to a meeting or to turn off video to minimize bandwidth use. The survey tool will be mobile-friendly for library workers, and the training module will be downloadable for offline use.

Lastly, this project is designed to be done virtually, including Steering Committee meetings, surveys, and the digital training module. The project can continue smoothly regardless of any lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic or other issues that may prevent people from interacting in person.

Broad Impact

This project will build understanding of the knowledge and readiness of our field to support library users with diverse reading needs. It will introduce a new publicly-available training resource to increase library workers' skills in using modern accessibility tools. Library workers who pilot the training module will learn this important content and be able to act as resources to both library users and to their colleagues in the profession. They will also hone their skills in reflection and delivery of

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feedback concerning if and how the training meets their continuing education needs as library professionals.

The project will elevate the role of library professionals as accessibility champions and providers of support for people with visible and invisible reading barriers. We expect 100 library workers to be active contributors to project Objective 1 as respondents to the needs assessment survey, and 50 to be pilot participants using the new training module for Objective 3.

The deliverables of this project – the needs assessment trends, the preliminary roadmap, and the training module – will be publicly available on The Ferguson’s website and the other platforms listed above. These resources will be actively disseminated to at least 1,000 library workers in three ways. The Steering Committee will share with its networks via email, social media, or other channels appropriate for their communities. The Ferguson Library and Benetech will amplify this messaging with digital and social media outreach to promote traffic to the site. The Ferguson Library and Benetech will submit at least 2 proposals to share this project at relevant conferences. Potential presentation options include Accessing Higher Ground, CSUN, and the DAISY Accessible Publishing and Reading webinar series. In addition, Ferguson Library staff regularly attend ALA Annual and Midwinter; the NELA (New England Library Association) and CLA (Connecticut Library Association) conferences; the Directors’ Summit; and the Computers in Libraries conference. Promotion channels include the Connecticut Library Association’s ADA Committee and State Library Division of Library Development, as well as parallel organizations in the states of Steering Committee members.

This Planning Grant will become the foundation for a long-term effort to expand the use of accessible books and personalization tools and to build a network of libraries leading a renewed charge for accessibility and inclusion. We expect that future stages of this project will deliver expanded training modules for advanced learning to thousands of library workers, develop use cases and stories of success from library workers who introduce these skills into their services, and facilitate collaborations between similar institutions to implement new initiatives.

The Ferguson Library’s mission statement is to “*Provide free and equal access to information, ideas, books and technology to educate, engage and enrich the Stamford community.*” We are excited to lead this project as part of our lived mission and our vision of lifelong learning, values that we know our partner libraries share. Technology to support reading is available. The remaining barrier is only the knowledge to use them. Modern library workers, with the right training, can eliminate this barrier to equity and inclusion for their communities.

Schedule of Completion

Table 1 Timeline for four activities and sub-tasks from Sept 2021 - February 2023

	Sep - 21	Oct- 21	Nov - 21	Dec - 21	Jan- 22	Feb- 22	Mar- 22	Apr- 22	May - 22	Jun- 22	Jul- 22	Aug - 22	Sep - 22	Oct- 22	Nov - 22	Dec - 22	Jan- 23	Feb- 23
Conduct a needs assessment.	Sep - 21	Oct- 21	Nov - 21	Dec - 21	Jan- 22													
Develop survey and review with Steering Committee (SC)	x	SC																
Promote and administer survey			x	x														
Analyze needs assessment data and review with SC					SC													
Disseminate highlights						x												
Develop a self-paced training module					Jan- 22	Feb- 22	Mar- 22	Apr- 22	May - 22	Jun- 22	Jul- 22	Aug - 22						
Develop outline of training module content					x	x												
Build content into a digital module						x	x	x	x	x	x							
Review twice with SC								SC			SC							



DIGITAL PRODUCT FORM

INTRODUCTION

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is committed to expanding public access to digital products that are created using federal funds. This includes (1) digitized and born-digital content, resources, or assets; (2) software; and (3) research data (see below for more specific examples). Excluded are preliminary analyses, drafts of papers, plans for future research, peer-review assessments, and communications with colleagues.

The digital products you create with IMLS funding require effective stewardship to protect and enhance their value, and they should be freely and readily available for use and reuse by libraries, archives, museums, and the public. Because technology is dynamic and because we do not want to inhibit innovation, we do not want to prescribe set standards and practices that could become quickly outdated. Instead, we ask that you answer questions that address specific aspects of creating and managing digital products. Like all components of your IMLS application, your answers will be used by IMLS staff and by expert peer reviewers to evaluate your application, and they will be important in determining whether your project will be funded.

INSTRUCTIONS

If you propose to create digital products in the course of your IMLS-funded project, you must first provide answers to the questions in **SECTION I: INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS AND PERMISSIONS**. Then consider which of the following types of digital products you will create in your project, and complete each section of the form that is applicable.

SECTION II: DIGITAL CONTENT, RESOURCES, OR ASSETS

Complete this section if your project will create digital content, resources, or assets. These include both digitized and born-digital products created by individuals, project teams, or through community gatherings during your project. Examples include, but are not limited to, still images, audio files, moving images, microfilm, object inventories, object catalogs, artworks, books, posters, curricula, field books, maps, notebooks, scientific labels, metadata schema, charts, tables, drawings, workflows, and teacher toolkits. Your project may involve making these materials available through public or access-controlled websites, kiosks, or live or recorded programs.

SECTION III: SOFTWARE

Complete this section if your project will create software, including any source code, algorithms, applications, and digital tools plus the accompanying documentation created by you during your project.

SECTION IV: RESEARCH DATA

Complete this section if your project will create research data, including recorded factual information and supporting documentation, commonly accepted as relevant to validating research findings and to supporting scholarly publications.

SECTION I: INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS AND PERMISSIONS

A.1 We expect applicants seeking federal funds for developing or creating digital products to release these files under open-source licenses to maximize access and promote reuse. What will be the intellectual property status of the digital products (i.e., digital content, resources, or assets; software; research data) you intend to create? What ownership rights will your organization assert over the files you intend to create, and what conditions will you impose on their access and use? Who will hold the copyright(s)? Explain and justify your licensing selections. Identify and explain the license under which you will release the files (e.g., a non-restrictive license such as BSD, GNU, MIT, Creative Commons licenses; RightsStatements.org statements). Explain and justify any prohibitive terms or conditions of use or access, and detail how you will notify potential users about relevant terms and conditions.

The training module to be developed for this project will be finalized in digital formats EPUB 3, Word, and HTML. Benetech will designate the module as CC BY-NC-SA (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>) which "lets others remix, adapt, and build upon your work non-commercially, as long as they credit you and license their new creations under the identical terms."

The roadmap document is a set of recommendations and guidelines that reflect the expertise of the Steering Committee and available data. It will not be labeled with any copyright restriction.

A.2 What ownership rights will your organization assert over the new digital products and what conditions will you impose on access and use? Explain and justify any terms of access and conditions of use and detail how you will notify potential users about relevant terms or conditions.

The Ferguson Library and Benetech will not assert ownership rights over the training document as per the CC BY-NC-SA license. The attribution will be visible, and will be described using alternative text, in the module. The Ferguson Library, Benetech, and IMLS logos and information for credit will also be added to the module, as will the names of people who have contributed, if they consent.

Likewise, The Ferguson Library and Benetech will not assert ownership rights over the roadmap. The document will display The Ferguson Library, Benetech, and IMLS logos and information, as well as the names of people who have contributed, if they consent.

A.3 If you will create any products that may involve privacy concerns, require obtaining permissions or rights, or raise any cultural sensitivities, describe the issues and how you plan to address them.

The training module and roadmap are not expected to contain any information that requires permissions or would be deemed culturally sensitive. We will ask the Steering Committee to keep privacy concerns, permissions, and cultural sensitivities in mind as they contribute to the roadmap and give feedback on the training module. If there are any aspects of these documents for which The Ferguson Library, Benetech, or the Steering Committee are unsure, we will consult legal counsel.

Members of the Steering Committee and any consulted experts will be acknowledged by name in the training module and roadmap, if they opt into this acknowledgement with written consent before a publicized deadline.

SECTION II: DIGITAL CONTENT, RESOURCES, OR ASSETS

A.1 Describe the digital content, resources, or assets you will create or collect, the quantities of each type, and the format(s) you will use.

The first resource is a preliminary roadmap for how the national library community could improve library workers' knowledge and library services for people with reading barriers. This white paper will describe data trends and will issue guidelines for how libraries can use available technologies in support of library users. The roadmap will be available in MS Word.

The second resource is a curated training module for library workers to learn about modern accessible reading technologies that support people with reading barriers to read. The formats will include Word, HTML, and the EPUB 3.

A.2 List the equipment, software, and supplies that you will use to create the digital content, resources, or assets, or the name of the service provider that will perform the work.

The training module will be structured as an EPUB 3 document. Software including Microsoft Word, Photoshop, iMovie and/or InDesign may be used in its creation. Non-professional cameras or screenshot features on a computer may be used to generate images, which will be embedded and described within the EPUB 3. Screen capture video and iMovie may be used to generate Mp4 files for additional information which would be posted online.

A.3 List all the digital file formats (e.g., XML, TIFF, MPEG, OBJ, DOC, PDF) you plan to use. If digitizing content, describe the quality standards (e.g., resolution, sampling rate, pixel dimensions) you will use for the files you will create.

File formats published will include EPUB 3, DOC, and HTML.

Workflow and Asset Maintenance/Preservation

B.1 Describe your quality control plan. How will you monitor and evaluate your workflow and products?

The Project Director and Project Coordinator will manage all overall documentation, version control, and data, as well as the flow of document preparation to publication. They will manage access to documents by other staff through permissions in a shared document repository (Box or SharePoint). This applies to the needs assessment survey, roadmap, and training module feedback. The Technical Lead will manage version control for the training module and the information curated to become part of the module. Box and SharePoint software for collaboration and storage have systems for version control that we will utilize.

B.2 Describe your plan for preserving and maintaining digital assets during and after the award period. Your plan should address storage systems, shared repositories, technical documentation, migration planning, and commitment of organizational funding for these purposes. Please note: You may charge the federal award before closeout for the costs of publication or sharing of research results if the costs are not incurred during the period of performance of the federal award (see 2 C.F.R. § 200.461).

The resource deliverables for this project will be hosted on The Ferguson Library website. The training module specifically will also be hosted in Bookshare and on the Niche Academy site. Niche Academy is an accessible online learning platform that serves public and academic libraries, as well as individuals and organizations who serve people with disabilities. OCLC's WebJunction has also invited us to submit the training module for hosting on their site. Links to these host sites will be incorporated into the Connecticut State Library's Division of Library Development page for professional development: <https://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/dld/professional/othertraining>

Internal documents including draft versions of deliverables, meeting notes, and feedback data will be stored in Box or SharePoint under current Ferguson Library licenses for these collaboration and storage systems.

Metadata

C.1 Describe how you will produce any and all technical, descriptive, administrative, or preservation metadata or linked data. Specify which standards or data models you will use for the metadata structure (e.g., RDF, BIBFRAME, Dublin Core, Encoded Archival Description, PBCore, PREMIS) and metadata content (e.g., thesauri).

Accessibility metadata for the training module will follow the W3C Publishing Community Group's User Experience Guide for Displaying Accessibility Metadata, found at <https://w3c.github.io/publ-a11y/UX-Guide-Metadata/principles/>. Benetech uses ONIX metadata formats for publication metadata.

C.2 Explain your strategy for preserving and maintaining metadata created or collected during and after the award period of performance.

Metadata will be embedded into the EPUB 3 document when the module is finalized. No additional metadata will be created after the award period.

C.3 Explain what metadata sharing and/or other strategies you will use to facilitate widespread discovery and use of the digital content, resources, or assets created during your project (e.g., an API [Application Programming Interface], contributions to a digital platform, or other ways you might enable batch queries and retrieval of metadata).

We plan to promote the resources created in this project through newsletters, email, social media, and presentations rather than through metadata exposure. The secondary location for hosting the training module, Bookshare, exposes metadata for search and will do so for this publication. Other sites like WebJunction and Niche Academy will have access to the metadata to surface as their platforms allow.

Access and Use

D.1 Describe how you will make the digital content, resources, or assets available to the public. Include details such as the delivery strategy (e.g., openly available online, available to specified audiences) and underlying hardware/software platforms and infrastructure (e.g., specific digital repository software or leased services, accessibility via standard web browsers, requirements for special software tools in order to use the content, delivery enabled by IIIF specifications).

The resources will be openly available online via The Ferguson Library's website that can be accessed on standard web browsers. The Ferguson Library, Benetech, and the Steering Committee will use several methods of outreach to encourage the public to view and use the resources: email, newsletter posts, social media, conference presentations.

D.2. Provide the name(s) and URL(s) (Universal Resource Locator), DOI (Digital Object Identifier), or other persistent identifier for any examples of previous digital content, resources, or assets your organization has created.

The Ferguson Library has a digital archive of library and community information and artifacts, which we actively augment with new material on an ongoing and project-specific basis:

The Ferguson Library Digital Archive

<http://www.fergusonlibraryarchive.org/>

Benetech operates Bookshare, an ebook library offering over 950,000 books in multiple accessible formats. Browse this collection of freely available upskilling books, <https://www.bookshare.org/browse/collection/368284>, to see the metadata display of available books.

SECTION III: SOFTWARE

General Information

A.1 Describe the software you intend to create, including a summary of the major functions it will perform and the intended primary audience(s) it will serve.

N/A

A.2 List other existing software that wholly or partially performs the same or similar functions, and explain how the software you intend to create is different, and justify why those differences are significant and necessary.

N/A

Technical Information

B.1 List the programming languages, platforms, frameworks, software, or other applications you will use to create your software and explain why you chose them.

N/A

B.2 Describe how the software you intend to create will extend or interoperate with relevant existing software.

N/A

B.3 Describe any underlying additional software or system dependencies necessary to run the software you intend to create.

N/A

B.4 Describe the processes you will use for development, documentation, and for maintaining and updating documentation for users of the software.

N/A

B.5 Provide the name(s), URL(s), and/or code repository locations for examples of any previous software your organization has created.

N/A

Access and Use

C.1 Describe how you will make the software and source code available to the public and/or its intended users.

N/A

C.2 Identify where you will deposit the source code for the software you intend to develop:

Name of publicly accessible source code repository: N/A

URL: N/A

SECTION IV: RESEARCH DATA

As part of the federal government's commitment to increase access to federally funded research data, Section IV represents the Data Management Plan (DMP) for research proposals and should reflect data management, dissemination, and preservation best practices in the applicant's area of research appropriate to the data that the project will generate.

A.1 Identify the type(s) of data you plan to collect or generate, and the purpose or intended use(s) to which you expect them to be put. Describe the method(s) you will use, the proposed scope and scale, and the approximate dates or intervals at which you will collect or generate data.

The project proposes to prepare a needs assessment of general librarian knowledge, challenges, interests, and opportunities in the realm of using technology to serve library members who face barriers to reading traditional printed books. This project proposes a survey to be completed by 100 librarians around the country in the fall of 2021. The survey will be a digital survey on a platform, Alchemer, that meets accessibility (WCAG) standards. The Steering Committee will encourage participation within their own organizations and other organizations in their networks to complete the survey.

The project also proposes to collect a pre/post survey and a feedback survey from 50 participants in a pilot of the training module. The participants will sign up for the pilot and then complete the training and the surveys in the fall of 2022.

A.2 Does the proposed data collection or research activity require approval by any internal

review panel or institutional review board (IRB)? If so, has the proposed research activity been approved? If not, what is your plan for securing approval?

The survey questions will be reviewed through an internal process that includes review by the Steering Committee and by Ferguson Library and Benetech staff with experience in survey design.

A.3 Will you collect any sensitive information? This may include personally identifiable information (PII), confidential information (e.g., trade secrets), or proprietary information. If so, detail the specific steps you will take to protect the information while you prepare it for public release (e.g., anonymizing individual identifiers, data aggregation). If the data will not be released publicly, explain why the data cannot be shared due to the protection of privacy, confidentiality, security, intellectual property, and other rights or requirements.

Needs assessment survey: All survey data will be collected in the secure platform. Personally-identifiable information will not be collected. The survey will ask the participants to identify the type of library at which they work (university library, local public library branch, state library system, NLS library, etc.); they may also be asked to indicate their comfort level with various technologies and/or their professional development experience to-date. None of these data will be able to be linked to name, gender, ethnicity, contact information, etc., because that information will not be collected. Participants may email the project team separately if they wish to discuss the survey; these names or email addresses will not be shared outside of the core project team (not with the Steering Committee or public).

Pilot participant survey: Pilot participants will share their name and email address with The Ferguson Library for the purpose of communication during the pilot. Pilot participants will be informed of all survey plans before joining the pilot. Participant name and email will not be connected to survey responses. The pre/post and feedback surveys will be administered using the Alchemer platform with identifiers rather than pilot participant name or email. Participants will be asked only to identify the type of library at which they work (university library, local public library branch, state library system, NLS library, etc.), unless doing so would identify a participant based on representation of library workers from that type of library amongst the pilot participant pool.

A.4 What technical (hardware and/or software) requirements or dependencies would be necessary for understanding retrieving, displaying, processing, or otherwise reusing the data?

Data can be downloaded from Alchemer in commonly used formats (.csv).

A.5 What documentation (e.g., consent agreements, data documentation, codebooks, metadata, and analytical and procedural information) will you capture or create along with the data? Where will the documentation be stored and in what format(s)? How will you permanently associate and manage the documentation with the data it describes to enable future reuse?

A pilot participant agreement document generated in MS Word will explain the pilot process and survey requirements. DocuSign will be used for participants to sign that they understand and agree to the process; this is a more secure way to sign than emailing MS Word documents or relying on email communications. Survey data will not be associated with a person's name or signed document.

A.6 What is your plan for managing, disseminating, and preserving data after the completion of the award-funded project?

Raw data from the surveys will not be disseminated. Overall trends and highlights from the analysis will be shared in meetings with the Steering Committee and in a publicly facing write up of the highlights.

A.7 Identify where you will deposit the data:

Name of repository: Trends and highlights will be written up and posted on The Ferguson Library website on a page that will be created for the purpose of this project.

URL: <https://fergusonlibrary.org/>

A.8 When and how frequently will you review this data management plan? How will the implementation be monitored?

The data management plan will be reviewed each six months of the project by the Project Director and Project Coordinator. Any changes will be reviewed with project staff and Steering Committee.