

Purdue University

Understanding the Health Information Seeking Behaviors of Black Americans: A Cultural Perspective

Purdue University, in collaboration with researchers from Howard University and DePaul University, request \$99,716 in IMLS Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program funding for a 24-month planning grant. *Understanding the Health Information Seeking Behaviors of Black Americans: A Cultural Perspective* will teach library professionals to understand and respond to the health information-seeking needs of Black Americans, with a direct focus on teaching practices that improve cultural sensitivity, inclusion, and equity. This project falls under the IMLS category of lifelong learning and is intended to develop the skills and expertise of in-service and pre-service library professionals by facilitating self-directed learning opportunities. Researchers from the three universities will conduct a systematic review to compile findings from multidisciplinary studies, conduct an environmental scan of existing learning resources, prototype a curriculum and an online instructional module for library professionals, and user test and iterate the curriculum and module based on user feedback. The project is in the Exploratory maturity phase.

Statement of Need. The health information-seeking behaviors of specific groups of Black Americans—e.g. Black women with elevated blood pressure, aged African Americans, and African Americans living in rural environments--have been individually documented in research studies. These behaviors are unique, with factors such as race, cultural traditions, digital literacy skills, and socioeconomic factors highlighted as barriers for Black Americans seeking health information in healthcare systems and on the internet. The reporting of findings across a wide range of disciplines combined with a lack of accessible learning opportunities related to this specific topic makes it difficult for library professionals to make evidence-based decisions about how to best respond to the health-information seeking needs of Black patrons.

Project Design: Purdue University, Howard University, and DePaul University will collaborate to conduct a systematic review and develop the prototype for a curriculum and instructional module focused on teaching library professionals to understand, respond to, and develop instruction related to the health information-seeking behaviors of Black patrons. The process will engage three experienced health sciences information professionals, Bethany McGowan, MLIS/MS as project director, Jahala Simuel, MIS/MLS as a project partner, and Mark Puente, MA/MLIS as a project consultant; in collaboration with a health & wellness participatory design researcher, Christina Harrington, Ph.D. as a project partner. The project will follow a basic design thinking process:

Empathize and Define. McGowan, Simuel, and Harrington will spend 12 months conducting a systematic review and environmental scan. A cross-disciplinary systematic review is needed to identify similarities and differences in themes and findings. This systematic review will include an assessment of relevant archival artifacts, including those from the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University, widely recognized as one of the world's most comprehensive repositories for the documentation of cultural artifacts related to Black Americans. The project team will also conduct an environmental scan to identify existing programming and learning resources in the library field. Collaborations with library associations and relevant professional organizations will be established to develop a recruitment plan for stakeholder interviews and user testing. This will include leveraging the expertise of Puente and leveraging existing relationships with professional associations such as the Black Caucus of the American Library Association and the African American Medical Librarians Alliance, and grassroots library organizations such as We Here.

Ideate. McGowan, Simuel, Harrington, and a graduate assistant will spend four months conducting stakeholder interviews with library workers, patrons, and healthcare providers to generate ideas. In considering the recruitment of stakeholders, diversity will be sought in race, ethnicity, and gender. In addition to the aforementioned collaborations with library organizations and associations, calls for participation will be posted on listserves, Slack channels, social media outlets, newsletters, and blog posts. A range of types of librarians--including public, academic, and special librarians--will be invited to participate in the interviews. Data from the interviews will be thematically analyzed and combined with systematic review findings to inform the development of a course curriculum and prototype module.

Prototype. The research team will use Articulate Rise 360, <https://articulate.com/360/rise>, or similar software to build an e-learning instructional module prototype. This project phase will last five months. To allow for greater accessibility and ease of use, the responsive prototype will be adaptable for use across multiple devices and screen sizes, including mobile phones, tablets, laptops, and desktops.

Test and Refine. The research team will spend three months conducting usability tests and refining the curriculum and module prototype based on user input.

Diversity Plan. Inclusive service to diverse populations is a fundamental tenant of the visions of Purdue, Howard, and DePaul universities. This project directly addresses issues related to race and ethnicity, specifically issues related to the health of Black Americans. It will rely on justice-oriented theoretical frameworks, emphasizing how people, policies, practices, curricula, and institutions can be used to promote a more equitable society. It will leverage collaborations with a range of library audiences and will be inclusive in welcoming input from people of various races, ethnicities, gender and sexual identifications, geographic regions, demographics of communities served, and types of libraries.

Broad Impact. *Understanding the Health Information Seeking Behaviors of Black Americans: A Cultural Perspective* will create a curriculum that teaches librarians to understand and meet the health information-seeking needs of Black patrons. This planning grant will fund the execution of a systematic review and the development and testing of a curriculum and a module prototype, which will position the researchers to pursue a project grant to develop additional modules and launch a full course. The goals are to (1) develop and widely distribute an open and accessible course for self-directed online learning; and (2) utilize inquiry-based learning practices to motivate learners to be actors for change. This project's broad dissemination will improve the quality and diversity of library-based learning opportunities and OER content while improving the ability of library workers to meet the needs of marginalized community members.

Budget. The budget request of \$99,716 includes salary and wages for one graduate assistant for one fiscal year, \$19,319; graduate assistant fringe benefits, \$1,526; travel, \$10k; supplies, \$3.5k; hardware equipment, \$6k; software equipment, \$4k; contractor stipend for each project partner, \$20k (\$10k/each); graduate assistant fee remissions, \$10,920; and indirect costs, \$24,451.