

## Expanding Access to Research Training for Academic Librarians (IRDL Online)

The William H. Hannon Library (<https://library.lmu.edu>) at Loyola Marymount University (LMU) seeks funding from the Laura Bush 21<sup>st</sup> Century Librarians Program (Continuing Education) totaling **\$232,974** for **Expanding Access to Research Training for Academic Librarians**, a Project that will expand the availability of our successful research training and mentoring program for novice librarian-researchers, the [Institute for Research Design in Librarianship \(IRDL\)](#) (funded by two previous IMLS grants). The proposed Project also complements *RTI Online*, funded by IMLS in 2020, which will offer a similar research continuing education experience for medical librarians.

IRDL is a continuing education opportunity for academic and research librarians to broaden their research skills and increase their output, focused on completing a specific research project. IRDL is aligned with the IMLS Agency-level goals of promoting lifelong learning and building capacity; its design responds directly to the stated needs of working post-MLS/MLIS academic and research librarians (Kennedy & Brancolini, [2012](#), [2018](#)). Over six years IRDL trained a diverse group of 134 librarians from all types of academic libraries, from 39 states and the District of Columbia. The year-long IRDL experience begins with a week-long in-person Summer Research Workshop, followed by a year of support and formal mentoring, primarily conducted via Zoom, as the Scholars work through their research projects. Demand for IRDL is high: we receive between 65 and 110 applicants for approximately 22 places each year. Demonstrating expertise and replicability, in 2020 we transitioned the grant-funded IRDL to a fee-based (cost recovery) model, however, the Summer Workshop was cancelled and rescheduled for June 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We propose to transition the in-person training workshop component of IRDL to an online format to meet the needs of working librarians and address sustainability issues such as reduced institutional budgets and uncertainty related to travel. **IRDL Online** will be free to Scholars and will allow us to expand each cohort from 22 to 30 Scholars, 90 librarians over three years. IMLS funding will enable LMU, in collaboration with our strategic partner for six years, San José State University (SJSU) iSchool to redesign the highly-effective workshop into an online/hybrid format, reducing in-person costs while increasing the numbers who can participate. With our long-time partner, Statewide California Electronic Library Consortium (SCELC), a regional library consortium of academic and independent research libraries, we will also create the **IRDL Online Research Conference**, the first research methods-focused conference of its kind in the United States. We have learned through our assessments that the introduction of new research methods to participants and providing opportunities to practice them through interactive exercises is one of the most effective confidence-building aspects of IRDL.

### STATEMENT OF BROAD NEED

Academic librarians conduct and disseminate research for many reasons: to develop and thrive as professionals, to improve services and collections, and to document the value of their work in libraries to the academic success of students and faculty. However, more than two decades of LIS studies reveal that academic librarians struggle to overcome barriers to research success, especially early-career librarians and more experienced librarians in their first tenure-track positions. The need for research training and institutional support is especially acute for these early-career academic librarians ([Ackerman, Hunter, & Wilkinson, 2018](#); [Vilz & Poremski, 2015](#)). Although many librarians see the value of becoming accomplished researchers, studies reveal that most librarians enter the profession unprepared to conduct and disseminate research (Kennedy & Brancolini, [2012](#), [2018](#); [Luo, 2011](#); [Vilz & Poremski, 2015](#)). Although more than 63% of LIS degree programs require a research methods course ([Luo, 2017, 49](#)), one research course usually proves to be insufficient. In fact, Kennedy and Brancolini found only 17% of librarians believe that their LIS master's degrees adequately prepared them to conduct original research ([2018](#)). MLIS program graduates require refresher courses, as these librarians, over time, identify problems of practice in their work life that require rigorous research strategies.

## **PROJECT DESIGN – Project activities, goals and outcomes**

During the three-year Expanding Access to Research Training for Academic Librarians Project we will:

- Design and convene three synchronous online training workshops, followed by a year of virtual support and mentoring; the workshop will build on the success of IRDL’s in-person workshop, with hands-on experiences adapted for online learning.
- Design assessment tools appropriate for the change to an online format; apply these assessments and revise the workshop in Years 2 and 3 based upon assessment findings.
- Create and offer the IRDL Online Research Conference, the first research methods-focused conference of its kind in the United States, to be designed and offered with our consortial partner SCELIC in Years 2 and 3.

## **PROJECT DESIGN – Project timeline**

**Year 1 (9/2021-8/2022):** Convert workshop curriculum into online/hybrid modules; redesign existing assessment tools for an online/hybrid environment; recruit participants, conduct first online/hybrid Summer Research Workshop in 2022. Continue existing virtual monthly check-ins and formal research mentoring.

**Year 2 (9/2022-8/2023):** Assess modules; adjust training, based on assessment data; plan and conduct the first IRDL Online Research Conference to be held in the spring of 2023; recruit participants, conduct second Summer Research Workshop in 2023.

**Year 3 (9/2023-8/2024):** Assess modules; adjust training, based on assessment data; plan and conduct the second IRDL Online Research Conference in the spring of 2024; recruit participants, conduct third Summer Research Workshop in 2024. Assess modules; summarize and report findings.

## **DIVERSITY PLAN**

We are committed to recruiting a diverse group of Scholars. Of the librarians who participated in the first six years of IRDL, 36% identified as persons of color. We will increase participation from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds by using both our own distribution lists and the email forums of groups that serve librarians of color, including ALA Black Caucus, ALA Asian/Pacific American Library Association, ALA Spectrum, REFORMA, and ATALM. We will reserve 40% of the spots each year for librarians of color.

## **BROAD IMPACT**

Our proposed Project has the potential for major national impact by increasing that number of producers of research who are also energized to participate in a community of like-minded professionals. Recently, researchers have turned their attention from the research barriers to research success factors. IRDL was designed to address identified success factors (Hoffman, Berg, & Koufogiannakis, [2014](#), [2017](#)): education and experience, confidence (research self-efficacy), mentoring, time, and community. Our program assessments enabled us to enhance and improve the IRDL experience during the Summer Research Workshop. In 2016, we began to examine formal mentoring as a research success factor. At that time, research mentoring was a well-established success factor in other practitioner-researcher professions, but had yet to be extensively studied in the LIS literature ([Hoffman, Berg, & Koufogiannakis, 2014](#)). We added a formal mentor program to IRDL for 2017-2019, with scheduled one-on-one mentoring by an experienced and enthusiastic LIS researcher. These efforts meet an urgency to train librarians in research: “Our field needs to educate a large number of producers of research if we are to maintain a stable infrastructure for our research base” ([O’Connor & Park, 2001, p. 104](#)).

## **BUDGET SUMMARY**

The IRDL project team will consist of a two-person leadership team working with a workshop curriculum design team, workshop instructors, content experts, former IRDL Scholars, and mentors. The estimated budget for this project is **\$232,974**. This will cover: Curriculum revision and instructional design (Year 1): \$39,000; instruction and assessment (Years 1-3): \$53,600; participant evaluation (Years 1-2): \$4,800; honoraria for formal mentors (Years 1-3): \$45,000; honoraria for speakers and panelists for Online Research Conference (Years 2-3): \$12,000; travel for co-directors (Years 1-3): \$7,500; and indirect costs (Years 1-3): \$71,074.