

Community Memory and Language Archiving & Curation Training |University of North Texas (UNT)

University of North Texas (UNT) College of Information and Libraries propose a 2-year collaborative interdisciplinary Implementation project addressing the LB21 program Goal 3 “Enhance the training and professional development of the library and archival workforce to meet the needs of their communities” and Objective 3.2 “Create and/or refine training programs that build library and archival workforce skills and expertise in contributing to the well-being of communities”. The project will address the need for extending the Libraries, Archives, and Museums (LAM) curriculum by incorporating content focusing on meeting information needs of the users and creators of diverse community language archives (i.e., community archives with language content). We will develop an online modular curriculum with a strong experiential component to educate the next generation of information professionals in the archiving and curation of resources that provide the means to revitalize community memory, language, and culture. Over 2 years, 30 LAM students will complete the project-developed specialized graduate course, and an estimated 120 will complete the project-developed learning modules integrated in other courses. Learning materials will be revised based on the feedback from underserved communities’ representatives, and LAM and language documentation students, and made widely available as open-source adaptable resources. This funding request is for \$249,982.

Project Justification: Diverse communities increasingly use audiovisual technologies to record language practices with the goal of culture preservation, language revitalization, and sharing of community memory, often with public funding¹. Community collections improve connectedness with heritage and culture, which brings a sense of belonging and positive identity, and allow communities to tell their own story and maintain control over how their materials are framed or shared. However, community members often express concerns that their materials are not curated or made available to users, both inside and outside the community, in a functional way.² Part of the reason is that archives are traditionally designed for academic researchers as opposed to indigenous communities. There is a lack of *accessible instruction* to communities on using existing LAM practices in creating, preserving, and disseminating their collections of invaluable materials, many of which are in imminent danger of loss since the holders of this knowledge are largely elderly. At the same time, there is very little *academic instruction* to information professionals on supporting the curation and archiving of these collections. While there is an overlap in concepts between traditional digital archiving led by LAMs and community digital archiving, the goals, scale, content, challenges, ethical considerations, and impact are substantially different. For example, the items in community language archives are often of novel types for mainstream archiving – wordlists, language art (oral poetry), procedural texts, transcriptions, word-by-word analysis of the language used, etc. – and need to be represented differently in the metadata and navigation structure of the archive. There is a need for diversifying LAM education by addressing the ways to represent these resources to meet community information needs.³ Greater focus is needed on rights, ownership, archiving spaces, and mutually beneficial relations between communities and partnering LAM institutions, identifying, and disseminating best practices, and developing collaborations to support community archiving and engage communities in stewardship of their collections housed by LAMs. We propose to meet this need with an implementation project that has two overall curriculum development goals: 1) Evidence-based community archiving and curation curriculum modules that can be incorporated into relevant courses and/or taught together as separate focused courses in LAM programs; 2) self-contained learning modules for use in online community archiving workshops for members of underserved indigenous, immigrant and refugee communities who are documenting community heritage.

Project Work Plan: Proposed project PI [Oksana Zavalina](#) (Professor, Information Science), Co-PIs [Shobhana Chelliah](#) (Professor, Linguistics) and [Mark Phillips](#) (Associate Dean for Digital Libraries) have successfully collaborated in the past (e.g., on IMLS-funded project [LG-87-18-0197-18](#), on establishing a [language archive](#)). The UNT team will include Senior Personnel: Professor [Brian O’Connor](#), Assistant Professor [Ana Roeschley](#), and 1 PhD student in Information Science with a background in Linguistics. We will work with consultants who help collect and archive underserved language communities’ personal and traditional narratives: [Kelly Berkson](#) (Associate Professor, Indiana University, IU) and [Kenneth Van Bik](#) (Assistant Professor and community leader). This team possesses community connections and cross-discipline expertise in research, development of digital archives – including a language archive – as well as in metadata, data curation, documentary linguistics, work with and capacity building for indigenous, immigrant, and refugee communities, and curriculum design for academic programs.

The proposed learning materials development will be informed by (1) results of exploration of language archives’ user needs and archivists’ perspectives ([LG-87-18-0197-18](#)); (2) relevant UNT-based archival and data curation curricula (e.g., [RE-05-11-0073-11](#)); (3) lessons learned in and feedback received from [the experimental graduate course on metadata for language archives \(2020\)](#) and [Community archiving workshops](#) with community language documenters in India in 2019-2022. Based on these and on examination of available materials of [DigCCurr and DigCCurr II](#) projects, [Digital Information Management online certification program](#) for librarians and underserved cultural and ethnic groups, [Archiving for the Future](#) training for linguists, and with feedback from community representatives, we will design 5 learning modules in Year 1. In summer 2024, we will pilot this curriculum in the new experimental course *Community Language Archiving*, with UNT LAM students, as well as with UNT and IU students of language documentation and revitalization. Students will collaborate with community members as we pilot these learning materials with diverse participants engaging in community language archiving as part of a project-led workshop with learners and teachers of the Chin languages, an under-resourced group of languages of Burma (Myanmar), recruited from diaspora communities in Dallas-Fort Worth and Indianapolis. Speakers of these languages are associated with the ongoing IU-

¹ E.g., [Accelerating Promising Practices for Small Libraries](#) Program, [New Common Heritage](#) and [Digital Humanities Advancement programs, Endangered Languages Project](#)

² [Al Smadi et al., 2016](#); [Burke et al., 2022](#); [Burke & Zavalina, 2020](#); [Wasson, Holton & Ross, 2016](#)

³ [Zavalina & Chelliah, 2021](#)

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hosted [Chin Language Research Project \(CLRP\)](#). We chose to work with the Chin community because its experience shows many similarities with other indigenous, immigrant and refugee communities in how they attempt to document and preserve community memory through audiovisual recordings with limited access to technologies and training. Our team's expertise in Chin languages and existing connections with CLRP will help ensure the community collaboration success.

We will measure the success of our project through formative and summative assessments of the curriculum content and instructional design and outcomes-based evaluation of the entire initiative for effectiveness, efficiency, quality, and timeliness. Assessment methods for content, instructional methods, satisfaction, etc. will include surveys of students and community participants, peer evaluation, pre-tests and post-tests for individual instructional modules, etc. Based on the results of these assessments obtained in Year 1, we will revise and enhance curriculum for the course and the community workshop and will prepare the modules for integration in existing archiving and curation LAM courses, as well as language documentation courses at UNT and IU in Year 2. We will offer the *Community Language Archiving* course in Summer 2025 and the modules in Fall 2024, Spring and Summer 2025, and conduct evaluation and collect feedback for future enhancements.

The flexible curricula will include 5 modules that could be incorporated by any academic program into existing relevant online or face-to-face courses, taught together as a standalone course, or offered as a workshop: (1) *Developing and managing a community language archive*: topics include determining scope, securing funding, evaluating needs and potential uses of an archive within a community; methods and procedures for collecting audio/video/images, use of recording/scanning/photography equipment; (2) *Language revitalization and language and culture endangerment*: topics include data management workflow borrowing from the field of Documentary Linguistics⁴; (3) *Digital content management and metadata for community language archives*: topics include selecting digital content management tools; the metadata standards and controlled vocabularies conventionally used in libraries and archives and community-specific application profiles; (4) *Preservation and access for community language archives*: topics include participatory archiving, custodial archiving, memorandum of agreement between institutions housing archives and communities, discussion and case studies dealing with intellectual property, privacy, open access, access restrictions for culturally sensitive materials, and the ethical use of indigenous, immigrant and refugee materials⁵; (5) *Dissemination and use of community collections*: topics include providing access to non-English language deposits through transcription and translation, creating user guides and finding aids, effective and ethical dissemination through websites and social media, analysis of use patterns (search logs etc.).

Diversity Plan: The proposed project focuses on diversity as it seeks to develop the training of the next generation of digital archivists to support underserved audiences and engage with community members in the participatory community language archiving training. Indigenous, immigrant and refugee communities will provide diverse perspectives that will inform the content and design of the learning materials. At UNT, a federally-designated [Minority-Serving Institution](#) and [Hispanic-Serving Institution](#), we will recruit diverse BiPOC and Hispanic students, as well as students who speak underrepresented languages, by providing a stipend to cover or offset registration costs for project-developed courses. Immigrant and refugee communities will be recruited through [CLRP](#) to participate in community training events developed and led by the project team. A project advisory board will include representatives from diverse language communities and from several communities of practice: linguistics and language archiving, digital humanities, and data curation. Through engagement with the project, the Research Assistant (RA) PhD student will receive preparation as a future faculty member focusing on improving information access for diverse communities. This project is expected to make a solid contribution to addressing the needs of diverse underrepresented communities through the LAM curriculum, and will help attract members of these communities, as well as linguists, into the LAM professions. It will help address the current [need for increasing ethnic and racial diversity in the US archiving profession](#).

Project Results: The project will have a broad and lasting impact by helping to increase diversity in the LAM curriculum and profession, forming community archiving collaborations. The 5 project-developed learning modules described above will be made available as open access resources (Creative Commons attribution non-commercial license) to be used by any interested LAM educators separately or combined into a coherent course and/or adapted for use with non-academic indigenous, immigrant and refugee groups working with community language archives. We will disseminate results broadly, through presentations and publications in LAM and Documentary Linguistics conferences (e.g., annual meetings of [ASIS&T](#), [SAA](#), [ALISE](#) and [iSchools](#); [JCDL](#), [ICLDC](#), [CoLANG](#)) and journals (including Gold Open Access articles), and use of workshops (e.g., the [JCDL Digital Language Archives Workshop](#) series) and other media for publicizing the curriculum, and soliciting feedback for improvements. UNT will continue offering project-developed coursework after the end of the project. We will also offer a webinar on how to incorporate the project-developed modules in curricula in different settings, advertised through [ALA's Services to Refugees, Immigrants, and Displaced Persons Sub-Committee](#), [Endangered Languages Project](#), [Texas Library Association](#), [Institute on Collaborative Language Research](#), [SAA](#), and the Society of Southwest Archivists. This project will rely on online technologies for meetings and collaboration to ensure access for the broadest range of participants and to support flexibility.

Budget Summary: IMLS support is requested in the amount of \$249,982. This includes \$207,051 direct costs – graduate student effort of the project's RA (\$43,580), tuition for the RA and a total of 30 students who will receive the proposed training through the project-developed specialized course during the project period (\$70,762), faculty salaries and wages (\$27,444), community consultant/participant fees (\$40,000), open access publication fees (\$3,400), and travel (\$18,000) for project implementation and results dissemination – and IDC \$42,931 at the federally negotiated rate for other sponsored activities (31.5%, excluding tuition).

⁴ [Chelliah & de Reuse, 2011](#)

⁵ [Hinton, 2001](#)