

Scaling Digital Collections Stewardship Training through Facilitated Group Learning

OCLC respectfully requests \$249,774 for a two-year project to (1) partner with five state libraries to support peer learning groups of staff at small and rural libraries, archives, and museums as they learn to create, share, and steward digital collections; and (2) develop a new course to add to WebJunction's Digital Collections Stewardship training series about how to build more diverse collections. Project results will contribute to a more equitable, inclusive, and comprehensive representation of the communities that libraries and archives serve, resulting in collections that better reflect their local and regional histories. This project aligns with the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program Goal 3 and Objective 3.5; it will enhance the training and professional development of the library and archival workforce to meet the needs of their communities, and it supports training of the library and archival workforce in digital collection management.

Project Justification. WebJunction's IMLS-funded [Digital Collections Stewardship](#) (DCS) course series for tribal archives, libraries, museums, and small public libraries¹ was adapted from Washington State University's *Tribal Digital Stewardship Cohort Training*, and was a first step toward meeting an important need for training documented in OCLC's report, *Advancing the National Digital Platform: The State of Digitization in US Public and State Libraries*.² In that report, every participating state library noted that digitizing and providing online access to local and unique digitized material was broadly or explicitly part of their mission. This project supports that mission by collaborating with state library agencies to train their regional workforce so they can execute cooperative digital collection initiatives and spur efforts to build more, and better, locally created digital collections.³

WebJunction's DCS course series guides decision makers at small cultural heritage institutions through the lifecycle of digital stewardship, from planning, collection development, and policy creation, to collaborating with local partners and their communities. It complements training—primarily from state agencies—that focuses on the technical workflows of digitization, preservation, and sharing specific to a state's digital memory project. More than 250 learners have enrolled in one or more of the DCS courses between May and September 2022, but digital stewardship is an extensive and challenging topic for the self-directed learner, as is reflected in a completion rate that is currently one-third that of other WebJunction courses. This new project will demonstrate how state libraries (and other organizations that provide staff training) can use these courses as instructional content in a facilitated learning group model.⁴ A facilitated learning group requires no instructor, and it combines the support and social engagement of a study group with the reach and cost effectiveness of online, on-demand training. WebJunction's extensive experience with peer group learning among library staff has shown that cohort learning improves both learner motivation and retention.

This project will also produce a new course designed to encourage rural and small libraries, archives, and museums to develop more comprehensive community representation in their digital collections. While community-centered collections and cultural sensitivity are covered in the DCS series, this new course will deepen and expand on these and related topics to help libraries, museums, and archives to develop more diverse collections that show the depth and breadth of their local and regional area and histories; the new course will draw on relevant learnings and approaches from OCLC's 2022 report, *Reimagining Digital Workflows* to support the capacity of staff to engage meaningfully with the communities they are working with to represent.⁵

Project Work Plan

Year 1 (August 2023-July 2024)

Co-Design Facilitated Learning Programs with State Partners. OCLC's WebJunction team will work with five state library agencies to co-design training programs in which they organize learning groups to work through the DCS courses together. Washington, Oregon, and Michigan have expressed interest in partnering on the project, and we are seeking two additional states to broaden the diversity of size, geography, and demographics. Each state's training program will be customized to consider local constraints and opportunities. Each learning group may use some or all of the DCS courses,

¹ The course series was funded in part by IMLS grant RE-246364-OLS-20. Access the course and related materials here: oc.lc/digital-stewardship

² Participating state agencies reported that digitizing and providing online access to local and unique digitized material aligns explicitly (12.8%) or broadly (87.2%) with their mission. The report also found that 61.4% of public libraries identified insufficient staff training/expertise as a major barrier to their digitization efforts. See: Morgan, Kendra, and Merrilee Proffitt. 2017. *Advancing the National Digital Platform: The State of Digitization in US Public and State Libraries*. Dublin, Ohio: OCLC Research. <https://doi.org/10.25333/C3WK8F>. This report was made possible in part by IMLS grant LG-72-15-0197-15.

³ When their capacity allows, we would welcome the opportunity to take a further step and partner again with Washington State University to support them to develop facilitated learning groups specifically for TALMs.

⁴ Learning groups are lightly facilitated study groups offering a collaborative, motivating environment where learners set attainable goals and connect learning to practical application while sharing ideas and insights, answering each other's questions, and benefitting from new perspectives and solutions.

⁵ Frick, Rachel L., and Merrilee Proffitt. 2022. *Reimagine Descriptive Workflows: A Community-informed Agenda for Reparative and Inclusive Descriptive Practice*. Dublin, OH: OCLC Research. <https://doi.org/10.25333/wd4b-bs51>.

depending on learner needs. Groups may also incorporate other courses from WebJunction or other free learning providers on topics such as web archiving, or collection development, or technical training specific to a state's digital memory project. Customizations may include the number, size, makeup, and meeting frequency of the groups, as well as whether they meet online or in-person.

New On-Demand Course. The project team will collaborate with a library practitioner experienced in creating diverse collections to create a new on-demand course that (a) describes the opportunity that digital collections present to add to the racial, ethnic, and/or cultural diversity of a library's collection; and (b) provides tools and information to support those activities. This course will encourage rural and smaller cultural institutions to expand collections by authentically and respectfully engaging with people who currently live, or have lived, in their location but are not equitably represented or well served by the library's existing collection.

Year 2 (August 2024-July 2025)

Support Implementation of Training with State Partners. Each partner will organize learning groups to train staff representing up to 100 rural and small libraries, archives, and/or museums. As a capstone to the training program, participating staff will create and share at least one new digital collection, either through their state's digital memory site or other sharing platform. State partners and the project team will monitor and support the completion of this process.

Produce, Publish, and Promote Digital Collections Stewardship Learning Program Guide. Incorporating relevant evaluation data, success stories from state partners and their participants, and other program results, WebJunction will produce and promote a guide for all state libraries (and other organizations that provide staff training) on how to use the courses as instructional content in a facilitated learning group model. A third-party evaluator will gather key project data such as qualitative feedback from each partner and group facilitator, individual learner feedback on training effectiveness and learner outcomes (immediately after training and after creating digital collections), and learner feedback on the new course added to the DCS series.

Diversity Plan. This project will equip staff at state libraries to guide institutions toward creating collections that are more representative of the diversity of their communities; and it will encourage and enable staff at rural and small libraries, archives, and museums to identify gaps and use a community-centered approach to build more diverse digital collections in responsible, respectful ways. Project funding will allow us to contract a subject matter consultant with expertise and experience in community-centered and culturally situated practices for digital preservation and access to build the new course. Project results will contribute to collections that better reflect their local and regional histories, resulting in a more equitable, inclusive, and comprehensive representation of the communities that libraries and archives serve.

Project Results. This project will (a) build and strengthen the knowledge, skills, and confidence of staff at small and rural libraries and archives to create, share and steward digital collections; (b) increase the comprehensive representation of diverse communities in institutions' digital collections; and (c) increase the number of rural and small cultural heritage institutions that create, share, and steward digital collections. The project will also (d) equip state library agencies with strategies and resources to successfully adopt the facilitated learning group training model to increase the reach and breadth of their training; and (f) support increased participation in state or other digital memory projects and related technical training that is available. WebJunction will continue to host the course series and promote it nationally through OCLC and WebJunction channels and to key member organizations such as the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies, the Association of Rural & Small Libraries, the Society of American Archivists, Small Museum Association, and the American Association for State and Local History. OCLC will propose a session about the guide and project results at one or more national conferences. A near-term outcome of this project is 100 new digital collections created and shared by participants. Longer-term impacts include an increase in cultural institutions with digital collections that are more fully representative of their communities; state libraries gaining more, and better, digital collections that reflect the depth and breadth of their communities and their local and regional histories; and state libraries applying the facilitated learning group model for other training needs.

The requested \$249,774 will be used toward OCLC project team salaries and fringe (\$225,829); subject matter expert (\$8,000); evaluation consultant (\$9,500); conference travel (\$2,400); closed captioning for webinars (\$200); and indirect costs (\$3,845). OCLC will contribute an additional \$62,063 toward cost share.

OCLC is grateful for the opportunity to propose this project, and we look forward to your review.