Libraries Advancing Community Learning to Reduce Substance Use (LACL)

Libraries Advancing Community Learning to Reduce Substance Use (LACL) is a two-year $149,644 National Forum project that aligns with LB21 Program Goal 3: Enhance the training and professional development of the library and archival workforce to meet the needs of their communities; Objectives 3.2 and 3.3. The University of Missouri (MU), in partnership with Emporia University (EU), University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), and Kansas City Public Library (KCPL), will host a two-day forum bringing together subject experts and librarian participants to focus on understanding, augmenting, and expanding libraries' roles in substance abuse recovery, and related programs in public health, bibliotherapy, and learning circles. The outcome of the forum will be a white paper in the form of an adaptable toolkit for implementing local, needs-based programming in public libraries to address alcohol addiction and substance use disorders through programs and partnerships that increase both social support and information access to promote positive life changes.

Project Justification: There are multiple reasons that librarians might expand programming to people experiencing addiction or questioning their relationship with substances. Most librarians are aware of the impact of substance abuse on their community and of some paths to recovery, and there is a widening body of practice to support people with mental health problems, opioid addiction, and homelessness[1]. Past work has found public libraries to be skillful partners with others working to reduce substance use. The IMLS-funded *Public Libraries Respond to the Opioid Crisis with their Communities* supported a Blount County (TN) Public Library partnership with a local Recovery Court to provide a Life Skills Curriculum to nonviolent offenders with a history of drug and alcohol abuse[2]. The recently released *2022 Urban Library Trauma Study* found among library staff a desire "to better understand addiction and how it functions, and organizational approaches to this issue."[3] Beyond understanding addiction, though, libraries could function as a 'third space' for people who want to change their relationship to substances, as social groups and social ties are very important in making behavioral changes related to addiction; loneliness exacerbates substance abuse[4].

Libraries are replete with resources for intellectual growth, self-help, habit change, and personal exploration, and they play a vital role in increasing health information access and health literacy. Many libraries have self-help information sections that include information on substance use and abuse, but few host regular meetings addressing such issues. Public libraries are primed to include spaces for recovery, as a means to increase options and resources for people seeking to moderate or eliminate substance abuse.

Project Work Plan: MU, with the support of partner organizations (ESU, UNCG, and KCPL) and a Graduate Assistant, will host a national forum. Co-PIs will identify experts and facilitators who will speak at the forum and facilitate group discussions with librarians who are selected to be part of the forum. The focus of these conversations will be on better understanding library preparedness and interest in topics related to substance abuse recovery, including conducting a community needs analysis, identifying gaps in service, collection development, support for library staff suffering from substance abuse, forming reading groups for recovery support, bibliotherapy, locating local experts and community groups (and referring patrons to them), forming and sustaining community partnerships, as well as other ways libraries can address substance use and abuse in their communities.

Jenny Bossaller (MU), aided by April Roy (KCPL) and Kim Gile (KCPL), will be primarily responsible for logistics of the forum. The event will be advertised through a variety of state and national listservs and communication channels that reach public librarians, including those maintained by the Public Library Association, the Association for Rural & Small Libraries, the Urban Libraries Council, and the American Library Association. Recruitment will also take place through our partners in the Network of the National Library of Medicine (NNLM). The application form will

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[1] Rubenstein, E. (2016). Knowing how to help: providing health information in public libraries. *Journal of Consumer Health on the Internet*, *20*(3), 114-129.

[2] Case Study: Blount County Public Library," by the Public Library Association, WebJunction, and OCLC. In Public Libraries Respond to the Opioid Crisis with Their Communities: Case Studies, https://doi.org/10.25333/cx18-1p87

[3] Urban Librarians Unite (2022). Urban Library Trauma Study: final Report.

[4] Gutkind, S., Gorfinkel, L. R., & Hasin, D. S. (2022). Prospective effects of loneliness on frequency of alcohol and marijuana use. *Addictive behaviors*, *124*, 107115.

include questions about the applicant's library, job experience related to public libraries and health, and a brief essay indicating their ideas about the subjects of the forum. The co-PIs will choose participants for the on-site forum who work with adults in a public library setting and who represent a diverse cross-section of the U.S. (urban, rural, socio-cultural demographic characteristics, etc.). Priority will be given to applicants who have experience with reading/learning groups, outreach, and/or social services.

In addition to the live event, which will be limited to 50 participants, all keynote talks will be broadcast live using Zoom and Facebook live to reach the broadest audience possible. All materials distributed at the forum will be made available online using Google Drive. We will have breakout sessions using Zoom to discuss the same conversations that are taking place in the library with online participants, and audience engagement will take place via technologies including Google Docs and Jamboard. We will host separate sessions for the live and online breakout sessions so that the online participants have the full attention of the facilitator.

To record insights shared, participants at the live forum will use post-it notes; participants in the online forum will use Jamboard (or a similar tool). The sessions will also be recorded, but subsequently deleted after they are used to distill insights for the white paper. The co-PIs will be responsible for organizing and recording group (breakout) sessions that will be the basis for the toolkit that will cover the topics discussed above.

Assessment mechanism: In October 2025, the draft white paper will be shared with live and online forum participants. They will be asked to closely review the white paper to assess to what extent the document encapsulates and distills the recommendations and insights shared during the forum. They will also be asked to assess to what extent it is readable and usable, from the perspective of library workers and leaders. In addition, assessment will be gathered from the reception of the white paper as it is shared online, at the ALISE and ALA conferences, and through peer-review publication.

Timeline:
- August – September 2024: Begin planning logistics, secure hotel rooms, recruit experts for keynote talks.
- October 2024: Issue Call for Participation via email listservs and professional social media sites. Recruit a Graduate Assistant to begin work January 2025.
- November – December: 2024: Select attendees and issue invitations and travel instructions; create assessment mechanism.
- January – March 2025: Confirm logistics (space, catering, and technology).
- End of May, 2025: Event takes place in Kansas City.
- July 2025: Final assessment from participants is due.
- August – December 2025: Project team writes white paper, presents work at ALISE, and writes an article.
- June 2026: Presentation at ALA Annual Meeting.

Diversity Plan: Addiction affects all socio-demographic groups. The project team will intentionally select participants for the forum who represent a cross-section of the United States to create a toolkit that helps its users envision how they could create appealing programs and collections in their own communities, specific to and reflective of their community's needs and various identities.

Project Results: The project team will produce a publicly available final white paper that includes both a summary of the forum as well as data from these two data collection points, including a distillation of promising practices that emerged from the forum that public librarians across America and of all sizes will be able to implement. The project team will also present the findings at various conferences (e.g., ALA, state library associations, and ALISE) in order to ensure wide dissemination in both the library and library education communities.

Budget Summary: We request $131,163 for this project. This includes: (1) $969 for hourly pay for a Graduate Assistant (50 hours) to help with logistics and on-the-ground at the forum; (2) $49,650 for travel for 5 speakers and co-PI Lenstra (UNCG) to the forum, hotel rooms for forum participants, and conference (ALA, ALISE) travel for the project team; (3) $6,500 for catering (breakfast and lunch) at the forum; (4) $1,500 for supplies; (5) honoraria for five speakers ($400 each, or $2,000 total); (6) $35,000 for 50 stipends for participants ($700 each average, to be used for travel and meals); (7) $3,000 for open access publication; (8) $32,544 for F&A.