

Smaller libraries, archives, and historical collections play an essential role in the preservation of our nation's diverse cultural heritage. Community archives are increasingly important to emerging areas of scholarship and document less-visible but essential aspects of America's historical record. Yet these institutions often lack the resources to mentor and train the next generation of archivists. Similarly, they lack resources for the continuing education of their staff—who often do not have MLIS degrees or formal training. Non-professional archivists have valuable hands-on experience and much to teach about preserving and ensuring public access to historical materials. However, many could benefit substantially from intensive exposure to the training that MLIS students receive during their educations. We designed the L.A. as Subject Residency Program to transfer archival skills between these two populations. The result is a scalable, replicable residency program that can benefit associations of community archives across the United States.

In partnership with the Autry National Center and California State University Northridge (CSUN), the USC Libraries propose to implement the 36-month pilot phase of a residency program that will provide continuing education in archival skills to 1) new MLIS graduates and 2) current staff at L.A. community archives. Like the Autry, CSUN, and USC, these archives belong to L.A. as Subject, an alliance of 230 historical collections hosted by the USC Libraries. Support from IMLS under the Continuing Education area of the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian program will enable us to launch a residency that provides mentoring and hands-on education in the archival skill areas outlined by the Society of American Archivists' guidelines for Archival Continuing Education (ACE). After hands-on training with experienced archivists at the Autry, CSUN, and USC, two cohorts of recent MLIS graduates will complete a series of 3 rotations at Southern California community archives.

During the 36-month pilot phase, we will host 6 residents for 12-month terms. They will receive mentoring from experienced archivists at the Autry, CSUN, and USC and complete supervised archival projects at their home institutions and community archives. During the pilot phase, 18 L.A. as Subject archives will offer 3-month rotations to residents that will provide intensive, hands-on learning experiences for residents and 4-5 of their current staff members. In the pilot phase, this will benefit at least 70-90 staff members in L.A.-area archives. Our evaluation activities will measure learning outcomes for the 6 residents and 70-90 community archives staff and volunteers in the archival skills (e.g. creating EAD finding aids) and ACE skill areas emphasized in each rotation.

The pilot phase will build on our recent IMLS-supported planning project. We believe recent MLIS graduates and current staff at community archives have a great deal to learn from another and would benefit substantially from hands-on, intensive exchanges of knowledge and skills. Our program leverages the expertise of archival staff at the Autry, CSUN, and USC—and our program coordinator Cindy Mediavilla—to design and evaluate archival projects at community archives. Through our pilot, we will demonstrate the impact of the L.A. as Subject residency on our two target populations to enlist the support of stakeholders at the Autry, CSUN, and USC—as well as L.A. as Subject members. This will enable us to ensure the program's long-term sustainability and develop additional workshops and education programs to benefit staff working in America's community archives.