

Catalyst Fund Proposal

Proposal Title:	Mobile Digitization for Rural Community Archives
ID:	46
Institution:	University of Nebraska at Omaha
Requestor:	Jason Heppler, Digital Engagement Librarian
Budget:	\$5,550
Goal (as pulled from the application):	<p>“In recent years, archivists have identified the need and desire to capture community archives.... One potential avenue we wish to explore is a mobile maker space and digitization lab that will allow us to reach out to rural communities and digitize their material, making such material widely available while keeping the archive in the community. The LYRASIS Catalyst Fund would go towards a pilot project that would allow us to work with tribal colleges and communities in Nebraska.”</p>
Description:	<p>In recent years, archivists have identified the need and desire to capture community archives with the twin goals of providing community members with tools and techniques to engage with their collections, as well as equipping archivists with connections, tools, and techniques to use in their communities. One potential avenue we wish to explore is a mobile maker space and digitization lab that will allow us to reach out to rural communities and digitize their material, making such material widely available while keeping the archive in the community. The LYRASIS Catalyst Fund would go towards a pilot project that would allow us to work with tribal colleges and communities in Nebraska.</p> <p>While mobile digitization and maker spaces have been done in the past, notably Baltimore's Open Works, California's SparkTruck, Boston's UpTruck, New York City's Culture in Transit, and Atlanta's STE(A)M Truck, we offer an alternative approach to these largely urban-based initiatives. Mobile spaces have generally targeted the cities and urban centers in which they were launched. Our initiative seeks to go beyond the urban area of Omaha and Council Bluffs to connect with community archives in rural communities. Combined with the University of Nebraska at Omaha's core mission of community engagement, developing a mobile maker and digitization lab would help us in fulfilling our mission as a university.</p> <p>This outreach is happening at a particularly important moment. Commentators in the wake of the 2016 election have pointed to an urban/rural divide^[^rural], a long perceived issue in American history. As a metropolitan research university, UNO Libraries believes a core facet of its mission is reaching out to communities in our region to connect with their histories and tell their stories. By doing so, we offer a way for rural communities to use their archives and provide those archives more widely within and without. The project will help us to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - explore how to provide access to community-made archives - provide a model for community engagement and involvement in public digital humanities work, specifically around community archival, curatorial, and participatory work - employ innovative technologies to enable digital participation

(Emily Badger, Quoctrung Bui, and Adam Pearce, The Election Highlighted a Growing Rural-Urban Split, *New York Times*, November 11, 2016).

Under the Catalyst Fund, the award would be administered towards:

- rental of an R.V. or van to transport equipment and staff.
- the support of two library staff, one department faculty, and two student interns, one from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and the other from the tribal community or college we visit. Costs include a month of working with student interns will include three days of work in the community, training, and metadata creation.
- we also feel that we can take advantage of an internal library fund that will match money we put forward with the grant, helping us double the impact of the project and allow us to procure equipment, include more people, and fund additional trips.

****Travel****

R.V. rental: \$1,500
R.V. security deposit: \$500
R.V. fuel and mileage: \$150

****Project Allowance****

Meals^[^1]: \$1,200 ^[^1]: For staff, interns, and community members.
Student interns^[^2 see below]: \$1,600
Staff travel expenses: \$600

****Total request****: ****\$5,550****

^[^2]: Divided evenly between two interns for one month of labor in June 2017, designed to cover training, on-site digitization, and metadata in the two weeks after the site visit. Students will make \$10 per hour, a dollar above Nebraska's minimum wage of \$9 per hour.

There are several potential audiences for distributing the work once completed, not only among LYRASIS partners but also academic organizations such as the American Studies Association (ASA), the Organization of American Historians (OAH), the American Historical Association (AHA), and the National Council on Public History (NCPH). Community mailing lists such as H-Net can also be used along with Facebook and Twitter. Furthermore, the results of the pilot project can be written up for publication in any number of journals to share with others interested in pursuing similar projects.

The core team will include: Kent Blansett (Professor, History, University of Nebraska at Omaha) Jason A. Heppler (Digital Engagement Librarian, University of Nebraska at Omaha) Jackie Mitchell (Creative Production Lab Supervisor, University of Nebraska at Omaha) Joyce Neujahr (Director, Patron Service, University of Nebraska at Omaha) Drew Roberts (Creative Production Lab Assistant, University of Nebraska at Omaha) Amy Schindler (Director, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska at Omaha) and two student interns to be identified in a later phase of the project.

	<p>Work Plan</p> <p>**May 2017**: *First group meeting* with humanities scholars, library and museum professionals, and digital media specialists in Omaha. This day-long meeting will bring together humanities scholars and technologists to discuss the project's goals, determine which communities to reach out to, discuss the potential benefits and drawbacks to collecting user-generated content, and discuss the needs of the project including potential types of content, assessment of technology, and best practices.</p> <p>**June 2017**: Skype meeting with the core team and a community liaison of the tribal community to gather comments about particular opportunities and challenges. Begin accepting applications for student interns.</p> <p>**July through September 2017**: Begin working in the community, taking our first trip to the community during the summer to begin digitizing and scanning objects. Work will include creating metadata for objects, digitization of material, capturing community knowledge and/or oral histories, and building relationships.</p> <p>**August 2017**: *Second group meeting* to check-in on the project's overall progress and begin drafting a white paper on things the team learned about a mobile digitization lab.</p> <p>**October 2017**: The digitized material will be uploaded to the project site and community members notified that the material can be accessed. The core team will finish the white paper for distribution or publication.</p>
<p>Comments from Field Reviewers:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I love this project. I think the hardest leap will be between the months of July and September 2017 with the field work. That can require a lot of time and attention to do well and special training for the staff involved. If anything, I would advocate for funding this proposal at a higher level so that we could ensure the project's success. 2. This is a great concept model that can be used by all libraries of all types. The cost is nominal and it aligns with other projects of this type. Recommend funding at the budget requested of \$5,550. 3. Capturing archival materials from rural areas is a crucial need in the archival community. The mobile van is an innovative solution, and could provide a good model for future institutions, including LYRASIS members, located outside of urban centers, attempting to capture community data. I would like more clarification about the equipment involved - the budget seems to assume that all of the equipment inside the van is already available.