

The University of California, Irvine (UCI) Transforming Knowledge/Transforming Libraries Project

The University of California, Irvine Libraries, in partnership with the UCI departments of Asian American Studies (AAS) and Chicano/Latino Studies as well as stakeholders representing organizations throughout the Orange County, California region, propose to expand upon an existing collaboration to teach undergraduate students the skills to document Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) and Chicano/Latino communities through oral history and community-based research. Our project aims to integrate library and information studies into the ethnic studies curriculum and provide undergraduates from underrepresented groups with first-hand experience in building and providing access to the nation's digital cultural heritage, transforming community knowledge and transforming librarianship. We request \$490,904 for this Research Grant project in the Community Anchors category.

This grant makes two key interventions in the library/archives professions. First, it seeks to diversify the profession by recruiting underrepresented AAPI and Latino American undergraduate students and providing these students with training in the basic principles and practices of archivists and librarians, creating a gateway to librarianship. Second, our project seeks to fill the silences and historical erasures prevalent in the archival record by training university students and community members to record, transcribe, digitize, describe, and make accessible oral histories and community-based archives in an openly-accessible digital portal hosted by the California Digital Library (CDL) and harvested by the Digital Public Library of America.

The University of California, Irvine, is uniquely situated to undertake this project. UCI is a federally designated Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution as well a Hispanic-Serving Institution. In the fall of 2015, Asian American and Pacific Islander students constituted 37% and Hispanic students constituted 25% of the undergraduate student population. Despite the popular representation of Asian Americans as model minorities, 40% of AAPI students come from low-income families, 47% grew up in bilingual households, and 28% in non-English speaking households. Some ethnic minorities, particularly those from Southeast Asia, have even higher percentages of low-income background and bilingual/non-English speaking households. Over half of the undergraduate student population is comprised of first-generation college students. The broader Orange County demographics also reflect this racial, ethnic, and class diversity. The latest UC census revealed that of the approximately 926,524 foreign-born residents in Orange County, 46% were from Latin America and 44% were from Asia. Latino Americans account for 33.8% of the county's total population; Asian Americans 18.3%. OC is home to a number of diverse Asian ethnic communities, including the largest Vietnamese American community in the country. UCI students represent the diversity of our community, but not of the library and archives professions.

This proposal builds upon successful collaborations such as the Vietnamese American Oral History Project by working with a number of Asian American Studies and Chicano/Latino Studies faculty and courses to document the ethnic diversity within the AAPI and Chicano/Latino communities in Orange County, telling a fuller story of our national heritage. Additional stakeholders who have already expressed commitment include Irvine Valley College (a community college and also a Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution), the UCI Cross Cultural Center, the UCI Office of Inclusive Excellence (including the UCI Chancellor's ADVANCE Postdoctoral Fellowship Program for Academic Diversity) and a local library/archives organization, the Orange County Heritage Coordinating Council. We can expand this model to include additional under-documented communities while providing core knowledge and career options for promising undergraduate students. Hence, the UCI Libraries through their collaboration with AAS and Chicano/Latino Studies will work closely with undergraduate UCI students to enhance their community-based research and oral history skills, teach them library preservation and archival skills, provide opportunities to share what they've learned in the community, and create a pipeline for diversifying the library profession.

Typical UCI courses in ethnic studies include community history research methodologies, but this project incorporates library and archives standards and best practices from the outset. This is a sustainable, scale-able model for libraries as Community Anchors. In creating a gateway to librarianship through real-life community archives work, this project will build the skills and knowledge of future library professionals to “support the role of libraries as community anchors that facilitate lifelong learning; enhance civic and cultural engagement; and support economic vitality, through programming and services.” This methodology could be applied to many communities and could be reproduced around the country. Undergraduates will be trained in the practices of community-based archives as well as post-custodial archives work. Topics will also include safe handling, preservation basics, digitization best practice, archival processing, descriptive metadata, the digital preservation lifecycle, and oral history best practice. Students will be introduced first-hand to important aspects of the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education, especially the frames of “Authority is Constructed and Contextual,” and “Information Creation as a Process.” These students will be trained as advocates, ready to empower under-documented communities to include their histories in the archives.

The proposed project will span a 3-year period of July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2020. A project coordinator librarian will be recruited from an under-represented group to participate in ethnic studies instruction to introduce concepts of archives, cataloging/metadata, information literacy, and digital projects to undergraduate students. As part of the existing curriculum, the students will implement oral history and/or documentation projects at a small scale. The coordinator will recruit and train a diverse group of students from these courses into paid summer assistant positions, housed in the UCI Libraries. These students will contribute digital heritage project materials into a central digital collection hosted by the CDL’s Calisphere portal. Students will collaboratively describe historical materials and transcribe oral histories, adding geographic information and descriptive context. This work will be supported by a programmer analyst working to develop Calisphere in response to user design and digital display needs for complex records including multi-format oral histories. As a result, libraries across California will be able to make unique community histories more accessible. Public programming will include at least two community archives day workshops in partnership with local libraries, a roundtable discussion of local community archives and libraries, and a live-streamed, student-led research forum. The digital portal can be further developed to include K-12 primary source learning materials and curated narratives to be re-used in future curricula.

Our project’s performance goal is to “strengthen museums and libraries as essential partners in addressing the needs of their communities.” We will survey ourselves and our partners to ensure these goals are met. Furthermore, our projected outcomes will also include the establishment and development of an inclusive, openly-accessible Orange County digital heritage portal highlighting the rich experiences of a variety of ethnic communities in the region and sustained through standardized preservation and description performed by a team of students, faculty, librarians, archivists, and community members.

Our proposed budget is \$490,904 and includes the following: \$187,893 for a 31-month Project Coordinator Librarian; \$71,832 for a 9-month Programmer Analyst; \$45,540 for 30 Undergraduate Scholars; \$10,000 for equipment including scanners, audio and video recording equipment, and other digitization equipment; \$6,000 for programming including the community workshops and student research forum; and \$169,639 in indirect costs (at a rate of 54.50%). UCI will also contribute a cost share of librarian, faculty, and staff time.