

RE-255177-OLS School of Information Science, University of Kentucky – Shannon Crawford Barniskis, PhD

## THE TRUSTEE PROJECT: UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC LIBRARY TRUSTEE SELECTION, TRAINING AND COLLABORATION FOR EQUITY, ACCESS, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

### Summary

The School of Information Science at the University of Kentucky, along with tenure-track Assistant Professor and Principal Investigator (PI) Shannon Crawford Barniskis, PhD, MLIS, seeks funding for a three year Laura Bush 21st Century (LB21) Early Career Development Research Grant, for \$444,923 to: (1) investigate current public library trustee demographics, selection, training, and work practices; (2) understand which practices support beneficial and inclusive governance; and (3) extend and develop an early-career scholar's research portfolio on public libraries, governance, and community capabilities. Public libraries depend on community-based governance decisions about funding, policy development, access to materials, and human resources planning and evaluation. These decisions often rest in the hands of volunteer boards of trustees, which researchers know little about, except that they are often untrained, non-representative of communities, and that they are struggling with the challenges of their responsibilities. The Trustee Project seeks to understand how trustee practices affect or interact with libraries and their communities, how trustees practice collaborative governance and civic engagement, and how, or if, trustees understand and sustain equitable access to library services. The proposed project expands the PI's previous research and conference presentations ([Crawford Barniskis, 2023](#)) on Kentucky public library trustees, with a nation-wide exploration of a previously little-explored but vital aspect of library services and governance. The Trustee Project will contribute to the capacity of public library administration and boards of trustees in supporting shared governance processes that benefit communities, while supporting equity, access and civic engagement.

### Project Justification

Public libraries depend on community-based governance decisions about funding, policy development, access to materials, and human resources planning and evaluation. These decisions often rest in the hands of volunteer boards of trustees. Trustees are community members who are elected or selected to sit on Boards, with duties that vary from state to state, and sometimes from community to community. Of the 9,057 public library administrative units in the United States ([ALA, 2023](#)), nearly all depend upon some form of volunteer boards. In some communities, these boards act in advisory capacities regarding an array of library services and practices, in others they have legal fiduciary responsibilities, and in others they are required to create or at least approve policies. These trustees might be selected by the current boards of trustees, by local politicians, by library administrators, or by elections. However they are selected and whatever their duties, we know little about them.

This stud seeks to fill the substantial gap in the Library and Information Science (LIS) literature regarding trustees, by finding out who the nation's public library trustees are, and what their duties are—both as the trustees perceive them and as library administrators or legal guidelines state. We wish to know how trustees are selected and trained, and the impact this selection and training has on libraries and communities. We will investigate how trustees work with libraries, their understanding of their role's civic value, and how they might they be better prepared for the many duties required of them. We wish to distinguish how many boards are acting only in an advisory

capacity, and how many have more integral decision-making power concerning library operations, the differences between these types of boards of trustees, and the impacts on library services when different types of boards of trustees or advisory boards are established. We will investigate what occurs when a library trustee has a different perception of their role than the administrator does.

The Trustee Project will contribute to the capacity of public library administration and boards of trustees in supporting shared governance processes that benefit communities, while supporting equity, access and civic engagement. This project extends the PI's pilot research in Kentucky, investigating trustee practices and the perceived impact of Senate Bill 167, a law that shifted responsibility for selecting trustees from the state library and local library boards to county judge executives. The initial findings of the pilot study highlight the urgent needs of small and rural libraries, and the judge executives working with them, to find, select, and train qualified trustees.

As book banning efforts increase ([ALA, 2023](#)) and libraries become more politicized, scholars and practitioners hypothesize that well-considered and locally-responsive selection, training, outreach, and collaboration methods for trustees are increasingly important. These methods may be especially vital in communities that are vulnerable due to having library administrators without master's degree-level training in librarianship, wide diversity in subpopulations, or low resource allocation. However, these are only hypotheses. Without understanding the current practices and problems of trustee work, and how these practices intersect with library services and community needs in a wide range of library situations, we not only do not know what methods will best serve diverse libraries, we cannot be sure what problems exist. Outside of anecdotal evidence of librarians reporting increasing challenges in working with boards, the data from the pilot study in Kentucky ([Crawford Barniskis, 2023](#)), and one 17-year-old article investigating a small sample of trustees in three states ([Arns, 2007](#)), librarians are working in the absence of evidence-supported practice when they work with trustees, and trustees may be similarly challenged in knowing how to best make decisions on behalf of their communities.

Moreover, public libraries support people's freedom to engage with a wide range of ideas, as active members of a self-governing society ([ALA, 2023](#); [Preer, 2014](#)). As key decision-makers in libraries, trustees impact the public sphere and this free exchange of ideas necessary to a thriving participatory democracy ([Post, 2011](#)). The results of this study will support that public sphere, by assisting communities of all sizes and configurations in cultivating their public library boards of trustees in ways that best reflect community needs, as well as equitable access. The project does so by first understanding trustees and their roles through survey, interview and focus group methods. Then, leveraging these findings, the project will convene a Participatory Action Research (PAR) Council comprised of librarians, trustees, scholars, and other stakeholders from across the nation. The PAR Council will craft materials to activate, evaluate, adjust, and sustain promising practices in inclusive, diverse, community-centered library governance. The findings from this project will support the well-being of communities across the United States, by supporting the community governance of libraries.

### Background and Previous Research

The research on public libraries is minimal, is historic rather than situated in our current cultural context, and addresses few of the questions this project asks about trustees and their work. We do

not know how trustees are trained, if at all, how they represent the diversity of their communities, or how they are otherwise prepared for the important work they do. Research has established that trustees are generally not representative of their communities, and older, white, professionals have historically comprised the bulk of most library boards ([Gibbs et al., 2007](#); [Joeckel, 1935](#); [Garceau, 1949](#); [Prentice, 1973](#)). There has been no research to suggest that these demographics have shifted, with one exception: trustees were generally male in the earlier half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and shifted to become predominately female sometime between Prentice's 1973 study and a demographics survey done by [Lynch in 1998](#).

[Koepp \(1969\)](#) found that the selection of trustees generally hinged on being well-known in the community by politicians, not "controversial" or likely to cause problems for ruling elites, and with an ill-defined "community spirit." The pilot study upon which this proposal is grounded has found that little has changed in this regard ([Crawford Barniskis, 2023](#)). There appear to be no overarching characteristics of what makes for a "good" trustee candidate beyond these factors, which may not be the most useful, diverse, or representative characteristics for the benefit of the community or library. This project aims to discover what might be more helpful in supporting good trustee selection characteristics or practices.

Little research has explored trustees or their practices, and the most recent published research on trustees in the United States is more than a decade old (e.g., [Ames & Heid, 2009](#); [Arns, 2007](#); [Gibbs et al., 2007](#)). Comprehensive research is older still ([Belanger, 1995](#); [Lynch, 1998](#); [Prentice, 1973](#)), with the research most similar to the proposed project emerging 75 years ago ([Garceau, 1949](#)). This sparse body of research finds that trustees may have no connection to, or training in, library values of access, equity, and intellectual freedom ([Gibbs et al., 2007](#)).

Yet trustees are often tasked with intellectual freedom and access decisions, such as whether challenged materials remain on library shelves ([Preer, 2014](#)). While untrained trustees can do well working with the library administration in times of relative calm, in times of tension a board of trustees can struggle ([Arns, 2007](#)). As trustees are asked to do more, due to recent increases in book challenges ([ALA, 2023](#)), they may need more tools to reconcile disparate perceptions of informational access. In fact, the roles of trustees are contested among library directors and trustees themselves, with diverse understandings of the rightful roles of each, as [Belanger found in 1995](#), and the pilot study corroborates ([Crawford Barniskis, 2023](#)). Since the roles and responsibilities of trustees often lie in perceptions rather than legal categorizations, this study will explore what these perceptions are nationally, and where unnecessary conflict arises from differing perceptions of the responsibilities of the trustees and library administration.

As [Lange \(1980\)](#) noted about rural library trustees, "Much of the literature deplores how little research there has been and urges concentrated attention to library boards and governing authorities as subjects of research" (pg. 591). This gap in our understanding endures 44 years later. The proposed project will begin to close this research gap and answer open questions about trustees.

## Project Work Plan

Since scholars know so little about trustees, and so many questions remain unanswered, the Research Questions (RQs) for this study are expansive. RQ1 and 2 are exploratory, examining existing practice and processes involving trustees. Once the data for these questions is gathered

and analyzed, the project will move into an interpretive phase, leveraging the expertise of practitioners, scholars, and trustees to amplify the most promising practices to support community needs.

RQ1: Who are today's public library trustees, demographically?

1a: What are the current practices pertaining to the selection, training, collaboration, and advocacy efforts of public library trustees?

1b: How do trustees understand their roles and how do those understandings reflect library administrators' viewpoints, and legal requirements to which trustees must adhere?

1c: How, and to what extent, do differences in trustee practices impact library services?

1d: To what extent are various board structures and assigned duties (such as advisory versus decision-making boards) operating in the United States, and how do these structures impact libraries and their communities?

RQ2: Which current practices related to public library trustees are promising in supporting equitable, inclusive, and beneficial governance, as well as community members' civic engagement?

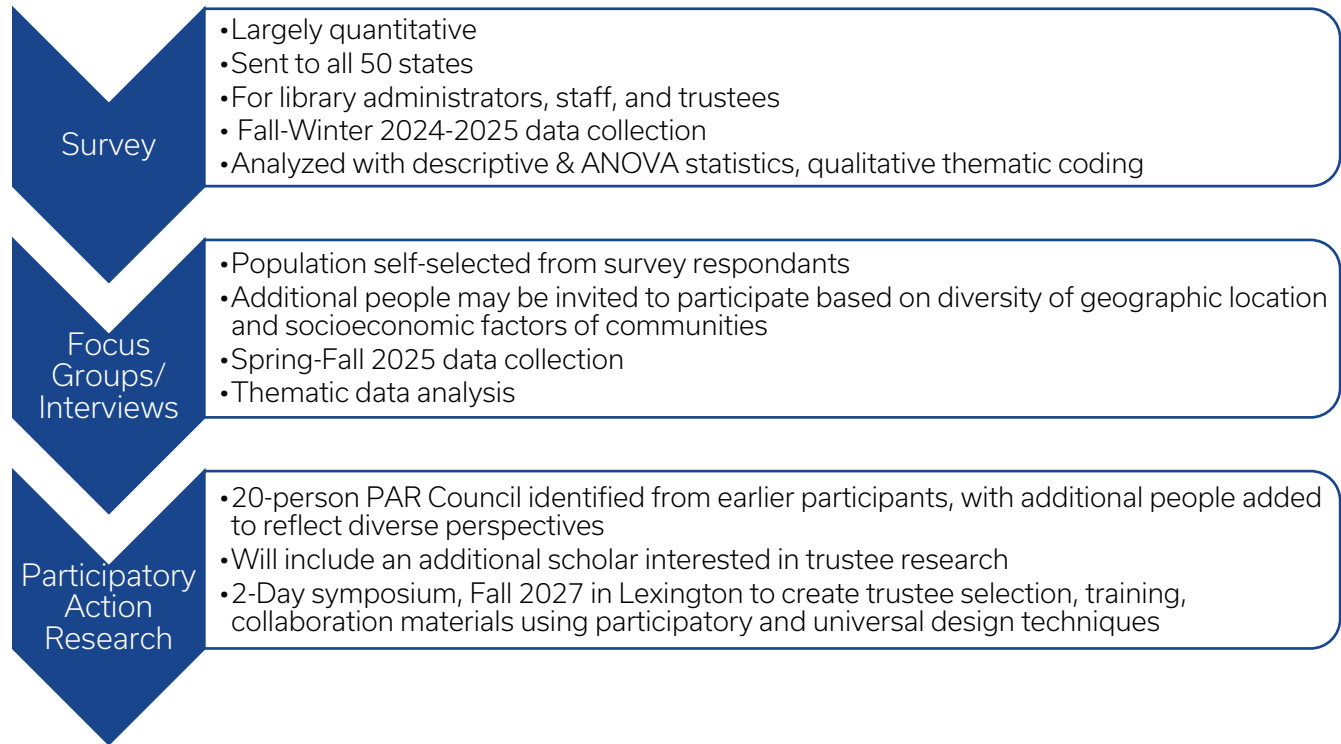
RQ3: What practices (including materials or processes) could advance beneficial and inclusive trustee governance?

### Theoretical Framing

This study situates understanding in constructivist practice theory ([Shatzki, Knorr Cetina & von Savigny, 2001](#)), using "practice" as the unit of analysis ([Talja & Nice, 2015](#)). By exploring the practices specifically, the study will explore what is or is not working with trustees and those that rely upon them. The study grounds practice in the context of community informatics, which explore how information organizations and systems support and sustain communities. This allows the researcher to situate the practices in the context of local meanings, goals, and outcomes, retaining the specificity of the local culture, while also allowing the analysis to abstract meaning across communities when practices intersect. This overlapping theoretical framework allows this study to work at two levels: learning what diverse types of communities need, since it is probable that different communities will need different types of support for trustee work; and secondly, it will allow a big-picture view of the practices of trustee work across the nation. Since community informatics is a pragmatic constructivist framework, it will allow the research team and PAR Council to design human-centered tools based on real-life situations ([Bishop & Bruce, 2005, p. 8](#)). This framework allows communities to share innovations that have worked with other communities ([Gurstein, 2013](#)), and ensure that communities have agency in developing and sharing the practices that work. The constructivist framework aligns with the third phase of this study, which is situated within a participatory action research. PAR is a "theory of social intervention negotiated and grounded in the ongoing experience, skill sets and multiple perspectives advanced by the concerned parties" ([Chevalier & Buckles, 2019, p. 27](#)). PAR forefronts the lived experiences of a variety of people and their collective wisdom to develop promising practices for trustee work, theory on trustees, and what is needed to support trustee work.

## Methods

This is a mixed methods study, using different data collection and analysis methods to explore, explain, or interpret the data. As the figure below shows, three main stages will be conducted to employ our methods.



### Survey

Data addressing the first two research questions will be gathered in a nationwide, largely quantitative survey sent to all state library and national library listservs, with a goal of ensuring a representative sample of public library administrators and trustees. To ensure that diverse voices are heard, participants will be actively recruited from organizations such as Black Caucus American Library Association (BCALA), Reforma, the Association of Small & Rural Libraries, and the Social Responsibilities Roundtable. The survey will focus on library administrators and trustees, though a survey aimed at library staff will also be made widely available, since little is known about staff-trustee relations or practices.

This survey will gather data on the practices, policies and understandings that currently exist regarding trustees. Questions will be broken into four main areas, for trustees, staff and trustees:

- What is occurring in your community related to trustees? (including type of board, training, roles, trustee practices, challenges, appointment/selection practices, relationships between staff, trustees and community)
- What is your understanding regarding the trustee role and libraries? (such as trustee experiences, perceptions of duties, and thoughts on library values such as access and inclusion)

- What impacts do you believe trustees have on the library and community? (these questions will explore the perceptions various stakeholders have on trustees and their work, and allow participants to share qualitative stories about what they believe occurs due to factors related to trustees, whether those practices are believed to be working well or causing problems)
- What are your social demographics? (i.e. age, educational attainment, work role, income, geographic location, community size)

Survey data will be analyzed with analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests and descriptive statistics using SPSS v. 29, with qualitative data analyzed using iterative and reflexive thematic analysis ([Terry & Hayfield, 2021](#)) in NVivo 14. ANOVA is a method that allows correlative relationships to be examined by comparing the means of two diverse data sets. For example, one might determine if the answers to a particular survey question statistically vary from one self-identified population to the next. Some potential hypotheses to test will include whether differences in gender, race, geographic location, dis/ability, selection process, or educational attainment impact the practices of trustees. Thematic analysis is a method that sits within the qualitative and constructivist paradigm, in which meaning is constructed inductively from the data as it is coded, sorted into themes, and resorted as new information comes to light. It is reflexive, with the researcher interrogating their own biases or assumptions, and seeking potential blind spots as part of the coding and memoing process.

Since these surveys will primarily be quantitative, they will help the research team to understand what, where, and to what extent various trustee practices are occurring. "How" or "why" questions regarding trustee practices will be more limited in the survey, so follow-up interviews and focus groups will occur to tease out the explanatory data. The surveys will solicit participants for further interview and focus group participation.

#### *Interviews and Focus Groups*

The research team will also seek further interview and focus group participation through snowball sampling among the self-selected participants from the survey, and by inviting further participation in emailed invitations to state library and national library listservs. We seek to conduct approximately 75 interviews or focus groups to ensure a wide variety of perspectives.

These interviews will delve deeper into the "how" and "why" questions that the survey will not be able to entirely capture, providing deep and rich data to explain the perceptions, practices, and problems experienced by trustees and those that work with them. The team will gather data for these questions through interviews and focus groups and analyze it through thematic analysis.

The interviews and focus groups will most commonly occur via Zoom. This is particularly beneficial in the case of focus groups, because people will be able to participate in their own homes or the location they feel comfortable, they can choose to use pseudonyms or turn their video cameras off, and otherwise can remain less identifiable to fellow focus group participants. The research team may offer in-person interviews or focus group opportunities to nearby participants. Participants may elect to participate in focus groups or individual interviews, as they prefer.

These participants will be asked questions about existing trustee practices via a semi-structured interview method that allows the research team to follow up on new, confusing, or particularly relevant information.

### *Participatory Action Research & Participatory Design Methods*

Once the researchers understand what *is* occurring among trustees, the next step is to understand what *should* be occurring, related to trustee training, selection, collaboration, and outreach efforts. From the interview and focus group participants, the team will use snowball and purposive methods to identify potential trustees, librarians, or other trustee decision-makers who are innovating and/or seeing beneficial results to their practices, to participate in a 20-person PAR) Council.

PAR is a form of collaborative inquiry that invites participants to engage deeply as co-researchers, and weaves diverse voices into the research process to ensure inclusion, ideas more grounded in lived experiences, and to develop support **with**, rather than just **for** people ([McIntyre, 2008](#)). The team will also invite 1-2 additional scholars interested in library trustee governance to join the Council. Once again, the research team will focus on diversity among participants based on a variety of demographic markers (age, race, geographic location, educational attainment, income, gender), trustee role and duration of trustee work, and diversity in perception of their experience as a trustee from positive to negative. The team will select participants to ensure maximum diversity, with an emphasis on Council members who have ideas for how to better select, prepare, and work as/with trustees. If needed the research team will once more solicit participants from states and regions that are underrepresented, or will reach out to members of Black Caucus American Library Association (BCALA), Reforma, the Association of Small & Rural Libraries through listservs.

The data about what *should* be occurring for trustees will be gathered through convening the PAR Council in a two-day symposium. The Council will collaborate in determining promising practices from the previously-gathered data, add their own insights, and generate early draft materials supporting trustees and libraries. The findings from the survey, interviews, and focus groups will be sent to the PAR Council in advance, so they can see what others have said about trustee work. Then the Council and research team will gather to determine what trustee selection, training, collaboration, and outreach methods might best serve diverse communities, with an emphasis on flexible materials that can be shifted to suit locally-specific needs. After all, the needs of a small rural community in Kentucky are unlikely to be the same as a large Californian city, and the roles of trustees vary.

The team will gather data via participatory and universal design methods ([Hanington & Martin, 2019](#)), including the following:

- KJ Technique: This is a method in which all participants are given sticky notes and pens and are invited to share all their concerns or ideas on a given topic. Silently, Council members will write all they wish to write, then are invited to start organizing these concerns and ideas thematically on a wall. Since all of this is done in silence, there is no opportunity for louder voices to drown quieter ones, and since the Council members themselves will both create the data and organize it, it ensures the research teams have no more influence on the outcome than the Council. Ideally this process ends with a clear determination of what to do, for example, how trustee selection methods should work best, but even if there is no clear answer, the act of elucidating and thematically organizing ideas will provide a jumping-off point for further discussion and design. The research team will take photos of the results throughout the process, and keep the results for analysis.

- User Journey Maps: This method will involve first developing several “personas” or crafted representatives of the various types of trustees that the survey and interviews identified. Then users will map out the steps each persona takes as they apply and are selected to be trustees and how they then are trained or navigate their duties. This method will allow Council members to identify points in which more or different types of support are offered for trustees to do their best work. The research team will take photos throughout this process and keep resulting maps and personas for analysis.
- Design Charette: This method involves the research team acting as moderators as small groups of PAR Council members collaborate to design tools, such as trustee training materials. At regular intervals, all but one member of each small group will move onto other groups, taking the design ideas of their previous group with them to inform what the new group is considering. This allows for cross-pollination of ideas, with a constant re-evaluation of ideas with fresh eyes and in new combinations.

These participatory and universal design methods structurally support openness, vulnerability, inclusion of a diversity of voices, and to deepen empathetic conversations about challenging topics. This will be necessary as we explore and design promising practices to assist trustees, libraries, and communities, given the diversity of opinion and experience we are likely to encounter. Consensus about which practices are best will be reached through “I can live with this” agreement among PAR Council members.

In PAR, collaborative analysis occurs in tandem with data collection, using iterative pattern-seeking analysis methods. The Council will be doing much of the analysis, with the research team acting as participants, moderators, assistants, and conveners. The materials generated through the PAR Council symposium will be then more fully developed into draft materials for selecting, training, and working with trustees. These drafts will be sent to Council members for feedback. All of the Council feedback and symposium data will be further analyzed using thematic analysis methods and reported upon.

After this work is done, the next step will be to seek a follow-up grant to fully develop a toolkit of flexible, community-oriented materials for trustees, including videos, application forms, training materials, and outreach scripts, as well as any other materials the Council or research suggests is necessary.

### Diversity Plan (optional)

We will focus on diversity among participants based on a variety of demographic markers (age, race, geographic location, educational attainment, income, gender, etc.), trustee role and duration of trustee work, and diversity in perception of their experience as a trustee from positive to negative. The team will select participants to ensure maximum diversity, with an emphasis on Council members who have ideas for how to better select, prepare, and work as/with trustees. If needed the research team will once more solicit participants from states and regions that are underrepresented, or will reach out to members of Black Caucus American Library Association (BCALA), Reforma, the Association of Small & Rural Libraries through listservs. By using PAR methods, we ensure diverse, collaborative, and locally-applicable results from this project, which will reflect diversity of geographic location, library size and type, trustee appointment processes, and socioeconomic factors in the community.



## Project Results

At least three scholarly articles, two trade publications, and six conference presentations will share and elicit feedback on the project's emerging analysis. Publications will be distributed as open access articles or through trade journals, to ensure practitioners and communities can benefit from them. Presentations will target local and national practitioner conferences, as well as scholarly conferences. In addition, the team will cultivate social media channels to keep practitioners informed about the questions and insights of each stage. The findings of the study will be generalizable due to the recruitment of a wide array of participants, triangulation of the data through mixed research methods, and use of PAR methods. The resulting information will be usable and adaptable for public libraries and communities across the United States. All anonymized and aggregated data will be released in University of Kentucky UKnowledge data repository, upon completion of the project.

The PI anticipates potential papers and presentations on the following, 5 of which are identified as the most vital for this project:

- Survey results describing who trustees are, demographically (Paper 1)
- Survey results on training, selection, and collaboration practices (Paper 2)
- Perceptions of trustee roles: staff, administrators, and trustee insights (Paper 3)
- PAR methods and participatory design in creating trustee materials (Paper 4)
- Draft toolkit materials for trustees (Paper 5)
- Potential further papers or conference presentations:
  - Trustee understandings of library values: Privacy, access, equity, and intellectual freedom
  - Implications of trustee work on civic engagement and communities
  - Trustee-staff relationships
  - Impacts of trustee selection and legal requirements
  - Advisory boards versus boards of trustees
  - Stories from trustees and administrators
  - Report on PAR Council symposium

The research team anticipates that some professional webinars on trustees will likely also arise from this project's findings.

This project is intended to provide demographic, practice-centered, community-contextualized yet generalizable or transferable findings regarding public library trustees and their practices. It will do so through the series of papers and presentations listed above, and through working with a PAR Council to develop flexible, useful materials that meet community needs. The findings and draft materials are intended to support libraries, trustees, and communities, as they negotiate the challenges of shared governance.

## IMLS Goals

This project fulfills the IMLS agency-level **Goal 1**, to champion lifelong learning, and **Objective 1.2**, to support the training and professional development of the museum and library workforce.

Specifically, it will develop an often-overlooked but vital aspect of the library workforce, the usually unpaid volunteers who oversee libraries across the country, as well as the administrators and staff who work with them, by developing evidence-based and flexible tools to assist their work.

In expanding and deepening a pilot study on Kentucky trustee selection and practices, this proposal will not only sustain and understand this central practice in public librarianship, it also addresses **Objective 2.3** of the IMLS LB21 program, by supporting untenured tenure-track faculty research. The PI's research has already encompassed public library mission statements, makerspace policy and practice, access, and the impacts of library programs, all aiming to understand how public libraries impact their communities. This project widens and deepens this research stream, by exploring the interconnected nature of trustee governance, public libraries, and the communities that they serve.

The impact of the project on the early career of the PI will also be significant. Though they have already published and presented on impacts of public libraries on their community-members' capabilities, and how libraries reflect their own values as they serve communities, the PI's project grounds this research portfolio in the scholarly conversation about how libraries work **with** their communities through sharing governance for the benefit of all. After this project is complete, the PI aims to further develop a comprehensive trustee toolkit to help select, train and work with trustees, based on this study's findings. We aim perform follow-up studies on the impacts of the toolkit. The toolkit will be aimed at libraries of different sizes, locations, and community makeup and needs, ensuring support for small, rural, and socio-economically challenged communities, as well as larger or more well-resourced ones.

In addition, the project will support graduate student researchers who are evolving their research careers, by embedding their early research experiences in practice, as a form of apprenticeship. One graduate student will be part of the research team from the first year onward. Another will join for the final year. They will learn by assisting with project management, literature review, survey design, participant recruitment, interviews, qualitative and quantitative data analysis, design of materials and processes, and scholarly writing. The main graduate research assistant will be involved at all levels of this project, while the second RA will specialize in how to conduct and analyze PAR, design draft toolkit materials, and assist with running a symposium. These tasks will prepare the RAs for their own scholarly careers.







## Digital Products Plan: Types of Products, Availability, Access, and Sustainability

This project will generate several types of digital data: survey data, interview and focus group data (recordings and transcripts), Zoom recordings, website materials, scanned and photographed PAR materials, research publications, and website and email materials. Data will be retained according to the parameters described below, as well as [UKY data retention policies](#) and [open records laws](#).

### Survey Data

For the survey data, this project will collect and deposit a quantitative dataset and a qualitative de-identified dataset regarding trustees. The survey data will also be collected and stored in a secure folder in the Qualtrics survey platform hosted by UKY as .qsf and JSON files, and stored indefinitely there. This data will be exported and be saved as .xlsx, .csv, and .pdf files. A backup of all data will be kept on the UKY OneDrive and secure external hard drives, with access afforded only to the research team. This data will be deposited in an openly accessible repository, Harvard's Dataverse repository, no later than the ending date of this project, and anyone may access the de-identified data there.

### Interview and Focus Group Data

The research team will create 20-50 digital audio recordings (which the team will save as .mp3 files) of interview and focus group sessions. This work will result in 20-50 subsequent transcripts (in .docx or .pdf file format). The research data will be analyzed using the qualitative analysis software, NVivo. NVivo file types created during the analysis phase of a project include .nvp, .pdf, and .xlsx. This data will be stored in secure folders on the UK OneDrive and on secure external hard drives. The .pdf and .xlsx data will be deposited in an openly accessible repository, the Dataverse repository. The data will be uploaded to Dataverse no later than the end of this project and final reporting to IMLS, and anyone may access the de-identified data there. A backup of all data will be kept on the UKY OneDrive, with access afforded only to the research team.

### PAR Council Materials and Data

Photographs and scans of PAR Council Symposium materials will be captured as .png and .pdf files and shared in the repository as data. The materials will also be analyzed in NVivo, and coded thematically alongside the transcript data from recordings of conversations during the symposium. This data will be stored in secure folders on the UK OneDrive and on secure external hard drives. This data will be deposited in an openly accessible repository, the Dataverse repository. This data will be uploaded no later than the final date of this project, and anyone may access the de-identified data there. The training, selection and other draft toolkit materials created by the PAR Council will be shared and disseminated via the project website as well as shared in the repository. A backup of all data will be kept on the UKY OneDrive, with access afforded only to the research team.

### Zoom and Audio Recordings

Over the course of the project, the project team will create an anticipated 15-40 Zoom recordings which will be saved as .mp3 files (audio-only). These recordings will be created as products of the interviews and focus group meetings. An additional 5-20 audiorecordings will be created on digital audiorecorders during in- person interviews, focus groups, and the PAR Council Symposium. These audiorecordings will be kept in secure files in the UKY OneDrive and on secure external hard drives, and accessible only to the research team, since they cannot be de-identified. Only transcripts will be accessible in the data repository by the general public, professional and scholarly audiences. Any video components of Zoom recordings will be deleted immediately after each interview or focus group.

### Website Materials

The project website will be an HTML site, hosted by the College of Communication and Information at the University of Kentucky. The website will include ongoing news regarding the project, highlights about the findings, and will include consent forms and marketing materials for the study. The website will disseminate findings, inform participants and stakeholders of project progress, and include links to surveys, forms and sample questions for interviews and focus groups, allowing people to understand

what will be asked of them if they elect to participate, or how the project is collecting data.

### Research Publications

Peer-reviewed articles and proceedings papers will be hosted by their respective publishers in their specified file types. At least two articles will be published using Gold Open Access standards, so anyone may find and use that information—particularly public library practitioners who may have little access to scholarly journal articles otherwise. All other publications will be either licensed by Creative Commons Share-Alike with Attribution (CC BY-SA) terms by the publisher, or will be hosted as CC BY-SA licensed draft pre-prints in .pdf format by the UKnowledge repository. Each publisher will determine the best possible arrangement for ensuring that the materials from this project are openly accessible to all.

### Project Emails

Emails related to the project (in .eml file formats) will be archived and saved by the project team in a secure folder in the University of Kentucky OneDrive. Only the research team and internal auditors will have access to this data, though all emails are subject to open records legal requirements. The emails will be retained for three years, then destroyed.

### Dataverse Repository

Dataverse is an openly-accessible repository, Metadata will be appended to the repository files to enhance findability, including: title, creator (principle investigators), data created, format, subject, unique identifier, description of the data asset, coverage of the data (spatial or temporal), publishing organization, rights, funding agency, Dublin Core classification.

### UKnowledge Repository

The [UKnowledge repository](#) is sustained on an ongoing basis by the University of Kentucky libraries. This repository is part of the [Digital Commons Network](#), with hundreds of academic institutions participating in the sharing of this data. Metadata will be appended to the repository files to enhance findability, including: title, creator (principle investigators), data created, format, subject, unique identifier, description of the data asset, coverage of the data (spatial or temporal), publishing organization, rights, funding agency, Dublin Core classification.

### External Hard Drives

The two external hard drives, which will be encrypted, password-protected, and secured in locked cabinets, will be stored in the PI's and RA's office until the end of the project. Then one hard drive will be erased and re-used for the next phase of the project. The second hard drive will be stored in the PI's office indefinitely to ensure that the data is recoverable in the event of data corruption in the UKnowledge or Dataverse repositories.

### File Naming Protocols & Responsibilities

Transcripts will be labeled with participant pseudonyms, and other data will be described with terms describing the content and will include dates, written in YYYY-MM-DD format. For example, "Michael interview transcript\_2024-09-05" or "Trustee survey data\_de-identified\_2024-12-14." The PI and research assistants are responsible for securely collecting and storing all of this data. The PI is responsible for disseminating the data in the repository.

## Data Management Plan

Three datasets will be captured, stored, and disseminated throughout this project: survey data, interview/focus group data, PAR Council data. Data will be retained securely as encrypted files, according to the parameters described below and [UKY data retention policies](#) and [open records laws](#). The PI will retain administrative access over all this data, with control over all logins, naming protocols, and dissemination remaining the PI's responsibility.

### Dataset 1: Survey Data

For the survey data, this project will collect and deposit a quantitative dataset and a qualitative dataset regarding trustees. The data will also be collected and stored in a secure folder in the Qualtrics survey platform hosted by UKY as .qsf and JSON files, and stored indefinitely there. This data will be exported, de-identified, and saved as .xlsx, .csv, and .pdf files. A backup of all this de-identified data and any non-de-identified data will be stored securely for five years, on the UKY OneDrive and secure external hard drives, with access afforded only to the research team. The de-identified data will be deposited in an openly accessible repository no later than the final data in the project funding period.

### Dataset 2: Interview and Focus Group Data

The research team will create digital audio recordings (.mp3 files) of interview and focus group sessions. This data will be sent to Rev.com for transcription, or transcribed by the research team. This work will result in transcripts (.docx or .pdf). The research data will be analyzed using the qualitative analysis software, NVivo. NVivo file types created during the analysis phase of a project will include .nvp, .pdf, .txt and .xlsx. This data will be stored in secure folders on the UKY OneDrive and on secure external hard drives. The de-identified .pdf, .txt and .xlsx data will be deposited in the Dataverse repository. A backup of all data will be kept on the UKY OneDrive and on secure external hard drives, with access afforded only to the research team.

### Dataset 3: PAR Council Materials and Data

Photographs and scans of PAR Council Symposium materials will be captured as .png and .pdf files and shared in the repository as de-identified data. Audiorecorded data from the symposium will be sent to Rev.com for transcription, or transcribed by the research team, based on available time of the RAs. All of this data will be analyzed in NVivo. This data will be stored in secure folders on the UK OneDrive and on secure external hard drives. The training, selection and other draft toolkit materials created by the PAR Council will be shared and disseminated via the project website as well as shared in the repository. A backup of all data will be kept on the UKY OneDrive and on external hard drives, with access afforded only to the research team.

### Personally Identifiable Information: Consent Forms, Lists of Pseudonyms and De-Identification Strategies

Personally Identifiable Information (PII) will be included in consent forms and lists of pseudonyms for de-identified participants. This data will all be stored securely and separately from the de-identified transcripts, recordings, or other data from this project.

Consent forms for the Qualtrics survey will be collected and stored electronically, in a separate "survey" and file from the data. Participants will be anonymous, with Qualtrics using HTTP referer verification to ensure each person participates only once. One-time-use links at the end of the consent form will connect participants who opt to continue on to the full survey, and branch logic will establish a condition for agreeing to participate for the survey to open. These electronic consent forms will be stored in Qualtrics and on the UKY OneDrive and secure external hard drives, with access afforded only to the research team or required auditors. This data will be kept separate from the survey data file, and will be encrypted. All



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electronically submitted consent forms will be gathered via email for focus groups and interview participants who elect to participate via Zoom. These forms will be printed onto paper, the electronic version will be stored with emails for time required by open records laws, then destroyed. This data will be stored separately from interview & focus group data. Printed consent forms will be stored, alongside any consent forms gathered in paper form in face-to-face data collection, in a locked storage container during the interview or focus group, then transported to a locked cabinet in the PI's office, and stored for five years.

Lists of pseudonyms for participants will describe the participant in broad, anonymous terms, with the data of data collection, a pseudonym, and notes on the participant to ensure the research team can identify the participant in question, but no one else can. This list will be kept separate from consent forms or any other personally-identifiable information.

De-identification of the transcripts, survey data, and PAR Council materials will be conducted by the PI and Research Assistants, who will be trained in current best practices for thoughtful and thorough de-identification by UKY de-identification experts from the Office of Technology Commercialization.

### Zoom and Audio Recordings

Over the course of the project, the project team will create an anticipated 15-40 Zoom recordings which will be saved as .mp3 files (audio-only). These recordings will be created as products of the interviews and focus group meetings. An additional 5-20 audiorecordings will be created on digital audiorecorders during in-person interviews, focus groups, and the PAR Council Symposium. These audiorecordings will be kept in secure files in the UKY OneDrive and on secure external hard drives, and accessible only to the research team, since they cannot be de-identified. Only transcripts will be accessible in the data repository by the general public and professional and scholarly audiences. Any video components of Zoom recordings will be deleted immediately after each interview or focus group.

### Website Materials

The project website will be an HTML site, hosted by the College of Communication and Information at the University of Kentucky. The website will disseminate findings, inform participants and stakeholders of project progress, and include links to surveys, forms and sample questions for interviews and focus groups, allowing people to understand what will be asked of them if they elect to participate, or how the project is collecting data. This website will be maintained for three years after the completion of the project, with links to a data repository for open access. The site will then be archived by the UKY Libraries, working in concert with a digital archivist, so that anyone may access the materials and information hosted there, indefinitely.

### Project Emails

Emails related to the project (in .eml file formats) will be archived and saved by the project team in a secure folder in the University of Kentucky OneDrive and secure external hard drives. Only the research team and internal auditors will have access to this data, though all emails are subject to open records legal requirements. The emails will be retained for three years, then destroyed.

### External Hard Drives

The two external hard drives will be encrypted, password-protected, and secured in locked cabinets, and stored in the PI's and RA's offices until the end of the project. These offices are in separate buildings, and will be stored separately in case of fire, flood, or other catastrophe. After the project is complete, one hard drive will be erased and re-used for the next phase of the project. The second hard drive will be stored in the PI's office indefinitely, to ensure that the data is recoverable in the event of data corruption in the UKnowledge repository.