Rare Book & Manuscript Library (RBML), Columbia University Libraries
Narrative for "Curatorial Duties, Ethics, and Best Practices in Archives and Special Collections for the Next Century"

Introduction

Columbia University Libraries' Rare Book & Manuscript Library (RBML) seeks an award of **$136,134** from the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program. Aligned with program goal number one and objective 1.2, this grant will convene a forum of curators who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and charged with collecting, preserving, and exhibiting special collections and archives materials. The forum will: 1) gather knowledge about the curatorial role and curators' professional development needs, 2) create space for discussing how contemporary curatorial work in archives and special collections is perceived by those working in the positions and those working closely with curators, 3) foster conversations about the ethics and best practices for stewarding collections, and 4) troubleshoot barriers and define pathways into the position. Approximately 15 to 20 curators will be invited to participate in a two-day workshop to be held in April 2025 on Columbia University's campus. The target group of BIPOC curators will create information aimed at beneficiaries, such as aspiring curators, directors who devise curatorial positions and supervise them, and current curators.

"Curatorial Duties, Ethics, and Best Practices in Archives and Special Collections for the Next Century" proposes a forum and deliverables to marshal the expertise and experiential wisdom of BIPOC curators. This project will lay the foundation for articulating contemporary curatorial ethics and best practices in a chapbook, establish an online community of practice for knowledge sharing, survey current curators to discern the state of the field, and foster an educational and mentoring pipeline for the next generation's curators. This proposal details: the current shortage of curatorial educational and professional development opportunities, provides a rationale for gathering specifically BIPOC curators from different types of institutions, explains how creating a forum for discussing curatorial practice and ethics will lead to understanding that is integral to nurturing an inclusive pipeline of next-generation curators, offers the credentials for a team of three archives and libraries professionals who will design the forum activities and execute the deliverables, and outlines a four-phase work plan to be carried out over 18 months.

Project Justification

Columbia University is but one archival collecting institution that adapted the curatorial role from museums for its special collections and archives in the mid-1980s. Rare books and manuscripts were the first types of materials to receive specialized curatorial attention, as distinct from librarianship. Columbia and its peer institutions in the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) formalized the curatorial role by applying it to other types of special collections in the early-to-mid-2000s (e.g. literature, history, oral history, etc.). Lacking the visibility that comes with accountability, curatorial work flies under the radar both as practice, and as a potential career path stewarding collections related to our collective history. The proposed curatorial forum, in its conception,

execution, and deliverables, will apply concentrated attention to how curators shape collections and participate ethically in institutional relationships with communities.

Curators' duties and responsibilities are located at the nexus of three adjacent cultural heritage fields. The first field, museum studies, informs how curators approach acquisitions, collections management, and exhibitions. Within library science, curatorial practice draws on archival science, in particular appraisal, cataloging, metadata, and archives management skills. More broadly, the cultural heritage sector provides archives and special collections curators with the opportunities for debating evolving ethics around critical questions of responsibility to communities and materials. For example, with the rise of repatriation as a mode of institutional accountability, curators can participate with our archivist colleagues in determining reparative processes directed toward creator communities and accountability for previous curatorial decision-making; however, this conversation situates repatriation as making up for *past* mistakes with little conversation about how curators can avoid repeating harms that necessitate repatriation now and in the future.

There are few specialized professional development opportunities for curatorial practice in archives and special collections. It is up to individual curators to arrive at their own ethical positioning and practices. The American Library Association (ALA), Society of American Archivists (SAA), and other professional organizational affinity groups provide excellent support networks, and will be a beneficial connection in outreach to curators. However, absent a professional curatorial association or community of practice of its own, there is no centralized venue for curators to discuss the state of the field nor articulate common ethical standards. Relative invisibility in existing organizations is but one factor in obscuring pathways to curatorial work. The forum's activities will provide this new and generative space for current and future curators to engage ethically with collections, donors, creators, and communities that benefit most from access to archival materials.

Another critical space that will benefit from crystallizing curatorial knowledge are library and information science (LIS) educational programs. In educational institutions and adjacent professional associations there is room to do more in terms of inclusivity and nurturing a pipeline to expand the pool of potential curators. The ALA database of accredited LIS programs does not list curation as a concentration and search results from the SAA's website lean heavily toward data curation. The closest and relevant search result refers to manuscript curation.[1] Library science school websites rarely list curatorial work in archives and special collections as a possible career

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[1] American Library Association, n.d. "Searchable Database of ALA-Accredited Programs." Accessed 15 September 2024. https://www.ala.org/educationcareers/accreditedprograms/directory/search.

possibility.[2] Curation may be deemed too granular an occupational track. Still, LIS programs offer few specific training opportunities related to curation as its own distinct specialization.[3] Otherwise, acknowledgment of curatorial duties is diffused through archival management curricula. Mention of curation in coursework or specialized panels at professional meetings might pique student interest. The curatorial field would benefit from intergenerational connections between curators who fell into the role due to institutional need and early career archival professionals researching curation in special collections. Our proposed forum makes ethical curatorial practice more visible and illustrates the need for more positions using this distinctive set of skills across different institutional types.

Scholarly research literature on the curatorial role as it currently exists is emerging. For a forthcoming book, *Radical Visions: New Perspectives on Special Collections Curatorship* (edited by Agnieszka Czeblakow and Jillian Cuellar), Amy Hildreth Chen surveyed 123 curators with advanced degrees working for the top 25 Association of Research Libraries (ARL) institutions.[4] The edited volume and Chen's chapter move the field forward by analyzing the current state of curatorial practice, as well as helping lay foundations for understanding who the workforce is and what needs to be done to make it more inclusive. To that end, of the curators included in Chen's data set, 63% were women. Race and ethnicity were not queried in this survey; initial research for this proposal suggests approximately 14%, or 17 respondents, might identify as BIPOC. However, white women's predominance in libraries and archives can be inferred, from the American Library Association's (ALA) most recent "Diversity Counts'' 2012 data, which reports that approximately 72% of librarians are white women. Similarly, the Society of American Archivists's (SAA) recent A*Census II results observe that the profession is 84% white, with women making up 71% of the archival profession. Across both fields, librarians and archivists who are white women are the largest demographic by far. Likewise, assuming this is the case for curatorial staffing amongst elite U.S. institutions that collect and maintain archives and special collections, these conditions foster and maintain an elitist and mysterious aura as to how one even becomes an archives or special collections curator.

If awarded, current BIPOC curatorial staff will be invited to a two-day forum for thinking critically about personal and professional ethical obligations as they influence institutional collecting, researcher experience, community relationship building, donor relationships, and the long-term outlook for curatorial labor in the sector.

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[2] In archives and preservation, the concept of curation is typically applied to "digital curation" or data management. Library science schools and research tends to apply the word "curation" to selecting texts for school libraries and curating curricula, rather than the more specific curatorial practice addressed in this proposal. Too, the title, "Curator" is not always used to designate curatorial work. Part of the survey will be to gain a greater understanding of the various titles under which curatorial labor happens in archives and special collections.

[3] One educational offering in this space is the Rare Book School's (RBS) course on Special Collections Curatorship. The RBS' course began in 1983 with a focus on rare books and manuscripts, developed into special collections librarianship by 2010, and today is taught as special collections curatorship (https://rarebookschool.org/courses/library/l10/).

[4] Chen generously shared her research data, which will serve as an excellent foundation for outreach to current curatorial staff and locating BIPOC curators for participation in our proposed forum.

There is much that individual archives and special collections curators will continue to learn and incorporate from museums, libraries, and cultural heritage sectors. The forum will build upon seeds of special collections and archives curation in professional associations and educational programs by creating a new, specialized space for shared curatorial knowledge.

Proposed forum deliverables include: a chapbook for current curators on archives and special collections curatorial ethics, an online community of practice for current curators to connect with similarly-situated colleagues,[5] a survey designed to assess the current state of the field, and planning for a summer curatorial institute for BIPOC LIS students. Additional deliverables are a white paper detailing the forum's thought-process and actionable outcomes to be shared at informational webinars. The informational webinars will be geared toward current curators, LIS students interested in learning more about the curatorial pathway, non-LIS terminal doctoral degree holders similarly considering a curatorial professional path, archives and special collections directors who supervise curatorial staff.

Project Work Plan

Twenty curators will meet over the course of two days on the Columbia University campus in April 2025. The team will commence their work in August 2024 with all deliverables made public by January 2026. As detailed here and in the Schedule for Completion, work for this grant will take place over 18 months in four distinct phrases. This work plan describes how the project team will maximize inclusive participation through initial informal, but goal-oriented conversations with current curators, carry out planning logistics for the in-person forum, conceptualize an efficient and achievable division of labor for deliverables, and create an iterative evaluation process for future sustainability of deliverables. Project tasks, status, and assignees are currently being tracked using the Open Science Foundations' OSF research project management platform; project management will continue with weekly team updates to the OSF and check-ins to solicit feedback and assistance.

The project team administering the grant consists of four members. Kimberly Springer, Curator for Oral History at Columbia University's Oral History Archives at Columbia (OHAC), is the project director charged with designing and overseeing the forum's goals and outcomes beyond the grant period. In her seven years as a curator, she served as the main point of contact for OHAC's major oral history projects, including the Obama Presidency Oral History Project, working with partners internal and external to Columbia University Libraries, as well as donors and funders. Chelsea Reil, an archivist well-versed in both archival and curatorial functions, collaborates

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[5] Ruth Monnier and Nena Schvaneveldt in their article, "Cohorts Building Community: Fostering Connection in Virtual Cohorts" argue convincingly and offer helpful advice for creating and sustaining virtual communities amongst librarians, particularly in light of COVID-19 pandemic conditions and changes to the workplace (*College & Research Libraries News*, Volume 85 Number 2 (6 February 2024)).

with curators to ethically apply archival principles to acquisitions across a range of materials and within varied institutional contexts. Springer and Reil have worked in the past on a large-scale acquisition and collection for Columbia University, putting them in a solid position to reflect on previous conversations about how archivists and curators can work together more productively and ethically with donors, communities, and materials. Kaetrena Davis Kendrick, a librarian, researcher, consultant, and experienced facilitator, was especially sought for this project based on her proven track record in empathetic and engaged leadership coaching and evidence-based research findings about overcoming low morale among marginalized groups in librarianship. Kendrick will provide an empathy-based approach for how to best contact and engage with research libraries and staff across different institutional types, as well. She will also provide necessary checks-and-balances to the Columbia-situated team, highlighting where the team can more closely and consistently align with the forum's inclusivity goals. A part-time assistant (graduate student) will be hired for this project to help manage forum logistics and data collection.

Phase one (August - October 2024) will be used to onboard the core team and explore how current curators define curatorial practice in archives and special collections. In August, the team will generate its list of offline and online spaces where curators and others have conversations about the role, its duties, and responsibilities. "Library/archives Twitter (X)," and other social media channels with galleries, libraries, archives, and museums (GLAM) constituencies are having vibrant conversations about curatorial topics. Intentionally and openly engaging through these channels will be useful for capturing the different roles that are curatorial in nature. Kendrick, Springer, and Reil will define the parameters of curatorial work by asking about the labor and titles associated with curatorial work. Between social media channels, organizational affinity groups, and word of mouth the team will extend our reach to potential participants beyond those named on institutional websites. In September and October, the team will lead two one-hour sessions open to current curators and those with curatorial responsibilities. The first informational session will introduce this project's goals and work. The second session will solicit feedback about the current state of curatorial work and ideas about the forum and its deliverables. These formative conversations will act as initial surveys of the field, as well as help the team reach consensus on what inclusivity means in this realm in a way that maximizes participation. The project team will also gather data for establishing the forum's goals and soliciting buy-in from potential participants.

Based on Reil and Kendrick's recommendations, Springer will conduct personalized outreach with BIPOC curators by phone. Critical at this stage will be speaking with leaders, and if appropriate, members of DEIA-focused organizations and committees, such as the Historically Black Colleges & Universities' Libraries Alliance, SAA's sections on Native American Archives, Accessibility and Disability, Diverse Sexuality and Gender, Latin American & Caribbean Cultural Heritage, and the Joint Conference for Librarians of Color to reach BIPOC curators who are part of these communities. This phase's outcome is a confidential database of potential forum

participants. Also, during this phase, Springer will hire a part-time project assistant to orient them to the budget and logistical tasks for the forum.

Phase two (November 2024 - April 2025) will focus on forum planning and logistics. Springer and the part-time assistant will work closely with the CUL Business Services office. Our tasks will include creating a form to gather information from participants to book flights, hotels, ground transportation, arrange food for the working meetings, gather information for ruminating for their pre-forum preparation and talks given during the forum, securing office supplies for the working groups, and being responsive to any disability adaptations participants share with us.[6]

During this time, Springer and Reil will formalize group activities and working group goals for the forum. With Kendrick's summarizing guidance and data from the phase one conversations, the project team will use results from the survey and phone conversations to develop the forum's two days of activities. This work includes establishing themes, devising the experiential lightning talk format, fine-tuning methods for helping participants align our collective insights with the proposed deliverables, and develop the working groups' structure. Springer and Reil will reconvene with Kendrick online in March 2025 to review progress, share insights about the participants as a body, and assign participants pre-forum information including goals and two relevant shared readings.[7] A short pre-forum webinar will introduce participants to the team, to one another, review a proposed Code of Conduct, and outline the forum's meeting process. The project team wants to ensure that participants feel emotionally supported and equipped to share and receive the experiences that can be challenging to curatorial work on personal, organizational, and societal levels.

Additional work in advance of the forum includes creating methods for capturing data and ideas to inform the white paper's outcomes and recommendations. The project team will develop a template for day two's working group to guide them in aligning with our jointly created vision for the curatorial role; the template will encourage high-level "blue sky" thinking and provide guidance for the practical application of those ideas to the forum deliverables. Our method of facilitating sharing and learning includes two forms of notetaking: a meeting template keyed to granular information gathered (e.g. specific questions to be addressed, tools needed, etc.) and a graphic recorder (i.e. a live event illustrator) capturing general themes and adding visual interest to the large group notes. The event will not be recorded to encourage transparency.

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[6] Our participant survey will note that while the forum will be held in person, the project team will be monitoring the status of respiratory virus guidance. Current reporting notes online meeting fatigue, as well as the reduced levels of engagement and interaction with remote meetings. The project team believes that the nature of personal and professional sharing involved in this forum necessitates in person interaction and attention to social cues that are lost in online interactions.
[7] Depending on outcomes from the informational sessions and Springer's conversations with participants, reading will be selected from Kendrick's existing research and publications:
Published Articles – Kaetrena Davis Kendrick, M.S.L.S..

In April, the forum team and participants will convene in person for the first day's sessions. The day's activities, facilitated by Kendrick, will include opportunities for getting to know one another and sharing lightning talks about the history and context of our curatorial practices at our respective institutions, an assessment of curatorial responsibilities and skills, and aspirations for continued professional development. This will be a full day that invites participants to examine their current thinking about curatorial work, cognitively and emotionally process what they have heard from others, and recognize any shifts in their thinking. Reil and Springer will alternate using the meeting template to take notes in tandem with the graphic recorder's illustrations. Written and graphic notes will be made available to participants to facilitate their overnight meditations on the day's themes in reflection for the second day's working groups. Springer and Reil facilitate and focus the second day's activities on reviewing the previous day's insights and translate them into goals for smaller working groups.

One the second day, participants will divide into four to five participants per working group. The groups will devise a plan to: develop and promote a survey of the current curatorial field (e.g. composition, educational background, skills used, desired skills for continued development, etc.), articulate an early set of principles for an ethics and best practices chapbook for curators, devising the purpose and relevant content streams for an online community of practice, and conceptualize a summer institute for LIS students interested in curation. Forum activities are meant to establish a collegial and empathetic working environment that will nurture a flexible approach for creating a reasonable and functional approach to meeting the group's goals, define what is needed from the grants administration team to complete their deliverable, and, if necessary, scale deliverables appropriately for this grant's duration.

Phase three (May - August 2025) finds the core team reviewing both written and graphic meeting notes independently and then collaboratively to discern strong, common themes. Too, the project team will pay attention to outstanding questions or issues from the forum. The project team will meet with the four working groups at least three times: once to affirm the working groups' remits as they align with the forum summaries, a second time to check in and receive any requests for additional support, and a final meeting to confirm progress and potentially "right-size" deliverables. The project team wants to be sensitive to life circumstances and capacities changing while being responsible for meeting expectations set in this proposal.

Work during this penultimate period will focus on drafting, formatting, and publishing the chapbook, finalizing the white paper's design and content, establishing infrastructure for the online community of practice space, and documenting potential collaborations and funding for the summer institute. This proposal includes an estimate from a Brooklyn-based design firm, Partner & Partners, with a proven track record in working with cultural heritage and educational institutions to provide informative and attractive design. This design firm was also chosen for their ability to consult on website sustainability beyond the grant period, including web archiving

options and options available through Columbia University's Digital Scholarship unit and open resource capabilities. Springer and Reil will liaise with the working groups and design firm to schedule delivery of materials and produce the forum's deliverables. The project team will also summarize the forum findings and work with the design firm to create content for the forum findings' website. Finally, the team will create a format for the specialized informational webinars to disseminate, discuss, and gather feedback about the white paper.

Phase four (September - January 2026) will be used to finalize and launch deliverables by January 2026. This phase will also include Reil and Springer arranging and conducting informational webinars for current curators, curatorially-inclined LIS students, non-LIS doctoral students seeking alternatives to traditional faculty post in archives and special collections curatorial work, and archives and special collections directors. The working groups' products (survey results, chapbook, website, and online community of practice) will feature in the informational webinars. The team will also create a post-webinar survey to assess interest in participating in the community of practice and the summer institute.

Diversity Plan

Contributing to exclusivity in the curatorial role is the workforce's homogeneity in its race and gender composition. White women overwhelmingly hold curatorial positions.[8] While there are notable initiatives to increase accountability and diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) in the field, those efforts are largely geared toward more inclusive collecting, sensitively describing materials, and diversifying archival staff. Less attention is paid to the overwhelming lack of diversity in the curatorial role and how the prestige accorded curators perpetuates elitism and exclusivity in collecting and stewardship.

This proposal's goal is to have curators who identify as BIPOC–whether stewarding collections from communities or color or curating broadly–lead from the front. Beginning with the general curatorial conversations slated for September and October 2024, the team will use an "inverted pyramid" model to cast a net widely to define curatorial work amongst the current population of curators, and irrespective of having the formal title, "curator." Then, from these responses and surveys, BIPOC curators will be invited to the forum and funded in the following priority order to stimulate inclusive participation and perspectives: those from Historically Black Colleges & Universities, from smaller archives and special collections where they may be the lone curatorial staff, and from institutions located *outside* the larger metropolitan areas of New York, Atlanta, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

In surveying curators about participating, potential attendees will be offered space to share any format adaptations or accommodations that will facilitate their participation regardless of physical and/or cognitive

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[8] Absent research on the topic, but extrapolating from hiring and employment trends in librarianship historically, mostly men occupied early curatorial positions. However, similar to librarianship more generally, the position's demographics shifted to women predominating in curatorial posts. The working group's survey will help to fill this knowledge gap with concrete data.

abilities; hopefully, such requests can be met through Universal Design[9] principles, thus surfacing adaptations that make the forum more accessible and productive for everyone. The project team aspires to have a wide age range of curators participating to gain a longitudinal overview of curatorial education in LIS programs and continuing education. Lacking formal curatorial educational tracks, how have current curators supplemented their knowledge base? What has this meant for their engagements with donors and communities? How is experiential knowledge valued and incorporated into formative and continuing educational opportunities, both in person and online?

This plan for inclusion does not assume that BIPOC curators are without biases requiring dismantling, nor is it assumed that BIPOC curators do not hold other types of privilege. Prioritizing BIPOC curators' participation does not discount the importance of allyship in broadening the field. Instead, the intention is to begin the conversation from a place of having acknowledged the field's shortcomings, which are already evident in the aforementioned statistical data. This framework for inclusivity recognizes that intersectionality, as a mode of interpersonal, institutional, political, and societal analysis is, in its intention, about *power* and *how power circulates within specific contexts*. Thus, this proposal approaches diversity as contextual and shifting. The forum's planning, execution, and deliverables will make explicit existing power dynamics and plans for power-sharing that will foster a more inclusive curatorial workforce today and in the future.

Project Results

Harnessing the considerable talents of BIPOC curators in organizing diverse communities within and outside institutional workplaces and professional associations will establish a strong foundation for documenting past and present curatorial practices. The forum's conversations, subsequent survey, and resulting chapbook are just the beginning of a rich conversation about curatorial work in archives and special collections. These materials will seed the online community of practice and stimulate interest in leading, teaching, and mentoring summer institute participants. Bringing clarity to the curatorial role will strengthen archives and special collections staff by acknowledging an emerging set of ethics that includes accountability to archivist colleagues. Collectively our knowledge contributes to a healthy and sustainable whole in special collections and archives.

Coalescing curatorial knowledge gained from this experience into a case study for submission to *Collections: a Journal for Museum and Archives Professionals* will document this moment. In the long-term, archives and special collections users will benefit by reaching consensus about best practices that are sensitive to context, thus improving collecting methods and knowledge about care for materials. Too, gathering curators across institutions types, with varying budgets for acquisitions, will greatly expand our local, regional, and national

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[9] For a helpful understanding of Universal Design, please see The UD Project's explanation:
https://universaldesign.org/definition.

perspectives on materials and their value with respect to cultural traditions as they make up the mosaic of our shared U.S. history.

Working toward diversifying the workforce and retaining talent invested in shared ethics will generate new curatorial ideas for more inclusive and culturally sensitive acquisition practices, as well as greater accessibility and engagement with archives and special collections. The white paper and recorded informational webinars will demystify the curatorial role within archives and special collections, bring visibility to this work as a career option for LIS and doctoral students, and help high-level administrators understand how curatorial positions make their staffs stronger through their specialized knowledge and activities that make collections more accessible. Future curators will revisit the white paper as they continue working ethically with sellers and donors, responsibly acquiring and stewarding collections, and collaborating effectively and respectfully with colleagues throughout their organizations. The chapbook, in addition to documenting one aspect of the field at this particular historical moment, will lay the groundwork for future definitive manuals or other output on curatorial ethics, statements, and practices. The online community of practice is intended to have a low-barrier to entry, serving as a resource for current and aspiring curators. Ideally, the community's infrastructure will be supported by an existing cultural heritage or higher education nonprofit platform, such as H-Net (Humanities and Social Sciences Online). Our intention is to take lessons from the forum and iterate on the processes used there to make the summer institute an inclusive, educational reality in 2027.

In summary, this proposal will document and implement curatorial thinking beyond traditional structural boundaries. Ultimately, the forum will serve as a template for helping the curatorial profession live up to the 21st ideals of rigor, integrity, and service espoused by the archives and special collections sector of our intellectual and cultural heritage institutions.

PHASE	DETAILS	AUG '24	SEPT '24	OCT '24	NOV '24	DEC '24	JAN '25	FEB '25	MAR '25	APR '25	MAY '25	JUN '25	JUL '25
1	Orientation to project	X											
1	Generation of list of online/offline spaces for inquiry and questions for engagement	X	X										
1	Open session one online		X										
1	Open session two online			X									
1	Summarize findings and creating contacts database			X									
1	Personal outreach to potential forum participants			X									
2	Forum logistics planning begins (reserving space, travel, accommodations, etc.				X	X	X	X	X				
2	Formalize forum activities and working group goals					X	X	X					
2	Progress review and reconvene with research consultant/facilitator								X				
2	Pre-forum orientation webinar for participants								X				
2	Develop data capture modes (written/graphic)							X	X	X			
2	Two day forum held									X			
3	Wrap up logistics (e.g. payments, reimbursements, etc.)										X	X	
3	Consultation with design firm and printer to receive guidance for submitting materials for review and revision										X	X	
3	Review and summarize data for white paper										X		
3	White paper drafting and revision											X	X
3	Create informational webinar format for four specialized audiences											X	X
3	Develop template for working group check ins (e.g. meeting schedule, progress, needs, scaling)										X		
3	Working groups convene to: 1) design and execute survey, 2) develop online community of practice themes and code of conduct/moderation method, 3) develop summer institute ideal themes, curriculum, and instructors										X	X	X
3	Working group check in #1: remit clarity/needs											X	
3	Working group check in #2: progress report												X

PHASE	DETAILS	JUL '25	AUG '25	SEPT '25	OCT '25	NOV '25	DEC '25	JAN '26
4	Working group check in #3: finalize content and submission instructions for upload to OSF repository		▓					P R O J E C T C O N C L U D E S
	Submit finished chapbook to printer for printing and binding			▓				
	Submit website copy and working group	▓	▓					
	Launch online community of practice and release white paper			▓				
	Hold four informational webinars for current curators, directors, aspiring curator LIS students, and aspiring curators non-LIS degree holders; solicit feedback from attendees				▓	▓		
	Summarize informational webinar feedback						▓	
	Draft article for submission to *Collections* journal						▓	
	Finalize OSF repository content						▓	
	Draft and finalize internal assessment and next steps documentation							

INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL PRODUCTS

This document details plans for the creation, use, maintenance, and sustainability of digital products created in service to the proposal, "Curatorial Duties, Ethics, and Best Practices in Archives and Special Collections for the Next Century."

The digital products will be the outcome of 20 curators' creative thinking and labor produced during a two-day forum in April 2025, as well as the grant administration team's data gathering and analysis of forum findings. The participants will collaborate as a large group on day one to determine the parameters and responsibilities of curatorial work in archives and special collections. Then, on day two, the attendees will join a working group, each with responsibility for creating a digital product.

Those products are:

- a **chapbook** (40 pages maximum; 150 copies) that will be printed and available as an electronic .pdf document,
- a **survey** of curators currently actively engaged in archives and special collections curatorial work,
- an **online community of practice** for current and aspiring curators, and
- **ideas for the content and structure of a summer institute** for LIS students who aspire to be curators to be documented in a wiki.

Additionally, two dedicated staff members (the project director and archival consultant) will work closely with the participants, a graphic illustrator, and a design firm to offer guidance on scheduling, coordinate content production, offer assistance and supplies where needed, and manage an overall editorial calendar to complete all digital production materials by the grant's conclusion in January 2026. The grants administrators will also be charged with consulting on design and content of the following digital products:

- a Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA compliant **website** that serves as a portal to all resources (e.g. white paper .pdf, chapbook .pdf, informational webinar recordings, a link to the survey and later to survey findings, a link to accessing the online community of practice, a link to the OSF publicly available repository),
- a **white paper** available as a .pdf that summarizes the forum's goals and findings about curatorial practice today,
- a case study about the forum, its deliverables, and reflection on process submitted for inclusion in *Collections: a Journal for Museum and Archives Professionals*,
- backup copies of the **informational forum video files**, and

- editing and uploading the working groups deliverables to OSF[1] (e.g. chapbook .pdf, survey raw data and summary findings .pdf, description of online community of practice areas, summer institute ideation).

RIGHTS AND PRIVACY

Other than the graphic illustrations and written notes, the forum's proceedings will be neither audio nor video recorded to encourage attendees' openness and transparency. If the graphics are used to illustrate the chapbook, white paper, or website, the images will be checked for anonymity and generalizability to the theme addressed. Should we wish to include a direct quotation from an attendee, they will be consulted personally for approval before inclusion.

The white paper, website content, and chapbook will be licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0, Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 International.

Though the platform for the online community of practice is yet to be determined, low barriers to entry and participation will be prioritized, as will significant privacy safeguards. Initially, membership will be limited to current curators, unless the working group offers a rationale for a space dedicated to aspiring curators, current LIS students, etc.

FILE TYPES, AVAILABILITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY

All digital products will be freely available via persistent URLs.

With IMLS funding, the website will have a year's hosting for the white paper, chapbook, informational webinar videos, and summary survey findings.

All files will be saved according to the Library of Congress' accepted standards: the chapbook, survey findings, and. white paper as PDF/A files, the informational webinar video files will be recorded via Zoom and saved as MPEG-4 files , and the website crawled by the Libraries' instance of Archive-It for open and persistent preservation.

Our central working hub is the Open Science Foundation's robust and free open platform, OSF. OSF is already used to manage the grant proposal's development and will be the main tool for ensuring the digital products' sustainability beyond IMLS/LB21 funding. The white paper, chapbook, and survey results will be uploaded to OSF as a safeguard repository.

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[1] OSF is the Center for Open Sciences' free research and collaboration platform. Springer has used this platform for project management and introducing students to online publishing since 2020. She has found it to be a stable repository and excellent tool for learning and sharing skills conducive to open publishing.