IMLS Early Career Research:
A Dialogue with Program Officers and Awardees

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ABSTRACT

External funding presents an opportunity for early career scholars to jumpstart their research agenda post-PhD. One funding opportunity available in the library and information science (LIS) field is the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian (LB21) Early Career Research award. What is the IMLS LB21 Early Career Research (EC) award? Learn more in this 90-minute interactive session that will include five primary activities: IMLS Funding Overview, Panelist Presentations, Attendee Breakout Discussion, Panel Discussion, and Reporting Back. Attendees will gain a better understanding of the EC funding opportunity available at IMLS; learn about first-hand experiences from EC awardees; reflect on their own career trajectories with peers; and evaluate potential next steps for funding their research agenda.

IMLS FUNDING OVERVIEW (5min): First, the IMLS staff will poll the attendees to better understand their experience and familiarity applying for grants from IMLS in order to tailor the focus of the presentation. Staff will then provide an overview of the funding opportunities available to the LIS community, including but not limited to the LB21 EC program.

PANELIST PRESENTATIONS (20min):

Several recent awardees will briefly speak about their experience applying for and managing their EC research awards. Panelists will be asked to discuss their reasons for choosing to apply to IMLS and to the EC category and to consider in what ways the project category benefitted or constrained their research goals. They can discuss the application process and considerations for those interested in applying.

Panelists are varied in terms of career stage, EC award stage, university affiliation, and research interests within LIS:

Dr. Cifor is in the second year of her award titled "[Valuing Library and Archives Labor: Assessing Internship and Fellowship Implications for the Library and Archives Community];"

Dr. Donaldson completed his award titled "[Bridging the Gap between Scientists, Institutional Repositories and Data Management Practices]" in late 2023;

Dr. Hands is in the third year of her award titled "[Public Library Support of College Literacy in Appalachia - Project CLiA];" and

Dr. Kitzie completed her award titled "[Examining Public Library Service to LGBTQ+ Communities for Health Information]" in early 2023.

ATTENDEE BREAKOUT DISCUSSION (40min):

Prompted by the introduction to IMLS funding opportunities and the four panelist EC award overviews, all session attendees will be organized into small groups. Attendees will be asked to take a few minutes to consider their own career trajectory – whether they are early career and considering applying to IMLS or whether they have already received tenure and want to learn the nuance of how to mentor early career colleagues. While the exact nature of the room configuration will depend on the number of attendees, we will ask that folks physically move their chairs to be able to speak with one another. Panelists and IMLS staff will each join different groups or serve as floaters to answer questions and facilitate small group conversations. These personalized small group discussions will provide the space for individuals to consider an IMLS application and to ask questions in the moment, with the aim of reducing barriers to application.

PANEL DISCUSSION (20min):

The session will then reconvene for a discussion among panelists. Moderator questions will probe further into how the EC award has increased awardees' capacity for research, teaching, and service to the department and the field. To what extent did the funding and/or external support systems ensure the proposed project goals were met? Panelists will be asked to consider how the award has changed or adapted their pedagogical approaches – how were the research findings incorporated into the classroom, early and often? Expecting that the teaching component of a scholars' journey is not discrete from their research, panelists will be prodded to further explore how the award has been integrated into their broader, ongoing teaching and mentoring activities.

Panelists will be asked to consider to what extent the proposed purpose of the award, "support the research of untenured tenure-track library and information science faculty,

furthering the faculty member's long-term research agenda, career trajectory, and professional development" is true to their experience. Panelists who have completed their EC award will be asked to consider next steps, including to what extent receiving an IMLS award, or an EC award in particular, has or has not contributed to their application for tenure. Panelists will be asked to explain what they would do differently if they were just beginning to consider applying for funding. What did they wish they knew then that they know now?

REPORTING BACK (5min):

Finally, IMLS wants to hear back from all session attendees. IMLS hopes to "develop faculty, library, and archives leaders," including supporting the "research of untenured tenure-track library and information science faculty." What advice do all attendees have for IMLS to better meet these stated goals of the LB21 program? What do you need from IMLS? Do you feel like you can apply to IMLS to support your research and career goals, and if not, what are the barriers?

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

education programs/schools; teaching faculty; pedagogy; scholarly communications; research methods.

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

funding; early career faculty; research agenda; career trajectory; professional development