Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the NEH Division of Preservation and Access application guidelines at https://www.neh.gov/grants/preservation/preservation-and-access-education-and-training for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Preservation and Access staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: Digital POWRR Professional Development Institute for Digital Preservation

Institution: Northern Illinois University

Project Director: Jaime Schumacher

Grant Program: Preservation and Access Education and Training

Digital POWRR Professional Development Institutes for Digital Preservation: Narrative

1. Project Impact and the Significance of the Humanities Collections to be Served

This proposal addresses many cultural heritage institutions and information professionals' need for improved awareness of and skills relating to the standards, processes, and tools used to curate and preserve digital objects. This need is especially acute among practitioners employed at non-elite institutions responsible for the curation and preservation of cultural heritage materials of historically marginalized groups, including Native Americans, African Americans, and members of the Latinx community. They often lack the large financial resources necessary to purchase integrated, cloud-based digital preservation applications; retain a full-time programmer for the implementation of extensive open-source software; and keep staff members abreast of new developments in this rapidly changing field. While librarians and archivists at smaller organizations facing financial limits may be aware that digital materials are subject to loss in a variety of ways, they often lack familiarity with the wide array of relatively simple open-source tools available to meet this threat or how they may assemble them into a workflow. Many also lack a sense of membership in a network of professionals addressing similar challenges.

The proposed project will support efforts to preserve and improve access to humanities collections by planning and presenting five professional development events, each instructing thirty practitioners and lasting 2.5 days. At each event participants will become familiar with best practices and a number of available open-source tools; work with institute staff members to create a local digital preservation workflow for their organization, comprised of a set of tools appropriate to their needs; and develop a network of practitioners at similar institutions.

If funded, these events would extend the Digital POWRR Project (POWRR) at Northern Illinois University (NIU) Libraries. POWRR began in 2012 with an Institute for Museum and Library Services-funded white paper study of digital preservation challenges and potential solution models at medium-sized and smaller institutions with fewer financial, technical, or personnel resources. In the course of disseminating study results, project team members developed a one-day instructional workshop for members of their target audience. In 2014 and 2017, the project received additional funding from IMLS and NEH for programs that presented seventeen workshops and five two-day institute events, respectively, around the United States. The institutes expanded on the workshop curriculum by providing participants with an opportunity to review their institution's digital collections and preservation capacity, consult with a member of the institute's instructional staff about their situation, and devise a specific action plan for developing a digital preservation workflow at their institution. Information professionals evaluating past Digital POWRR institute events have emphasized that their practical, hands-on approach meets a large need. Many have also noted that they would have benefited from more time for direct consultation with instructors about their institution's specific needs and time to experiment with individual tools and services introduced in the workshop. The 2.5-day format proposed here will provide attendees with more time for review of local practices and expert consultation, as well as experimentation with individual tools, than the previous POWRR institute format.

Project staff members will work with organizations and practitioners serving Native American, African American, and Latinx cultural heritage communities to solicit application materials from potential participants. While the program will especially emphasize bringing its events to the attention of practitioners responsible for humanities materials reflecting these communities' histories and cultures, it will actively recruit and admit archivists and librarians from all organizations within its target population of medium-sized or smaller institutions lacking large financial resources.

All attendees will participate free of charge, and representatives of institutions showing need may receive travel stipends, which are typically in the $300-500 range. Applicants may demonstrate need by providing a letter or email from a supervisor stating that their institution presently lacks the funds to support the applicant's attendance at a specific project event. During a past POWRR program consisting of single day events which trained 370 professionals, travel scholarships totaling $7,600 were awarded to 26 individuals showing need for assistance, with an average stipend amount of $292.31. A subsequent program presenting two-day events trained 150 participants from 150 organizations. Sixty-seven individuals were awarded $28,028 in travel funds, with an average stipend amount of $418.33.

Should the public health situation or other events make in-person events impossible, project leaders will use Zoom technology, per the recommendation of Jason Underwood, Director of Instructional Design and Development at Northern Illinois University's Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, to hold institute events online. They will consult with National Endowment for the Humanities Division of Preservation and Access program officers in order to determine how to reallocate funds presently identified for travel expenses to expand the total number of events made available or expand the number of participants.

The proposed project will assist attending practitioners with the preservation of a wide variety of humanities collections. Although it is impossible to identify specific collections before individual institute participants have been identified, the project's emphasis on reaching smaller organizations has in the past contributed to the preservation of uniquely important collections. For example, staff members of the Somali Documentary Project attended a POWRR institute event and described how they sought to preserve digital photographs recording Somali immigration to the Upper Midwest. A participant from the Hawai'i Plantation Museum described how the curriculum would help her to preserve a collection consisting of digital copies made from early- to mid-twentieth-century video of local plantation work and conditions. Another participant from a museum of African American dance used POWRR training to design a workflow to preserve digitized photographs of specific performances more effectively.

The proposed project would provide training activities quite different than those presently available in the field. These include several online learning products. High-quality programs, such as those provided by the Northeast Document Conservation Center and Lyrasis, as well as the Association of American Archivists' Digital Archives Specialist (DAS) training, provide on-demand instructional materials and in many cases certification. Nevertheless, their cost may prohibit some practitioners, including many in this program's target audience, from taking part.

Free-use online materials can address this issue, but they also raise several potential difficulties. Syllabi and recorded web series are widely available, but most free-use, online digital preservation training requires a great deal of individual direction and effort on the part of the learner, who must determine what new knowledge they require, find appropriate materials, evaluate the relevance of those materials, review those they have selected, and judge when they have successfully covered enough of the subject to have sufficiently mastered it. Free-use, online materials typically also provide no opportunity to pose questions or ask for clarification of specific points in the curriculum provided.

In-person training workshops can provide librarians and archivists with direct instruction, but again the costs of registration and travel can limit many professionals' ability to participate. In addition, unless provided with additional post-event resources, participants can only refer to their own memory and notes when seeking to implement what they have learned. The proposed project will provide practitioners selected for participation with intensive in-person instruction and will also make digital PDF documents and instructional modules featuring institute curriculum material available on the POWRR web site at no charge for participants' future reference and the use of all who did not attend the event.

The proposed project will provide instruction to a total of 150 participants (30 at each event). Each institution will be asked to submit an application for a single representative in order to reach the maximum of 150 institutions.

Institute events will combine several types of activities: A) traditional classroom instruction; B) extensive hands-on experience with open-source digital preservation tools, emphasizing how to combine them into a workflow best suited to a specific institution's collections and its organizational strengths and weaknesses; C) individual consulting sessions with a program instructor discussing how to select tools and assemble them into a workflow; and D) cohort discussions among practitioners facing similar situations. Each institute is typically comprised of six cohorts of five individuals.

2. Methodology and Work Plan

The proposed program will include the following elements and activities:

First, project staff members will ask individuals seeking to attend a Digital POWRR institute to include in their application a description of their organization, its service community, and its available resources; the nature and extent of its digital collections and a description of a specific collection that will be the subject of their institute activities; their own previous training; and the specific benefits that they hope to gain from attendance. This information will help project staff members to select individuals from within the program's target audience and organize them into cohorts sharing common needs, concerns, and goals for group activities. It will also serve as the basis of an online document that will grow into their customized online plan (POWRR Plan) for digital preservation activities at their institution.

Project staff members will ask participants selected to take part in an institute to provide additional details about their organization to their online POWRR Plan before the event date.

This information will include a description of their organization's technical infrastructure and available personnel; the nature of its digital collections, including (if possible) formats and storage media in use; existing policies and workflows related to digital preservation; and their high-level goals for digital preservation capacity. They will also ask participants to describe their institution's current capacity for digital curation and preservation by means of the NDSA Levels of Digital Preservation chart.

Project institutes will use the following schedule:

DAY ONE:

8:45 – 10:30 AM: An introductory session, 105 minutes in length, will discuss institute deliverables and expectations, present the POWRR approach to the Digital Preservation Lifecycle, discuss the National Digital Stewardship Alliance's (NDSA) Levels of Digital Preservation, and review commonly used preservation models and packages.

10:45 AM – Noon: Participants will separate into cohort groups of five individuals for sharing circles, each led by one instructor, and initial group consultation sessions, during a period of 75 minutes. Each cohort will meet their staff advisor and each member will be allotted time to introduce themselves and their institutional situation as it relates to the Digital Preservation Lifecycle. Each advisor will guide participants through a group consultation identifying and discussing at-risk collections, at-hand resources, and short-term goals. Each participant will capture this information in their own POWRR Plan.

Participants will break for one hour at noon for lunch, which will be provided.

1:00 – 3:30 PM (including a short break): The Walk the Workflow module will provide each participant with an opportunity to proceed through an entire digital preservation workflow made up of open-source tools using a provided sample data set, allowing them to envision how a workflow can be set up and deployed locally based on their institutional needs and capabilities.

3:45 – 4:45 PM: The Storage 101 module will discuss viable options for short-term and long-term storage of digital materials at different price points.

DAY TWO:

8:45 – 10:15: The Digital Preservation in the Wild module will review existing workflows developed by peer organizations at previous POWRR institutes (see https://coptr.digipres.org/Workflow:Community_Owned_Workflows) or the workflows published by the Educopia Institute as part of the OSSArcFlow program and discuss options for local implementation.

10:30 – Noon: PROUD/Consultations/Tech Skills Lab

> *PROUD* (Portable Recovery of Unique Data) – Participants will learn what equipment they need to rescue data from obsolete digital media they have in-

house and how to do so; learn how to write-protect several types of digital media; and learn what a disk image is and how to capture one from several types of digital media.

Tech Skills Lab will provide extended hands-on experience with selected open-source digital preservation software, with support of instructors, while others attend a consulting session, PROUD, or TECH 201. Those completing a consulting session may return to Tech Skills Lab.

Consultations – Each participant will receive an individual 45-minute consultation, building on Day One's small group meeting, that will define a local workflow for the participant to pilot based on identified at-risk collection, local resources, and goals that are mapped to the NDSA levels.

Participants will break for one hour at noon for lunch, which will be provided.

1 – 2:30 PM: TECH 201/Consultations/Tech Skills Lab

Tech 201 – Participants will explore the workflows associated with digital preservation. In particular they will review digital preservation skills such as how to extract files in an operating system and how to work with a command line interface. They will also discuss virtual machines and their applicability to digital preservation.

2:45 – 4:15: PROUD/Consultations/Tech Skills Lab

4:15 – 4:45: Cohort Sharing Circles & Whole Group Review

DAY THREE:

8:45 – 10:15: TECH 201/Consultations/Tech Skills Lab

10:30 – Noon: Consultations/Tech Skills Lab

Noon: Lunch and Evaluation Activity, followed by dismissal

Project staff members will begin the development of a new institute curriculum based on the broad outline of that used in past institute events, with considerable revision reflecting new developments in the field and input from representatives of the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums; the Latino Digital Archives Group; and Information Professionals of the Association for the Study of African American Life.

Project leaders will host the first project institute at NIU's Naperville, Illinois, branch campus in November, 2022. The third project institute will also be held at this facility in November, 2023. This modern facility is located near a large number of organizations responsible for African

American humanities materials, including the members of the Black Metropolis Research Consortium, which will assist with the recruitment of practitioners for all events. Numerous organizations for Latinx materials can be found in the area as well. Naperville is also an appropriate location for two institutes because of its relative proximity to both Chicago airports and the wealth of reasonably priced hotels and restaurants within a short walk of the NIU branch campus there. Organizers will promote the Naperville events heavily in the eastern one-third of the nation and assume that many attending practitioners will arrive by air. Experience in previous POWRR projects has shown that high hotel and restaurant costs in large northeastern cities make hosting institute events in these locations impracticable within a realistic project budget including financial assistance for participant travel.

The second and fourth institute events will take place in May, 2023 and May, 2024, respectively, in Tempe, Arizona, in conjunction with Arizona State University Libraries. Tempe's location in the American Southwest places it relatively near many organizations responsible for the curation of Latinx and Native American humanities materials. Practitioners from Arizona, as well as others from Southern California and New Mexico, may reach it by car. It is also readily accessible by air. A large number of reasonably priced hotels and restaurants exist near the Arizona State University campus and May events will take place outside of that area's high tourist season, which generally falls in the winter months. POWRR has held a previous institute event at Arizona State University Libraries with success.

The final event will be held at Oklahoma State University Libraries in Stillwater, Oklahoma in November, 2024. Located in central Oklahoma, Stillwater is a short distance away from many Native American nations and organizations holding Native American humanities materials. It is also within driving distance of large number of Latinx-serving institutions and organizations in Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico. It can be reached by air via the nearby cities of Tulsa and Oklahoma City.

Upon the completion of the final institute, project leaders will engage in summative evaluation activities through February, 2025, and prepare a report for Endowment officials.

Please see the detailed Plan of Work (Attachment 4) for additional discussion of activities related to the planning, promotion, presentation, and evaluation of these project events.

Project leaders and staff members will track progress toward intended results by reviewing institute participants' evaluations of their event experiences, as well as engaging in formative evaluation activities with instructors, consultants, cohort leaders, and the event facilitator. These processes will produce revisions of and additions to institute curricula as needed. Project leaders and staff members will share project outcomes and results in reports presented to the National Endowment for the Humanities and on the Digital POWRR Project's blog, Twitter feed, and web page. A project Slack channel will allow participants an opportunity to share questions, concerns, and discussion, as will its Twitter feed and blog.

The proposed program addresses a topic of great importance for many libraries and archives. Beginning in the late 1990s, many practitioners moved forward with the mass digitization of analog collection materials, in part based on the belief that the use of digital formats contributed

to analog collections' preservation. Research and experience soon showed that digital materials were themselves subject to loss for a number of reasons, including hardware and software obsolescence, and large losses in fact occurred. The emergence of large born-digital collections has only re-emphasized the importance of developing robust policies and techniques for the preservation of digital materials.

This program will address an audience of librarians and archivists who, although they may have received professional training and certification in their field and be aware of the need to preserve digital materials, are often presently unable to find a practicable solution to the problem of digital loss. Organizers will direct admitted practitioners to online modules developed by earlier POWRR projects covering more basic issues in digital preservation as prerequisites: https://digitalpowrr.niu.edu/digital-preservation-101/digital-powrr-webinar/.

The program will charge no registration fee and make travel stipends available to practitioners demonstrating need.

The program's structure, in which participants take part in a variety of activities, is appropriate for a topic that requires a variety of skills and attributes, ranging from general awareness of the elements of a digital preservation workflow to specific technical skills and the confidence necessary to develop a unique workflow for a single institution's needs.

Project staff members will make those portions of the curriculum except Tech Skills Lab, cohort, and individual consulting activities available online in PDF and digital module formats for free use on the POWRR web site. Practitioners corresponding with POWRR staff members have reported extensive usage of open-access curricular materials developed for POWRR's previous professional development events.

The project institutes will produce 150 librarians and archivists returning to their institutions benefiting from:

- awareness of the levels of digital preservation and curation capacity that an institution might achieve and what levels they seek in their local practice;
- familiarity with best practices in the field, as well as leading open-source digital preservation tools and services;
- possession of a custom digital preservation workflow (POWRR Plan) made up of tools and services suited to their local needs, abilities, and resources;
- awareness of and preparation for known factors that might impede progress toward achieving their goals and strategies for addressing those factors;
- membership in a community of practice supporting their own efforts and the opportunity to offer support to other practitioners attempting to engage in similar curation and preservation activities;
- increased confidence in their own and their institution's abilities to achieve increasing levels of proficiency in the preservation of digital materials as measured by the Levels of Digital Preservation.

In accomplishing the above this program will impact the curation of digital collections at organizations responsible for humanities collections at the national level, especially among information professionals serving historically marginalized populations who may presently lack access to reliable, affordable professional development opportunities in the field. It will enable these individuals and practitioners to curate and preserve materials in keeping with internationally recognized best practices. This will, in turn, make their materials available to the large group of users in their local communities and, in many cases, the United States and the wider world.

3. Participant recruitment and outreach

Program administrators will use available methods, including national and regional archives and library and museum professionals' organizational listservs, websites, and newsletters to make the events known to practitioners in the field. In addition, they will work with organizations representing institutions and practitioners serving the Native American, African American, and Latinx communities to reach individuals who would benefit from attending a program event. Organizations reaching practitioners responsible for Native American materials will include the Sustainable Heritage Network and the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums. The Black Metropolis Research Consortium and individual members of the Information Professionals of the Association for the Study of African American Life will bring project events to the attention of practitioners responsible for African American materials. The Latino Digital Archive Group will assist with outreach to practitioners responsible for Latinx materials.

4. Evaluation:

Institute evaluation activities will include formative and summative aspects and focus on how the program helped participants to reach the following outcomes:

1. raise awareness of the levels of digital preservation and curation capacity that an institution might achieve and what levels they seek in their local practice;
2. increase familiarity with best practices in the field, as well as leading open-source digital preservation tools and services;
3. develop a custom digital preservation workflow (POWRR Plan) made up of tools and services suited to their local needs, abilities, and resources;
4. raise awareness of and preparation for known factors that might impede progress toward achieving their goals with strategies for addressing those factors;
5. join a community of practice supporting their own efforts while offering the opportunity to support to other practitioners attempting to engage in similar curation and preservation activities; and
6. develop increased confidence in their own and their institution's abilities to achieve increasing levels of proficiency in the preservation of digital materials as measured by the NDSA Levels of Digital Preservation.

The project will retain Lisa Morehead-Hillman, an independent consultant and member of the Karuk Tribe, to contribute to the design of evaluation materials and perform specific formative evaluation activities, including review of participants' and staff members' assessments of all

events and an in-person evaluation of a single event, in order to improve subsequent events. She will also perform a detailed summative evaluation of project activities as the grant period comes to a close and produce a final report evaluating all aspects of the project.

Project staff members engaging in formative evaluation will review data that institute staff members gather from participants, including pre- and post-tests documenting any change in participants' awareness, skills, and membership status as expressed in the six points of emphasis listed on page seven of this document and in the first paragraph of this section (awareness, familiarity, skill level, etc.). Post-tests will include a survey completed at the end of the event itself, as well as a six-month follow-up survey, which asks participants to evaluate their own progress toward better digital preservation practices through the use of the NDSA Levels of Digital Preservation. These measures have proved effective in conjunction with preceding POWRR professional development events. Please see Attachment 7 for copies of the end-of-event and six-month survey documents used in a previous project.

Past POWRR activities include a program presenting workshop (one day) events which trained 370 professionals representing 221 institutions, 30 states (including Washington, DC), and 10 Native American tribes and cultural heritage institutions. The project awarded travel scholarships totaling $7,600 to 26 individuals showing need for assistance, with an average stipend amount of $292.31. Event participants provided strongly positive evaluations upon completion of the workshop.

POWRR's subsequent program of two-day institutes trained 150 participants from 150 organizations. These included practitioners responsible for materials of a number of Native American tribes, including Nisqually, Chugachmiut, Iñupiat, Maskwacis Cultural College, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and the Mashpee Wampanoag. It awarded over $28,028 in travel funds to sixty-seven individuals, with an average stipend award of $418.33.

Among participants at these events who completed a post-workshop survey, 93.3% reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that they had an increased knowledge of digital preservation information and techniques; 97% reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that they had an actionable digital preservation plan for their institution; and 78.8% responding to the six-month follow-up survey reported measurable progress on specific digital preservation goals. These evaluation tools also informed project staff members that attending practitioners desired more time to meet individually with instructors in order to consult about their institution's specific digital preservation needs.

Staff, Faculty, and Consultants

Project personnel for each of the proposed institutes will consist of a Principal Instructor, Associate Instructor, and Third Instructor, as well as two Technical Instructors and an event facilitator, who will lead cohort groups and liaise with local facility managers.

The following persons make up the proposed project staff:

Jaime Schumacher is Senior Director of Digital Collections and Scholarship at Northern Illinois University Libraries. She will serve as Principal Investigator while leading the design of the program curriculum and will contribute to the administration of the project budget and planning of project activities. She will also serve as the Principal Instructor at institute events.

Drew VandeCreek is Director of Digital Scholarship at Northern Illinois University Libraries. He will serve as co-Principal Investigator, collaborating with Jaime Schumacher on the administration of the project budget and the planning of project activities. He will serve as an event facilitator as needed.

Sarah Cain is Curator of Rare Books and Special Collections and Assistant Professor at Northern Illinois University Libraries. She will serve as event facilitator.

Stacey Erdman is Digital Preservation and Curation Officer and Acting Digital Repository Manager at Arizona State University Libraries. She will assist Jaime Schumacher in the design of the project curriculum and evaluation materials and serve as an Associate Instructor at institute events.

Martin Kong is Systems Librarian at Chicago State University Libraries. He will serve as a Technical Instructor, leading the Tech Skills 201 module. He will also meet with participant cohorts and provide consulting and advice on POWRR Plan design to individual participants.

Dorothea Salo is Distinguished Faculty Associate at the University of Wisconsin iSchool. She will serve as a Technical Instructor, presenting a module discussing PROUD, as well as meeting with participant cohorts and providing consulting and advice on POWRR Plan design to individual participants.

Danielle Spalenka is Associate Curator of Digital Projects at the Filson Historical Society in Louisville, Kentucky. She will serve as Third Instructor in at least one POWRR institute event.

Patrice-Andre Prud'homme is Director of Digital Curation at the Oklahoma State University Archives. He will serve as Third Instructor at the institute event to be held at Oklahoma State University, responsible for advising a cohort and providing consulting on individual POWRR Plans.

Aaisha Haykal is Manager of Archival Services at the Avery Center for African American History and Culture at the College of Charleston, in Charleston, South Carolina. She will act as Third Instructor in at least one POWRR institute event. She will also work with others to design project curricular and evaluation materials.

Lisa Morehead-Hillman is an Independent Information Services Consultant. She is a founding member of the Karuk Tribe Digital Repository. She will serve as the project's evaluation consultant.

Tabitha Samuels is Assistant Professor and Digital Archivist at the Waring Historical Library in Charleston, South Carolina.

For more details about project personnel, please see attachments 2 and 3.