California Humanities'
2020 Schwartz Prize Nomination
Library Innovation Lab

LIBRARY INNOVATION LAB PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Library Innovation Lab: Exploring New Ways of Engaging Immigrant Communities through Public Humanities Programming is an ongoing program created by California Humanities to support responsive and relevant public humanities programming in California's public libraries. Each year, we provide a yearlong practice-based, capacity-building, professional development experience for 10 library programming specialists. Grant awards of $5,000 furnish venture capital to enable the design and delivery of innovative programming to provide welcoming experiences for immigrants and foster more inclusive communities. Over the last four years, almost 33,000 Californians have been engaged in programming provided by 42 partner libraries, including 10 in 2019. Faced with the challenges posed by COVID-19, our 2020 cohort is now experimenting with various types of virtual and physically distanced public programming. Library Innovation Lab (LIL) has established a sustainable model that leverages an initial investment into building long-term programming capacity and expands our statewide network of public humanities provider partners.

PURPOSE

Backstory

Library Innovation Lab: Exploring New Ways of Engaging Immigrant Communities Through Public Humanities Programming (LIL), developed from California Humanities current strategic framework, which places renewed organizational emphasis on ensuring that inclusive, relevant, and responsive public humanities programs are provided for *all* Californians. Immigrants are a significant sector of California's population: California has the largest immigrant population of any state; 27% of current residents are immigrants, and almost half the state's children have at least one immigrant parent. From previous experience, we knew that immigrant populations have not always been adequately served by traditional public humanities programs, including those offered by our grantees and partners.

In order to address this gap, California Humanities opted to build on our longstanding relationship with the California library community, which over the past 45 years has been a key partner in helping us provide public humanities programs that reach widely across our state and engage a diversity of audiences. We knew that public libraries play and have long played an important role in welcoming newcomers by providing citizenship classes, English language instruction, and access to information, and thus provide a natural connection point with immigrants. We learned that the State Library's recent Five Year plan had identified expanding services and effective programming for immigrants as a top priority. Their desire to see libraries help promote more inclusive communities was another objective that aligned with our mission and values.

We embarked on a yearlong process of planning and research, in which we gathered information about the needs, interests, and concerns of the California library community through new surveys, review of previous program evaluations, conducting an environmental scan of best practices in library public programming, reading relevant research, and consulting with leading library and public humanities programmers across the country. During this process we learned that although many librarians genuinely desired to serve immigrant communities, they often didn't know what their needs were, lacked information about their interests and circumstances, or did not have the capacity or resources to respond to them with programming. Librarians told us that a program that facilitated networking and sharing of information peer-to-peer as well as the infusion of expert knowledge would be appreciated. It became clear to us that a program that provided these types of supports to supplement grant funds, would be a more effective way to meet these needs for building capacity.

These findings were incorporated into the design of Library Innovation Lab: Exploring New Ways of Engaging Immigrant Communities through Public Humanities Programming (LIL hereafter). Launched in 2017, the program aims to provide humanities programming to an important new and underserved segment of the California population, build the capacity of key partners (libraries) to deliver meaningful public humanities programs to their communities on an ongoing basis, and make use of the potential the humanities provide to promote greater empathy and understanding among all our state's people. Our principal objectives with this program from the outset have been to:

- Foster innovative and creative public humanities programming in and by libraries through application of Design Thinking methods

- Build the capacity of participating librarians and libraries to provide welcoming humanities experiences for immigrants that will contribute to building more inclusive communities

- Use collaborative learning and reflective practice as a means of professional growth and development
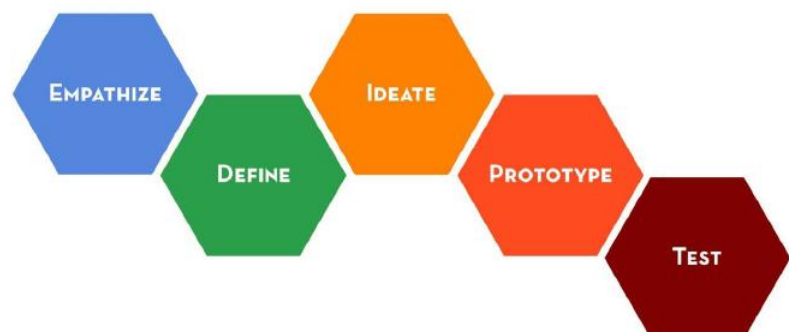
Program Structure

Each year, LIL engages a cohort of public library programmers, recruited through an open call to libraries across the state, to research, design, implement and assess a small scale, short-term public humanities project before the year's end. Working in a collaborative learning environment that includes face-to-face and virtual group meetings as well as individualized advising, cohort participants acquire new skills and knowledge in program development and project management, build confidence and develop capacity to work with immigrants, and exercise creativity and imagination through experimenting with new programming approaches. This process of learning and discovery is facilitated by peer mentors, selected from previous cohorts, and supported by humanities experts and practitioners and staff. California Humanities provides each participating library up to $5,000 in grant funds to be used as venture capital for program research and implementation expenses.

Recruitment begins in January with outreach through library networks and communications with grantees and partners; previous cohort participants have played a key role by serving as "ambassadors" in this process. Applications are reviewed by staff and mentors and selections made early in March. Usually, the cohort assembles for a two-day face-to-face initial orientation and training session in early May; in 2020, due to the pandemic, we redirected to provide this experience online over a period of half-day sessions held on three consecutive days in April. In addition to provide a congenial space to get acquainted with colleagues, mentors and staff, and participatory humanities experiences, this initial meeting includes a session on Design Thinking. Through interactive exercises, participants are introduced to this user-centered approach to the process of program research and design, which emphasizes the cultivation of empathy and understanding, and awareness of constraints as well as opportunities, as essential to developing creative as well as effective public programming.

Stanford d.school
Design Thinking Framework

Over the course of the spring and summer, the process encourages librarians learn more about their communities, identify local needs

that can be addressed through humanities programming, and develop collaborations with internal (library staff) and external (community) partners. Structured exercises help them translate their ideas into concrete plans. Periodic small and whole group gatherings, along with individual assistance, enables them to present their work-in-process and get feedback from peers, mentors and staff, that promotes the evolution of a learning community committed to experimentation and innovation. The results of this process are program plans and budgets, specific to each library and community, to provide public humanities programs that will engage immigrants and promote inclusive communities.

In early fall, once their plans and budgets have been approved and remaining grant funds released, the librarians launch into the fall implementation phase of their work to "field test" their plans, observe and assess the impact on participants, audiences, community partners, and their libraries in order to determine how well their

Figure 1 Cohort members provide feedback to each other on their developing project plans.

programs performed *vis a vis* the desired outcomes, and what they have learned. Throughout this period, they share successes and challenges, and adjust their plans to reflect what they and their colleagues are learning; site visits and feedback provided by the cohort, mentors and staff support these efforts.

The public programming phase of the project ends in December and in January, we host a final gathering that includes a presentation by each participant followed by a Q&A, as well as a general debrief, in which participants reflect on their experience and offer suggestions about how the program might be enhanced for future cohorts. A final budget and narrative report are required of all participants.

Innovative Programming: 2019 Cohort Projects

The primary "outputs" of this process have been the unique projects developed by each library in response to the needs, interests, and circumstances of their community and the people they aim to engage. The 32 projects implemented to date have employed many types of public humanities programming formats and modalities, both traditional and digital, including the various modes of storytelling and sharing; oral history projects, dialogues and discussions anchored by films, books, and poetry, presentations by scholars, authors, artists, and culture bearers, and experiential activities including workshops and interactive sessions focused on the art and culture of immigrant communities. Among the 10 projects created in 2019 by LIL libraries are the following:

Connecting Cultures in Mid-City Los Angeles The Washington Irving Branch of the Los Angeles Public Library focused its efforts on engaging underserved immigrants of Asian, Latin American, and Ethiopian heritage who make up a large portion of the diverse population served by the library. An evening talk and Q&A with a scholar, author of a well-regarded book about Mexican American immigration history, was enthusiastically received – the discussion continued outside after official closing hours. This was followed by a presentation and demonstration of traditional Asian cooking methods which attracted a diverse audience who shared family recipes and stories and took away boxes of produce from local farmers. The concluding program was a traditional Ethiopian coffee service and dance performance, the first program at the library to highlight this culture, which drew many community members who wore traditional attire and joining in the dancing, along with attendees from many backgrounds. The event was so popular that it has since been added to a master list of programs available to branches throughout the municipal library system.

Figure 2 Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony, dance and discussion program at Washington Irving Public

A New Community/*Una Nueva Comunidad* On California's Central Coast, the Cambria branch of County of San Luis Obispo Public Library offered an array of cultural programs to engage the local Latinx community, promote increased understanding of the immigrant experience, and build cross-cultural connections. Most of the events were bilingual and family-focused in order to provide a welcoming and comfortable environment to people who were infrequent patrons. A program exploring the meaning of family names strengthened ties between children and adults and provided fascinating insights into Latinx culture and history for all. A Latina scholar from a nearby
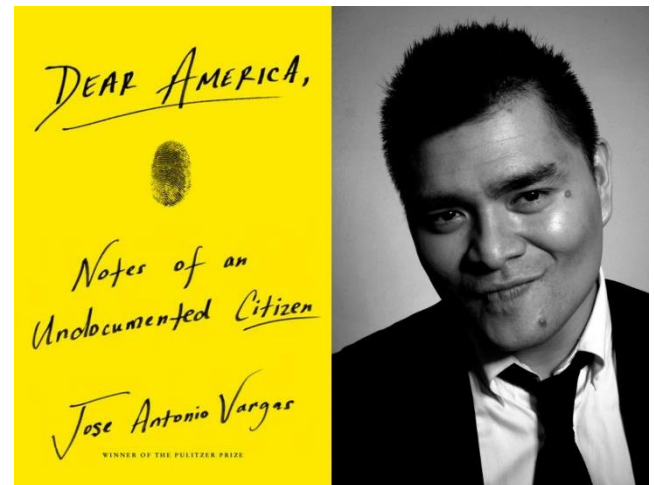

campus made a presentation about her own educational journey and the role her mother played in encouraging her, to draw the audience into conversation about the importance of parental engagement in their children's education. One of the most enjoyable programs used virtual reality technology to enable immigrant participants to "revisit" their hometowns, as well as to share the experience with their families and friends.

Figure 3 Librarian Kate McMillen with patron.

Pásale Paisano: **Welcoming Immigrants and Spanish-Speaking Communities in Tulare County** The County Library System's Exeter Branch serves a rural farming region in the Central Valley. Librarian Veronica Casanova, who grew up in this community, wanted to address the unmet needs of immigrants and Spanish speakers and to use library programming to foster a more inclusive community. A series of events centered on the traditional Mexican holiday, Day of the Dead, were developed to encourage Latinos and non-Latinos alike to explore and appreciate the richness of Latinx culture. A screening of the popular animated film, *Coco*, attracted attendance of several hundred people. Related programs included hands on crafting activities that flowed seamlessly into conversations and the sharing of family stories and traditions. Zine-making workshops engaged teens in discussions and writing about the

immigrant experience. A presentation from a collective of Mixtec indigenous women who own a local restaurant provided opportunities for the community to think and talk about the importance of preserving and sharing traditional culture, as well as to sample *mole* and other traditional Oaxacan foods.

Immigration Stories in Mill Valley. Mill Valley Library, in Marin County on the north shore of the San Francisco Bay, focused its programming to enable local immigrants to share their personal stories, and to use stories as catalysts for community conversations about the broader topic of immigration. A partnership with the Multicultural Center of Marin involved local Latinx immigrant youth in making a short documentary film. A screening at the library provided the opportunity to also hear from the filmmakers; a lively facilitated discussion followed between them and the audience, most of them older non-immigrants. The culminating event, a talk by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jose Antonio Vargas, drew a capacity crowd of 175 people. Vargas, an undocumented immigrant, shared his personal story, and engaged with the audience in a thoughtful conversation about the complex history of US immigration policies, enabling exploration of the issue through humanities perspectives.

COVID-19 Adaptations in 2020: Pivot to Virtual

The LIL program's emphasis on the importance of innovation, experimentation, and risk-taking – as well as the strength and support provided by the cohort experience -- has proven not only to be useful, but essential to the continuation of this program this year. As noted above, the new realities created by the pandemic – the continuing limitations on face-to-face gatherings imposed in early spring 2020– made it essential for us to switch to virtual modes of delivering the LIL program elements to our 2020 cohort, and focus on enabling   the cohort to meet the challenges of providing programming to their communities. Thanks to the flexibility and adaptability shown by our library mentors, consultants, and staff, we were able to organize and host our initial convening online. As the situation intensified, we realized it was likely that we would need to continue to work online, and have done so since, delivering subsequent whole group and small group meetings as well as informal check-ins and conversations through Zoom or GoToMeeting, over the remainder of the spring, summer and fall. A lively Google Group list serv and Facebook Group keep the group close knit between meetings. We also increased the frequency of meetings in response to the concerns expressed by the librarians, as well as our sense that these would provide valuable points of connection and solidarity, as well as

Figure 4 Mentors, staff and librarians gather online to study design thinking.

opportunities to voice questions and concerns and share information and resources that would enable the librarians to continue programming, albeit under very changed conditions.

The librarians understandably worried about how they would be able to offer programs that would be safe, accessible, and engaging to their communities, particularly to immigrants. Virtually no one in the cohort had direct experience with virtual or physically distanced programming, and like most libraries and cultural institutions at that point, little institutional knowledge to draw upon. Addressing the "digital divide" was another immediate concern, as many low-income immigrants lack reliable internet access or other resources (hardware or software) that are required to participate in online programming formats. As a result, there was considerable concern we sought to address by providing examples of successful online and physically distanced programming being used by other libraries and cultural organizations, encouraging cohort members to share what they were learning with each other, and connecting librarians with local sources of knowledge and expertise.

Over the last six months, libraries have expanded their comfort level with these new approaches, and many of our cohort members are now feeling confident about offering online panels and forums, book- or film-based discussions, virtual tours, performances and discussions, and interactive workshops. In other cases, the libraries have identified appropriate forms of remote programming that meets local health standards for public safety such as outdoor film screenings, "drive by" or street banner exhibits, and distribution of kits containing reading or viewing material, and supplies for writing or crafting or cooking that can be done at home. In some locations, recent relaxation of restrictions has resulted in the resumption of public programming, allowing the libraries to do live, in-person events.

Despite the uncertainties we as well as the libraries have faced and continue to face, the proverbial "silver lining" of the pandemic experience has proven to be the resourcefulness and resilience of our participating librarians. We are delighted that they have risen to the challenges they faced by developing an array of imaginative and innovative programs that have been offered or will be offered to their communities this fall, including:

Yōkoso! **(Welcome!),** a week-long series of activities titled designed to engage members of Oceanside's Japanese-American community, along with all residents, in deepening awareness and appreciation for traditional Japanese culture (including an online taiko drum performance, a docent-led virtual tour of Balboa Park's historic Japanese Friendship Garden, paper craft-making workshops, and a tween-only discussion of beloved classic, *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*.

Our Cultures, Our Stories, a series of activities that will engage and bring attention to several often-overlooked immigrant and refugee populations in Fresno (Lao and Syrian), will include online performances and demonstrations of traditional arts and cultural practices (music, dance, storytelling, cooking) by culture bearers. The library will also elicit contributions for a community-sourced cookbook of stories and recipes that will be published on the library's website.

Our Voices/*Nuestras Voces***, Our Food/***Nuestra Comida***, Our Culture/***Nuestra Cultura*** at Santa Clarita Public Library will offer online family-friendly programs celebrating Latin American heritage that will kick off with an evening talk by a scholar about the cultural history of the popular board game, *loteria*, followed by an interactive online game-playing session (snacks and games will be packaged for pick-up in advance).

Home Gardens Library in Riverside will launch its series of multicultural book-based programs for children and parents with a visit from Vilayyanh Bender, the Laotian American author of *Mommy Eats Fried Grasshoppers*. After reading from her book, the author will lead a discussion about her childhood in Laos and her journey to the United States and demonstrate traditional Lao arts and crafts. Books, craft materials, and snacks will be distributed to the participants with appropriate physical distancing precautions observed.

Figure 5: Nancy Reiter of Home Gardens Library hosts a socially distanced storytime with Vietnamese author Vilayvanh Bender.

Studio City Library (a branch of Los Angeles Public Library) will offer two sessions of "The Restless Books Immigrant Writing Workshop". Taught by Ilan Stevens, a nationally known humanities scholar and book publisher, these online workshops aim to help immigrants develop their voices, self-confidence, self-esteem, and boost English language speaking and writing skills. One series will be offered in October, another in November, with a culminating public program in December.

Figure 7: The Oakland Public Library's Mam Festival. Photo by Khai Pham. Mexican Folklorico Event, 2018.

IMPACT

Impact on Audiences

LIL programming over the past three years has reached widely throughout the state. Not including the activities currently underway, our partner libraries have hosted 261 programs that reached almost 33,000 people in 33 Congressional Districts and 37 cities**.**

As this program aligns with our strategic framework goal of "responsive public engagement" and the State Library's aim to provide inclusive and meaningful programming to all Californians, including immigrants, we have been gratified to learn how *responsive* the LIL programming has been to community and individual needs. Since increasing access to humanities programming, particularly for new and underserved constituencies, is of vital importance to California Humanities, we are glad to know how well LIL projects have performed in this area, too. All the libraries

participating in the program have reported success in engaging a new and/or underserved immigrant community as a primary target audience (88% "very" or "mostly" successful). All have reported success in providing new programs or activities to meet the needs or circumstances of the target audiences and in minimizing barriers to participation or improving access to existing programs or services for immigrants (94% reported they were "very" or "mostly" successful in this regard). More details about particular areas of impact are outlined below.

Providing Welcoming Experiences to Immigrants

Participating libraries have been very successful in creating a rich variety of programs and activities that have made immigrants feel welcome in libraries and a part of their communities. Among the representative comments gathered on surveys completed by audience members are: "This program made me feel at home" "Now I know the library is a safe place for me and my family" "I feel like my community is respected" "This is the first time I've come to the library but I plan to come back." Feedback from community members and librarians alike points up number of factors that contributed to these successes, including the use of languages spoken by immigrants in outreach and programming (bilingual programs or providing translation services); making provisions for childcare or ensuring that activities are suitable for children and adults alike; highlighting immigrant traditions, holidays, and popular culture, and making familiar and traditional foods a key component of programming. The importance of providing enjoyable communal experiences at a time when so many immigrant communities are experiencing fear, loss, and uncertainty about the future cannot be underestimated.
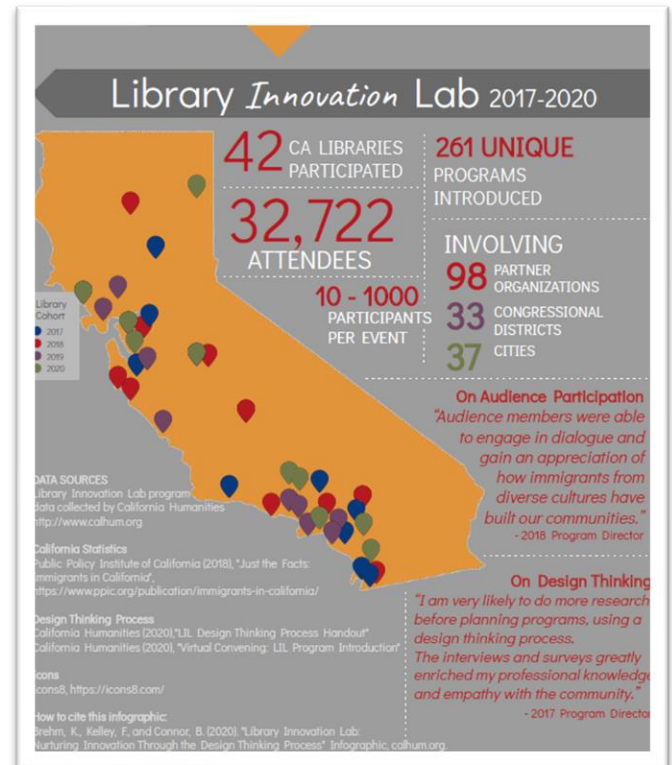
Fostering Connections Within Immigrant Communities

Immigrant patrons frequently express their desires to strengthen intergenerational connections, preserve traditions, and maintain cultural practices even while adapting to life in California. As a result, many LIL librarians developed programming to meet these needs through family story-sharing projects, craft-making activities, and interactive presentations that increase understanding and valuation of immigrant cultural heritage and traditions, particularly for young people. For some, virtual reality technology has provided the means to offer immigrants a way to maintain connections with the homelands, and bring along family, friends and neighbors on a "visit." Survey responses from program attendees have highlighted the value of these activities and librarians have remarked on the importance of these bonding experiences given the stresses on family life felt by so many immigrants.

Figure 5: Indigenous immigrant women and children prepare for event at Ventura County Public Library.

Bridging Cultural Divisions
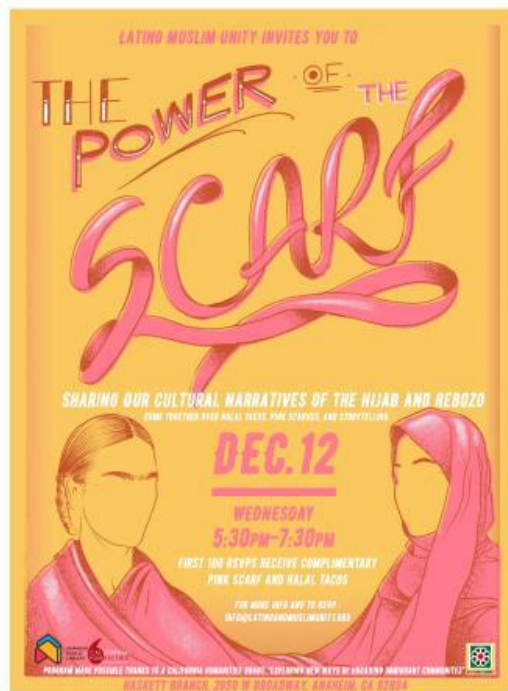
At the same time, programming provided opportunities to meet another important need identified by many libraries: promoting cross-cultural understanding and interaction in order to foster more inclusive communities. Some of the most frequent comments made on audience surveys point up the ways in which library programs are increasing appreciation for immigrant cultural practices, enabling people to recognize and appreciate the similarities as well as the differences between cultures, and recognize the commonalities among all people. "This program created much needed space for connecting with my community -- neighbors I would normally have never met." Participatory activities such as performances or demonstrations of traditional arts and crafts with accompanying hands-on activities have been effective ways of breaking down barriers and enabling "outsiders" to gain insight by experiencing another culture from the "inside". Interesting, these benefits applied to fostering connections between different immigrant communities as well as between immigrants and non-immigrant community members.

Making Space for Immigrant Perspectives and Voices

Many libraries identified the need for immigrants to give expression to the experiences and to be acknowledged as part of their communities, and indeed, of California. Librarians have reported great

success in developing programming that enabled immigrants to reflect on and share their experiences (over 80% reported being "very" or "mostly" successful). Various activities designed to enable immigrants to be seen and heard, figuratively as well as literally, such as oral history programs, video or photo documentary projects, panel discussions, presentations by immigrant authors, and analytical and creative writing activities with public readings have been well received by participants and audiences. The importance of these goes beyond simple self-expression: many survey respondents called out the importance of having immigrants speak for themselves, rather than being represented by experts or the media. Many of those who participated by sharing their stories expressed the feeling of empowerment they experienced as a result – as one youth attendee wrote, "Representation matters! Thank you for holding space for us to tell our stories." Many librarians remarked on the importance of providing a safe space for these activities: "just by enabling immigrants to share their experiences, we are affirming they are part of our community."

Increasing Knowledge of the Immigrant Experience

At the core of the humanities is, of course, an appreciation for the value of knowledge and the hope that greater knowledge contributes to greater understanding of oneself as well as others. LIL programs have proven to be very successful in providing humanities learning experiences to the public – both immigrants and non-immigrants alike – about the history of immigration in America and the contributions immigrants have made and are making to our country, the state, and our communities. In addition to making engaging educational programming available to their communities, LIL libraries have also succeeded in producing new knowledge products about the immigrant experience, including documentary films, online and physical exhibits, zines, oral history projects, and recorded talks. Many of these have engaged immigrant community members as "citizen humanists" -- active participants in processes of knowledge production.

Figure 6: Contributor to Fountain Valley "Art Is For Everyone" exhibit poses with her work.

"Zine Fronteras, the publication created by Santa Cruz Public Library patrons.

Impact on Cohort Participants and Libraries

Given the LIL program's emphasis on capacity-building objectives, we have been very interested to learn how it has affected the professional development of our cohort participants (individual librarians) as well as on their libraries and library systems. Again, results from our multiyear program evaluation show strong positive results on both individuals and institutions. Highlighted below are some of the most important outcomes observed.

Focus on User (Program Audience or Participant) Experience

One of the most significant changes noted by the cohort members to shift their focus, in planning and delivering programs, to focus on meeting the needs of "users" – the people who attend library events and activities. Introduction of the Design Thinking approach appears to have been particularly important for many cohort members, in changing the way they now approach programming.

"Before we would offer programs because we thought people would like them or because they were popular in the past. After this grant process, I realized that you should offer programs based on the need of the community and not on the need of the library." LIL Cohort Participant

Developing Collaborations with External Partners

Another significant result of the LIL program appears to have been increased interest in and practical knowledge about how to effectively work with community partners – individuals as well as organizations. During the 2017 – 2019 period, librarians developed 98 partnerships to assist their planning, outreach, and program implementation. Social service and faith-based organizations proved to be invaluable in helping the libraries forge connections with immigrant communities and gain their trust. Academic institutions, cultural organizations, and museums provided valuable support for programming as in many cases, libraries used grant funds to contract with experts and professionals to make presentations, lead workshops, or deliver engaging performances. Local businesses, many immigrant-owned or oriented, provided material resources including discounted or free goods and services. In many cases, the collaborations initiated through the LIL programs will be of continuing value to the libraries and further establish their connections to their communities.

Figure 7 Cookbook launch and food demonstration provided by Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement at Washington Irving Library.

Encouragement to Innovate

All LIL participants reported success with *innovating* (working in a new way) in various respects as a result of their participation in the program. The strongest impacts were related to experimentation with new types of programming and new ways of approaching program design, followed by trying out new approaches to evaluation and working with new external partners. Many librarians highlighted the encouragement and support they received from peers, mentors, and staff, along with the provision of "venture capital" in the form of grant funds, as of particular value in enabling them to experiment with new types of programming and to reach new audiences.

"This was a wonderful opportunity to bring innovative programming to public libraries that might not have otherwise been approved. An excellent professional learning opportunity." LIL Cohort Member

Others articulated the importance of having the "endorsement" of a respected organization like California Humanities to implementing needed changes to established practices.

Increased Capacity to Serve Immigrants Responses from participants over the past three years indicate the program led to increased knowledge about immigrants in general, and how to work with them, as well as increased knowledge and understanding about the immigrant community (or communities) each librarian focused on serving. *After* completing the program, 92% of the participants said they felt very or mostly prepared to work with immigrants; a substantial increase over the 64% who felt so *before* the program.

Professional Growth Participants have reported the project developed their professional skills in various ways, not surprising given the emphasis on "learn by doing." The strongest impacts were felt in the areas of project management, program design, program evaluation, building relationships with a wide range of external partners, and developing skill in community needs assessment. Although not an explicit objective of the program, several LIL participants have reported that their participation resulted in promotions or other types of professional advancement. One participant was promoted from branch manager to director of her library system; she felt her participation in the program

> *"In the three years I've been doing [library programming], I can honestly say that this project has been one of the most amazing things I've been a part of."* LIL Participant and Mentor

tipped the scales by demonstrating her abilities as a creative, resourceful, and inspiring leader. The effect has been strong on many who were just beginning their careers, by providing an opportunity to showcase their energy and talents. Many have gained valuable experience by making presentations to peers and colleagues at professional meetings about their experience with the program with colleagues.

Increasing Library Capacity In addition to strengthening their personal skills and capacities, LIL librarians felt the effects of program "spilled over" into strengthening organizational capacity, especially regarding new/improved relations with community partners, programming capacity, and teamwork (over the past three years, a majority of participants have reported high and moderate impact in these areas). Again, the introduction of the Design Thinking approach appears to have had considerable impact on several of the participating libraries, resulting in institutionalization of this user-centered approach to programming. An unintended but important outcome for many libraries has been increased circulation of bilingual and foreign language reading materials as well as the addition of new materials, purchased to support programming, to library collections.

Figure 8 Book giveaway at Ventura County Library.

Building a Community of Practice One of the most important outcomes of the LIL program has been the cultivation of a sense of common purpose and collegiality among the members of each cohort, as well as among cohorts. Participants have expressed how valuable they find the opportunity to connect with peers from across the state and to learn from one another in a supportive environment. Cohort members from previous years have continued to stay in touch with one another, a connection we cultivate through periodic communications. By employing previous cohort participants as peer

Figure 9 2018 Cohort, mentors and staff in 2018.

mentors, and by calling upon past participants to share their expertise with new cohort members as well as to serve as program "ambassadors" to the library community, we make efforts to ensure inter-"generational" continuity and connections.

Increasing the visibility and value of libraries Overall, participants have remarked that Library Innovation Lab fosters an increased appreciation for the role libraries play in community life. LIL programming has provided opportunities to secure earned media coverage, positive attention from elected officials, local decision makers and influencers, and to position the library as a trusted source of information and resources for immigrants as well as all community members.

Participant experience

As with all of our programs, we want to learn about the experience of our grantees and partners and how well we are meeting their needs. This is of special importance with LIL, given the cohort structure and the emphasis on professional growth.

Resources All participants reported receiving a sufficient level of staff and advisor support and felt expectations were clearly communicated. Nearly all thought the size of the grant ($5,000) was sufficient; all appreciated the extra financial support for attending convenings. The online communications platform(s) have been the one area judged needing significant improvement.

Program structure All cohorts gave highest rating to the convenings – all participants rated them "very useful"; most thought enough time was allotted for implementation and planning.

The future All 32 past participants indicated they plan to continue to use the skills and know-how they developed in the future; all but one expressed a desire to participate in a similar project again, should opportunities arise.

FINANCIAL STRUCTURE

Over the past three years, the LIL project has shown how a relatively small investment of council funds can be leveraged effectively to bring meaningful humanities programs to new, underserved, and sizeable audiences. Although the initial investment in each participating library and cohort member is not insignificant, we believe this investment in capacity building activities is warranted, as it has and will continue to cultivate the ability of librarians and libraries to partner with us on the provision of quality public humanities programs in the future.

California Humanities provides each participating library with a grant of up to $5,000 to be used for project-related research, planning, implementation, and assessment; grant funds must be matched at a minimum 1:1 ratio by local cash or in-kind contributions. On average, grant funds have been leveraged 2:1 by the libraries. In several cases, libraries have not requested the full funding available and none have evidenced concern about securing the match.

In addition to provision of grant funds to the participating libraries, California Humanities covers the costs of organizing and hosting mandatory program meetings, including travel, lodging, and meals. As a result of California's unique geography, and our efforts to involve libraries from all parts of the state, travel has been a significant expense until this year, when switching to virtual platforms for meetings and trainings greatly lowered our costs.

California Humanities underwrites the operating costs of the program, including staff salaries (.25 FTE for the program manager, .10 for a program assistant, .05 respectively for the CEO, grants manager, development director, and communications manager. Mentors receive a flat fee of $3000 per year, and consultants (humanities and technical experts) are compensated at an average of $200 per presentation or $500 per workshop. Staff, consultants, and mentors are also reimbursed for travel expenses associated with site visits and meetings.

LIL has had a successful fundraising track record, beginning with a Planning Grant provided by the California State Library in 2016, which supported a large portion of our program research and development expenses, and has continued to support the program since then through several LSTA grants. The program has also garnered support from private funders including corporations (Well Fargo and Southwest Airlines) and individual private donors, including a group of board alumni. California Humanities directs a portion of NEH regrant funds received annually to support the grants to libraries; staffing and other overhead are also supported by NEH funds as well as operating funds provided by the State of California, foundations, and private donors.

Looking back on the past four years, the average annual cost of the program has been $100,000, including regrants. We believe this program is sustainable over the long-term and will continue to seek out ways to minimize costs as well as to secure additional sources of funding in the future.

CONCLUSION

California Humanities believes the Library Innovation Lab program described above meets the goals listed in the call for nominations for the 2020 Helen and Martin Schwartz prize, particularly in regard to these desired characteristics:

- Involvement of new audiences

- Unique or far-reaching collaborations

- Capacity-building efforts

- New uses of technology

- Demonstrated sustainability

- Creative response to COVID-19

We believe this program shows great potential for extension and might provide inspiration for other state humanities councils seeking to reach immigrants and other underserved constituencies. Combining two traditional forms of support for community partners -- grant-making and capacity-building – our experience with this program to date demonstrates the potential of a hybrid model that builds upon the best of both modes. Not only has the program produced relevant, meaningful, and impactful public humanities programs, it has built the short- and long-term capacity of our partner libraries and librarians to function effectively as programmers in the future.

We appreciate this opportunity to share the work we and our library partners have accomplished thus far. Thank you for your consideration.