Envisioning a Paid Community Archives Internship Program: Challenges and Opportunities

FOCAS: Faculty Organizing for Community Archives Support

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This article provides background on community archiving as it relates to a group of faculty members currently working together to address the challenge of reimagining archival education to center non-dominant archival traditions and the restructuring of internship programs to provide financial compensation, by asking how MLIS programs might transform to better serve both minoritized communities and minoritized students. We focus on MLIS Education and Dominant Archival Theories and Practices, to explore the challenges of and possibilities for a large-scale North American effort to support paid internships at community archives.

Keywords: advocacy, community archives, equity, internships, outreach, social justice

KEY POINTS:

- Faculty Organizing for Community Archives Support recognizes the challenges and possibilities for a larger-scale North American effort to support paid internships at community archives.
- MLIS education has not yet fully responded to the needs of BIPOC students. The curriculum does not yet adequately reflect non-dominant theories and practices in the classroom, nor does it fully prepare students for careers in BIPOC-centered cultural institutions.
- To transform MLIS programs, Educators should work towards better serving minoritized communities and students, all MLIS programs should provide culturally responsive education and all MLIS students should be trained in cultural competency skills.

Over the past two decades, archival studies has undergone a major intellectual shift, away from a narrow focus on dominant Western archival theories and practices rooted in bureaucratic and government record keeping and toward theories and practices that have emerged in the context of personal and community-based memory-keeping traditions. There is particular excitement about archival practices and theories that were developed by and support minoritized, marginalized, and/or vulnerable people, such as BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and/or disabled communities. Simultaneously, the increased precarity of the archival labor market, together with increasing student debt, has led MLIS students to organize against the previously widespread practice of unpaid internships in the field. This paper seeks to address these twin challenges—the reimagining of archival education to center non-dominant archival traditions and the restructuring of internship programs to provide financial compensation—by asking how MLIS programs might transform to better serve both minoritized communities and minoritized students.

Since 2018, the Mellon Foundation has supported a paid community archives internship program for MLIS students at UCLA, through two consecutive grants to UCLA's Lab.[1] Each academic year, the program provides seven second-year MLIS students with paid

internships at local community archives. Student interns, all of whom have already taken UCLA's IS433 Community Archives class, are compensated $25 an hour for 12 hours of work each week during the academic year, for a total of $9,000. Participating sites include the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archive, the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, the Skid Row History Museum and Archive, Visual Communications, and La Historia Historical Society and Museum. Each participating site is given $2,000 in acknowledgment of their labor training and supervising students. The program has been an enormous success, financially supporting more than three dozen MLIS students (the vast majority of whom identify as BIPOC and/or LGBTQIA+), training MLIS students in community-centered practices, and bolstering preservation, description, digitization, access, and fundraising efforts at community archives sites across the region. (For more information on the impact of the first three years of the program, see Caswell, 2022a). Notably, at least six of the interns have been hired on to full-time professional positions at their internship sites after graduation, demonstrating not only the value these sites have found in working with their interns but also the increasing financial capacity of community archives in the area, thanks, in part, to support from the Mellon Foundation as well as other foundations and government agencies.

Given the success of this UCLA program, other iSchools have taken interest in the possibility of replicating it. We represent a range of iSchools and LIS Departments across the United States and Canada, including large R1 institutions and smaller professional schools, both public and private, with MLIS degree programs that range from on-site to online and hybrid. Rather than compete with each other for scarce resources, the authors of this paper have decided to collaborate, forming FOCAS: Faculty Organizing for Community Archives Support, to explore the challenges of and possibilities for a larger-scale North American effort to support paid internships at community archives. This paper describes the first part of our research. We began by working collectively to address the following overarching research question:

> Can and should the UCLA / Mellon Foundation paid community archives internship program be used as a model to transform archival education and training programs across the United States and Canada?

Under this overarching question, we ask the following sub-questions:

- Is there an interest in and need for such a program at local community archives sites?
- Is there an interest in and need for such a program among iSchool students, faculty, and administrators?
- What barriers (administrative, curricular, relational, financial) might currently exist for this program to be replicated across iSchools? How might these barriers be addressed?
- What curricular elements are currently in place that address non-dominant and/or community-based theories and practices? What curricular elements would need to

change or be added to train students in community-based theories and practices in the classroom?
- What initiatives are currently in place to support internships, fieldwork, and practica at iSchools? Would any policies and procedures need to be changed to support paid internships at community archives?
- What resources (administrative, curricular, relational, financial) would need to be in place to support these efforts?

By answering these questions and addressing the challenges and opportunities of the current moment in archival education, this paper makes the intellectual case for a collaborative North American effort to simultaneously transform both archival studies curriculum and internship programs. We aim to leverage the preliminary findings reported in this paper to collaboratively craft a funding strategy and draft proposals in the coming months so that we may enact the transformative ideas contained herein.

Literature review

Before reporting on our findings, we present a literature review that defines key terms and explains the context for the project.

Community archives

UK-based archival studies scholars Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Shepherd define *community* as "any group of people who come together and present themselves as such, and a 'community archive' is the product of their attempts to document the history of their commonality" (Flinn et al., 2009). The same research team writes, "the defining characteristic of community archives is the active participation of a community in documenting and making accessible the history of their particular group and/or locality *on their own terms*." In the United States, the phenomenon of community archives is inextricably linked to power and oppression. Those who have been disempowered by oppressive systems, those who have been "symbolically annihilated," those whose histories have been ignored, maligned, misrepresented, and/or grossly distorted by mainstream memory institutions (as agents of and conduits for those oppressive systems)—they all feel the need to create their own autonomous community archives (Caswell et al., 2016). In light of this power differential, researchers at the UCLA Community Archives Lab define community archives as "independent memory organizations emerging from and coalescing around vulnerable communities, past and present" (UCLA, Community Archives webpage).

Community archives are often formed in reaction to the failure of mainstream archives to tell an accurate and complex story of marginalized communities. Such archival spaces enable communities to enact a stake in their own history, often through practices that value and encourage the participation of their users, who are assumed to be community members. These community archives may vary in size, governance structure, financial capacity, relationship to dominant institutions, and the nature of the identity and community being documented, but they are united in their insistence that communities take ownership of their own historical representations as a way of enacting a more just present and

envisioning new futures (Caswell, 2022b). Through interviews, focus groups, and participant observation, researchers from UCLA's Community Archives Lab found that community archives practices often disrupt the hierarchical models in traditional archives, prompting community members to view collections as belonging *to the community* and challenging dominant practices and conceptions of custody, description, and ownership (Caswell et al., 2016).

From appraisal and acquisition to description and access, community archives build and leverage relationships of trust that enable them to document histories and to produce and represent knowledges that mainstream institutions simply cannot. Community members who work or volunteer for these archives are experts in their own right, but many organizations lack the capacity to fully support their important work. Due to the inequitable distribution of resources to support cultural heritage institutions, many community archives struggle financially, with some operating on annual budgets of less than $100,000 and relying solely on volunteer labor. As Jules Bergis (2019) writes, "Small donations and one-time funding are available to community-based archives, but substantial and long-term sustainable funding remains elusive." He continues, "community-based archives can develop successful fundraising programs, but some need support to sustain and grow the capacity of those efforts." This points to how, while community archives possess the knowledge and expertise to steward their records, they often suffer from a lack of financial resources to perform and sustain their important work.

Relationships between iSchool faculty and community archives are complex. Some community archives actively seek out involvement from archival studies faculty and students, while other fiercely independent organizations shun what they perceive to be extractive relationships between universities and minoritized communities. The Reciprocity in Research Records Collaborative, a group consisting of community archivists and iSchool faculty, surfaced several damaging tendencies in academic research in or about community archives, including parachuting in, knowledge extraction, financial inequity, and transactional consent. The group delineated nine key principles for building mutually beneficial relationships between academic researchers and community archivists moving forward: relational consent, mutual benefit, investment, humility, accountability, transparency, equity, reparation, and amplification (Caswell et al., 2021). We are guided by these principles in our work and do not take for granted an assumption that community archives want or need support from MLIS students and iSchool faculty. Instead, building relationships over time, asking questions and listening to answers, and collaboratively designing projects are at the heart of this work. In all cases, there must be space to respect refusal and nonparticipation from community archives.

MLIS education and dominant archival theories and practices

MLIS programs broadly, and archival studies programs specifically, have rightfully come under fire over the past decade for their narrow, harmful, and often unacknowledged or under-acknowledged bases in white supremacist histories, theories, and practices (Galvan, 2015; Jennings & Kinzer, 2021; Patin et al., 2022; Ramirez, 2015). MLIS programs have historically taught dominant Western archival theories and practices to the detriment of

theories and practices emerging from BIPOC and/or LGBTQIA+ communities. Archival studies scholars like Mario H. Ramirez and Tonia Sutherland have launched a sustained critique of dominant archival education, drawing attention to its limiting definitions of key concepts that belie its roots in dominant white epistemologies; its failure to address or incorporate philosophies, cultural frameworks, and practices rooted in BIPOC communities; and its attendant failure to recruit and retain BIPOC MLIS students and faculty (Ramirez, 2015; Sutherland, 2017, 2020). As Myrna E. Morales and Stacie Williams (2021) have noted, many MLIS educational experiences and practices uphold what they call "epistemic supremacy," or "a political ideology that facilitates, enables, and upholds the conditions that lead to the destruction of communities of color, particularly working-class and poor Black and Indigenous communities" (p. 74). The oft-repeated demographic data collected by the Society of American Archivists (2021)—in which 89% of archivists self-reported to be white—has yet to be met by a comprehensive plan or resource commitment to shift student demographics.[2] Although there has been a sea change in the content of archival education in the past two decades, there is still a long way to go for archival studies to develop a liberatory pedagogy and more representative student body.

Based on these ongoing conversations in the field, it is clear that MLIS education has not yet fully responded to the needs of BIPOC students. The curriculum does not yet adequately reflect non-dominant theories and practices in the classroom, nor does it fully prepare students for careers in BIPOC-centered cultural institutions.[3] Furthermore, untenured faculty often feel constrained about transforming curricula when their employment status relies on teaching evaluations and recommendations from senior faculty. Given these sustained and substantive critiques, it is imperative that MLIS students have opportunities to gain experience outside of dominant archival institutions, develop cultural competency skills, and cultivate the flexibility to work in a range of environments. Patricia Montiel Overall (2009) defines *cultural competence* as "the ability to recognize the significance of culture in one's own life and in the lives of others and to come to know and respect diverse cultural backgrounds and characteristics through interaction with individuals from diverse linguistic, cultural and socioeconomic groups" (p. 176). In archival work, Jessica Tai (2021) posits that cultural competency skills can be demonstrated in the following: re-description projects to change harmful and/or oppressive language; acquisition audits that identify gaps in collections and appraisal strategies to fill in such gaps; and reference room policies that open up rather than foreclose possibilities for community use and engagement. Although *all* MLIS programs should provide culturally responsive education and *all* MLIS students should be trained in cultural competency skills, it is essential both for BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and/ or disabled students (and students at the intersections of those identities) to see themselves and their community's values and practices reflected in archival training *and* for white students to learn to decenter their own dominant ways of thinking and being in the (archives) world.

MLIS programs must train a diverse workforce if they are to remain relevant and meet the challenges facing contemporary libraries, archives, and museums. A more representative and culturally competent workforce is particularly important for stewarding the collections of community archives, which represent and serve minoritized communities. Funding for

MLIS students to work in community archives not only provides paid internship opportunities to those who would not otherwise be able to afford to undertake unpaid internships but also helps support a diverse group of archival students, many of whom come from the same minoritized communities represented and served by their placement sites.

LIS labor and (un)paid internships

Recent conversations in library and information studies (LIS) have drawn attention to the increasing precarity of labor for professionally trained librarians and archivists. As Emily Drabinski, Aliqae Geraci, and Roxanne Shirazi (2019) identify in an introduction to a special issue of *Library Trends* on the theme of labor in academic libraries and archives, generations of public divestment in higher education have caused academic libraries to decrease hiring, deskill the work of librarians, and outsource labor to for-profit corporations. As the authors report, library workers have responded through labor organizing, advocacy, and envisioning entirely new arrangements for higher education. Adding to this conversation, the Collective Responsibility project highlighted the experiences of contingent laborers working on grant-funded digital library, archives, and museum projects, ultimately advocating for both making contingent labor "more ethical" and to "eliminate contingency itself" (Rodriguez et al., 2019).

This crisis of precarity has trickled down to new professionals and, in turn, to MLIS students, who are often expected by their graduate programs to take on unpaid internships in order to get the practical experience necessary for later employment (Cifor & Watson, 2020). These unpaid internships not only place a financial burden on students; they are simply cost-prohibitive for many, especially for students who are not from affluent backgrounds. As archival scholars Cifor and Lee (2017) note, "unpaid internships mean that the archival profession opens itself just to those in the privileged financial situation to be able to undertake such labors thereby replicating problematic inequalities in the profession." There is a growing demand from MLIS students and recent graduates nationwide for MLIS programs to prohibit or strongly discourage giving students credit for unpaid internships, to "denormalize" them, as recent graduate Karly Wildenhaus (2019) writes, "especially for those institutions that articulate social justice as part of their institutional values" (p. 13). Wildenhaus further asserts,

> By recognizing the connection between unpaid internships and other forms of contingent and precarious labor, denormalizing the practice becomes all the more urgent. Rather than accept this tendency towards precarity, information workers can recognize how advocating for the abolition of exploitive positions can help to bolster their own positions as they too resist the effects of neoliberalism. (p. 13)

Anecdotally, over the past decade of teaching in an MLIS program, the authors of this paper have witnessed first-hand the increasing pressures on students to gain professional experience through internships, the overwhelming burden of student loan debt on their lives, and the precarity of temporary positions that many students land in after graduation. This confluence has made it clear that MLIS students need *paid* opportunities to gain practical experience working in the field.

Methodology

On December 1, 2022, a selected group of faculty representing eight different iSchools (all co-authors of this paper) were brought together by the first author of this paper for a Zoom conversation on the feasibility of a US–Canadian paid community archives internship program for MLIS students. An additional faculty member could not attend that meeting and subsequently had a one-on-one Zoom conversation with the first author of this paper, for a total of 11 faculty participants from nine iSchools. The group of faculty teach archival studies in their Information School or Library and Information Science School. Because the pool of faculty teaching archival studies is relatively small and the community of faculty and scholars are aware of each other's work, it was easy to select a group of faculty for this study. The faculty here were chosen because they teach graduate archival studies courses and are actively engaged in the intellectual shift in the field, moving away from a sole focus on dominant bureaucratic forms of record keeping toward an emphasis on community and personal collections. Participants represent a wide array of racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual identities and are geographically dispersed across the United States and Canada. One participant is a full professor, while the others are associate and assistant professors.

The participants were asked the overarching questions and the six sub-questions listed above. With participants' permission, these conversations were recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were then sent to participants for correction and confirmation. The first author then hand-coded the transcripts for recurring themes and wrote an initial draft of this paper reporting on the themes that surfaced during the conversations. Participants then substantially added to and edited this initial draft before submission for review. All participants in these conversations are co-authors of this paper rather than subjects of research or sources of data.

Findings

Several themes emerged in the group discussion, including the current state of the archival studies curriculum in reference to community archives; the current racial make-up of the student body in MLIS programs; and the current state of policies governing internships in MLIS programs. While these conversations surface possible barriers to implementing a paid internship program at community archives, we also address ways in which such barriers could be addressed and resources that would be needed in order to make a paid internship program at community archives successful. Below, we discuss these findings in further detail and reproduce parts of the discussion that were particularly illustrative.

The current state of archival studies curriculum

FOCAS discussed how archival studies curricula are changing to better address non-dominant perspectives. All of the participants incorporated some community archives content throughout their courses and were eager to incorporate more, though many felt limited by resources and constrained by the small number of archival studies faculty in their departments or schools.

Of the eight iSchools represented in our conversation, only UCLA and University of Arizona (U of A) regularly offer permanent, stand-alone community archives courses. However, most other programs incorporate community archives content in both archival studies courses and community-focused information services courses. For example, James Lowry reported how CUNY now offers two courses, *Community Libraries and Archives* and *Memory Work*, that both significantly address community archives theories and practices. University G also has an *Advanced Archival Practice* class that has been an opportunity to work with community collections in the university's ethnic studies centers (Fontánez Rodríguez et al, 2020). Jamie Ann Lee, from U of A, reported teaching a class entitled *Information Environments from Nondominant Perspectives* that also includes significant community archives content. Cecilia Salvatore from Dominican University discussed how the term "community archives" does not completely resonate with many communities. Instead, her course *Cultural Heritage Resources and Services* addresses much content that we might associate with community archives. Others reported addressing community archives in courses such as *Information and Social Justice*, *Social and Community Informatics*, *Cultural Heritage Informatics*, *Personal Information Management*, and *Public History*.

Many faculty discussed feeling limited by a lack of resources and program support. Several faculty reported that they were the only full-time tenure-stream faculty teaching archival studies, making it difficult to focus on community archives content when so much material needs to be covered in very few courses. As Gracen Brilmyer from McGill University said,

> We don't have a community archives class so I try to talk about community archives throughout. I teach the Archival Principles and Practices course, which is an introduction to archives course, so I talk about community archives almost every week, but I think an important thing to note is that I'm the only archives-focused tenure track faculty in a small department, and the other archives courses are taught by adjuncts or course lecturers. So there are limited resources of who can take on our archival content and shape it in really specific ways.

Similarly, Marika Cifor, who is the first and only tenure-track archival studies faculty at the University of Washington (UW), said,

> We don't have a separate community archives class. I teach our archives course, LIS 505, and I teach community archives content in the course, but it's a general archives course.... I have asked repeatedly to be able to offer a community archives class but have not yet been able to given other teaching needs. I'm teaching LIS 582 for the first time in the spring, which is *Community Engagement Strategies in Information Science*. So my bend on that, I think, will be community archives focused, but in the past it's been taught by a range of different people with different expertise.

Jennifer Douglas at the University of British Columbia (UBC) reported that while there are three archival studies faculty there, the program still relies heavily on adjunct faculty to teach key courses. She added, "the rationale [to offer a separate community archives class] gets difficult when we so many classes with such limited ability to deliver them."

Some professors experience active resistance to addressing community archives in their courses from senior colleagues steeped in dominant archival traditions. Other faculty discussed how their curricula had not been systematically reviewed for many years and needed an update to reflect current theories and practices. Lowry said, "Our problem hasn't been opposition so much, just neglect. Our curriculum has just not been overhauled in a really long time. So we have an intro to archives class, and we cover a little bit about community archives in that, but it's only in the last year or so, with major changes in the faculty, that we've had the opportunity to re-examine content of the program" in a more holistic way. Many agreed that their curricula needed to be overhauled. Several noted that the term "community archives" needs to be more clearly defined in various cultural contexts in order for curricula to respond to and reflect local communities.

All agreed that curricular changes are essential if students are to meaningfully engage community archives as interns. Sumayya Ahmed at Simmons University said, "You can't just send students to these organizations that don't have any kind of background [in working with non-dominant communities]." There is a great potential for damage if students are sent to work at community archives without culturally appropriate training and a critical lens on how power impacts archival theories and practices. For example, Douglas at UBC said,

> We're known as a school for being really traditional and kind of authoritarian when it comes to archival practices. I have had plenty of feedback from folks who have said, "You know, your students come in here, and they just tell us how we're doing everything wrong, and how this is a record, and that's not a record, and here's how you do it." This is how they have been taught.

Any internship program focusing on community archives needs to be accompanied by significant curricular changes that decenter dominant archival paradigms and better prepare students for the realities of community-based and community-centered archival work. While MLIS programs are responding to changes in the field, these changes have been not fast enough for many students and faculty.

The current state of archival studies students

Faculty reported an increasing interest in community archives from students, while at the same time they lamented how the whiteness of the student body—reflected also in the faculty—made it difficult to adequately support the needs of community archives representing and serving BIPOC communities.

Several faculty noted that students are increasingly interested in community archives content and have begun to request specific community archives courses. Ahmed said of her students at Simmons,

> Community archives come up a lot in class, because as soon as students learn about community archives, they keep coming back to them. That's the one form of archives that really has meaning for them … Students are really interested. They have to do literature review [for the introductory archives class] and a lot of students always choose community archives to do the literature review on, so it's very popular…

Similarly, Douglas from UBC said,

> When I started here, there was no community archives content at all, and I think it was something that was really wanted by the students. I introduced a class on personal archives, and then, over time that course has become personal and community archives. In our last curriculum review … a course on community archives was flagged as something that is really wanted by students, a single course….

Many faculty agreed that their students were not only interested in community archives but were also requesting and in some cases demanding more culturally relevant, non-dominant content both in all their archives courses and in a specific stand-alone community archives course.

At UCLA and CUNY, faculty report that many of the students come to their specific programs because of the orientation towards community archives. Lowry from CUNY said,

> The majority of our archives students are coming into the program wanting to work in community archives. And I've had students come to me and say "if I really have to take a job in a government or a university archive, how am I going to cope with the ideas that they're working with in those spaces?" and getting really upset. The other thing is that they're coming in with knowledge of their own communities, and a more radical disposition, so they are kind of shocked when they are introduced to the established archival dogma.

As Lowry implied, when more BIPOC and/or LGBTQIA+ students are present in MLIS programs, theories and practices from their communities must take center stage.

However, at least one faculty member expressed frustration that the overwhelming and persistent whiteness of the student body in their program makes it impossible to serve the needs of BIPOC community archives. Ahmed from Simmons remarked that nearly all of her students are white. She then recounted the following experience:

> I'm writing a paper with the first Black Full Professor in the School of Social Work. She is working with these amazing archives of this Black social service organization that started in the 1890s here in Boston. It was run by Black women, and they were very conscious that their materials are important. They have very rare materials … from the 1890s when they started…. They have correspondence with Frederick Douglass. They have correspondence with Ida B. Wells in their collection. Because none of the white schools in Boston would let Black students stay in their dorms, they became a dorm for Black females who wanted to come and study in Boston, including Coretta Scott King. …
>
> So my colleague … got some funding from this group called King Boston, a foundation to keep alive the legacy of Dr. King's time in Boston…. She wants archives students to help her go through these materials. She asked me, "Do you have a Black archives student?" When she asked my department, they sent her all these white students. She asked me, "Do you have any Black students?" and I just looked at her. I was like "no." She just looked at me, like she couldn't believe me; she was literally quiet. She was like, "What? You don't have one black student that could come work with me on this?" And I was like "No."

At some iSchools, white racial hegemony among the MLIS student body makes meaningful community engagement with BIPOC communities nearly impossible. As has been well documented, most MLIS programs reflect an overrepresentation of white students. While it is not always necessary to match students at sites reflecting their own identities, some community archives sites request or require it. For others, matching a student to a site reflecting their own identity is simply culturally appropriate placement. The situation is complex. At UCLA, for example, significant portions of the MLIS student body are Latinx and Asian American, making it possible to easily match Latinx and Asian American students to community archives reflecting their own identities. However, a significant dearth of Black and Indigenous MLIS students make matching appropriate students to sites serving and representing those communities more difficult. Although the demographics are different for different programs and for many the situation is not as dire as Ahmed explained, most programs still have a long way to go to more accurately reflect the racial and ethnic demographics of their surrounding communities. This is a problem that needs to be addressed systemically and collaboratively to enact field-wide change, participants agree. It is, as Salvatore from Dominican University described it, "a basic equity issue."

The current state of internship programs

FOCAS participants explained a variety of mechanisms in place that help administer internships and similar fieldwork or practica experiences at their schools. Many iSchools offer course credit for internships or fieldwork; some require internships for MLIS degrees or specialized certificates. Some schools permit paid work, while others do not. Some iSchools have staff in place who match students to internship sites and supervise them; at others, faculty may supervise student workers as part of coursework or fieldwork.

Some policies favor internships at large, well-established institutions like museums, government agencies, and universities and prohibit or restrict community archives work. Many faculty noted that being supervised by someone with an MLIS degree is a prerequisite for their school's internship program, effectively limiting internships at community archives where there are no MLIS-holding supervisors. Others noted that their schools' policies denote that students must be supervised by someone with an MLIS degree "or equivalent," and that that language provided enough wiggle room to include community archives sites that do not have MLIS graduates on staff. As Cifor noted, "there's some space to interpret things broadly." Brilmyer agreed that while internship policies are set, "there are other options." Brilmyer continued, "I've supervised one student in getting a small grant to do a full-time, three-month, summer internship that was paid through a granting body. And so there are other opportunities, and I know that some students do research assistantships on campus, which is another way that they work with archives or archival professionals." Michelle Caswell noted that at UCLA, while there is a policy that interns are supervised by MLIS-holding supervisors, she was able to get that requirement waived for the Mellon-funded internship program. At CUNY, faculty are in the preliminary stages of "exploring ways in which the for-credit MLIS internship can be harnessed to provide opportunities for engagement with community cultural heritage and the

development of community archives", but it is apparent that compensation will be a key issue (Thayer et al., 2023).

Faculty commented that while "internships" are often highly regulated in their programs, "fieldwork" presents more flexibility in terms of the qualifications of the supervisor and type of institution or organization that hosts. One faculty said that supervising student work at a site of great community significance as "fieldwork" provided the necessary independence and flexibility. She said, "I can make my own moves…. No one can ask me a question about it because they have no idea." However, faculty also reported that shifting community projects from "internships" to "fieldwork" also presented a significant increase in work for them, work that did not count toward their formal teaching load or provide any kind of additional salary support.

A huge issue that surfaced was the ability of students in precarious financial positions to take on unpaid internships in current arrangements. Salvatore from Dominican University summarized,

> There are some students who would like to do a practicum, but they really can't afford to do it, right? They can't quit their job. And so I think there's an equity question there, too, when we're saying to our students—which we do, we require students to do a practicum for the archives program, so they have to do that. But that has always been a big issue, because, you know, you have students who basically attend school, full time and not have to work. And then you have these other students who work full time and can't take on unpaid work. So I think that's an equity issue that is very important to consider.

Adding to this, Brilmyer described the amplification of inequities for disabled students:

> A number of disabled students have approached me about internship or job opportunities with significant concerns about access and accommodations. Some have expressed concerns about community archives having the systems, funds and/or infrastructure to support their access needs—in contrast to larger institutions—in order to gain work experience. So, to me, this complicates how we think of who can take advantage of opportunities to be able to work in community archives, especially ones that represent a part of their identity, for disabled people of color or queer disabled people.

FOCAS participants agreed that expecting or requiring students to take on unpaid work or work in an inaccessible environment is a basic equity issue and that many current policies unfairly disadvantage financially precarious students, contributing to inequities in our field.

Most reported that their programs have recently removed rules prohibiting students from getting paid for work for which they are also getting course credit, but some noted the persistence of such rules. Douglas said, "it's a hard and fast rule at UBC, you cannot get credit for and pay for the same thing." By contrast, other faculty noted increasing sensitivity to the issue of unpaid labor on their schools. Lee said,

> One thing I'm very grateful for is the faculty I work with who are stepping out to support students to be paid and trying to figure out how to do it. My colleagues are putting in the labor to do that. So that's been really nice to not be the only person trying to figure out how to do it. We've got probably like 5 to 10 people who are always thinking and trying to

manipulate the system in a way to ensure equity and support for paid labor in the areas of internships, but also more like negotiate the expectations.

At UCLA, Caswell reported that students have increasingly requested paid internships and the MLIS program manager has begun strongly encouraging institutions to pay student interns. Caswell said that, in her conversations with other faculty in her department, there is an awareness that getting paid for work is an equity issue that enables students from all financial backgrounds to get the necessary experience to succeed professionally.

Some faculty reported having well-established, ongoing relationships with community archives in their area, while others said they would need time to develop those relationships. Many participants are assistant professors who recently moved to their locations and are still establishing themselves in new communities. This has been particularly challenging in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which several participants moved and began their faculty positions without yet being able to fully establish roots and network in person. Several faculty cautioned against the assumption that community archives would automatically want to host interns without getting their feedback first. Instead, they characterized community-based work as slow and relational, necessitating dispensing with assumptions and listening to tough answers. The possibility of refusal and non-participation was also raised as an important consideration.

Another complication was raised around the issue of supervising internships and fieldwork over distances for those faculty who teach in fully online or blended programs. When faculty are supervising students online, it is harder to build relationships at dispersed sites without traveling to directly observe student work.

In summary, the conversation about the current state of archival studies curricula, the demographics of MLIS students, and policies guiding internship programs surfaced several barriers that would need to be addressed to propose a successful North American collaborative paid community archives internship program. These barriers include curriculum that does not fully address community-based memory traditions; the white racial hegemony of students in many MLIS programs; and internship policies that do not reflect the realities of community archives practices.

How to address these barriers: Recommendations

In all three of these areas, FOCAS participants posited that these barriers could be addressed readily with institutional support and external funding. Indeed, participants remarked that funding from external sources would incentivize their deans and chairs to be quite flexible about existing policies and procedures. As Cifor said, "I think money always helps with making things a priority for the administrators." Without a doubt, external funding would be necessary to directly support student labor at community archives. However, our discussion surfaced other areas also in need of funding in order to adequately support a robust community archives paid internship program, as described below.

It is important to stress here what makes the FOCAS Project stand out from other fellowships and internships. The LOC Junior Fellows Program and the Getty Graduate Internship Program, for example, provide fellows and interns with access to the enviable

records and collections of highly regarded or formally recognized individuals, communities or groups, families, corporate bodies, or institutions. Fellows and interns gain experience in established archival programs. Furthermore, the programs aim to provide experiential learning to current students. Paying particular attention to the need for more BIPOC archivists, the FOCAS Project aims to actively recruit students from BIPOC communities. In addition, the project aims to place students in community archives that lack staff and funding and where records and collections may not be processed in a timely manner.

The FOCAS Project is also different from other fellowship programs at LIS schools. As described earlier, the project targets community archives and BIPOC students.

The following is a list of recommendations for how these challenges could be addressed with external financial support: (1) Transform archival studies curricula; (2) Recruit and fund scholarships for BIPOC students; and (3) Craft flexible internship programs. Addressing these challenges and evaluating the results will form the second part of this study.

1. Transform archival studies curricula

Archival studies curricula need to continue to be transformed in order to adequately reflect the theories and practices that have emerged from non-dominant communities.

As Douglas at UBC said, in order for a paid community archives internship program to succeed there,

> We would definitely need some curricular boosting.... We would need a course that's an unlearning course for the students who are interested in community archives. I think it would be also very good if there was a funding opportunity and the ability to be part of a bigger collaborative project. It would make it easier to make a strong rationale as well for adding a course on community archives. The rationale gets difficult when we have to offer so many classes with such limited ability to deliver them. So this collaborative project would actually be the sort of thing that we would really need to be able to say, yes, it's time to devote energy and resources into that specific class.

Another faculty member mentioned a course on decentering whiteness in LIS, which had previously been taught but was no longer on the regularly scheduled roster of courses. Funding community members to co-create archival curricula with faculty would be valuable, but this first requires that universities, programs, and faculty invest the time and resources in redressing past community harms and building respectful and equal relationships with communities. By necessity, this is a slow process and one interlaced with other kinds of reparative and decolonizing work that is necessarily local and specific.

For universities, this also means giving faculty the time and resources to collaboratively redesign curricula. This is key to the success of both a paid community archives internship program and the field as a whole. This could be supported through support for summer salary, course buy-outs, and collaborative workshops in which faculty share syllabi and pedagogical practices. Faculty may also need support to build relationships with community archives sites. Relationship building is crucial work that should be acknowledged for tenure and promotion and can be compensated.

2. Recruit and fund scholarships (including tuition support) for BIPOC students

Faculty can recruit and support more BIPOC MLIS students via scholarships that provide tuition and living expenses. One faculty member recounted a university administrator callously saying, "we can't afford diversity," an assertion that "floored" her. It was clear from this experience that not all administrators were willing to spend internal resources on recruiting and retaining BIPOC students. In the face of this unwillingness to change the racial status quo, external funding is key to making such work a priority.

A paid community archives internship program could be used to recruit BIPOC MLIS students, particularly if tuition and fee remissions are included in addition to an hourly wage. This is a significant barrier, as the current source of funding for the pilot program (the Mellon Foundation) does not fund student tuition. It is crucial, moving forward, that a collaborative program seek additional sources of funding that *do* allow for tuition costs. In the case of UCLA participants, students have been able to fund their living expenses through their hourly wage, but most still graduate with significant debt from tuition and fees.

FOCAS participants proposed a new method of recruiting BIPOC students. If scholarships are available, faculty can recruit people who are already volunteering or working at community archives sites into MLIS programs. MLIS programs can "meet community-based practitioners where they are," in the words of one FOCAS member. Ahmed said, "I think for this situation that I've encountered at Simmons, it has to work a little bit differently [than it does at UCLA.] I think maybe going out to the community and then inviting people to come do their master's degrees, that might work better than assuming that you are going to have the students that you could send to a community." This approach reverses dominant thinking, acknowledging the expertise community-based practitioners already have, and helping to bridge the divide between "community-based practitioners" and "professional archivists." Tuition support would be crucial for these efforts.

3. Craft policies to support flexible internship programs

Policies and procedures governing internship programs need to be designed with enough flexibility to accommodate the realities and needs of many community archives sites. This may mean waiving or eliminating the requirement for an MLIS-holding supervisor currently in place in many MLIS programs and instead recognizing that expertise that comes from community is not only expertise, but an important form of archival expertise. It may mean eliminating outdated regulations that prohibit students from getting course credit for paid work. It may mean offering additional funding and support to archives for increasing accessibility and providing accommodations. It may mean designing remote in-person, online, or blended internships in communities where online students are already embedded. It may mean eliminating the distinction between internships and fieldwork and compensating faculty for what has been considered ad hoc or voluntary supervision of interns at community sites. Flexibility will be key to the success of a program that best meets the needs of students and community archives.

The FOCAS participants understand that changing institutional-level policies is a complex process. In the second part of this study, the FOCAS participants will develop strategies for soliciting and securing institutional policies.

Conclusion: Why addressing these barriers matters moving forward

From our conversation, it is clear that harmful or limiting internship practices at participating universities will need to be dismantled differently. Some have well-established relationships with community archives and stand-alone community archives courses. Those institutions will likely need funding for tuition, intern wages, and site supervisors. At other programs, faculty will need time to build relationships and shift curricula to reflect community-based theories and practices. These institutions will likely need greater support, not just for tuition, wages, and site supervisors, but for pedagogical redesign and community relation building and co-creation as well. FOCAS participants will also need travel support to work with each other and to present findings at conferences. US and Canadian institutions each have some of their own requirements and government-based funding sources that are unique in their own national and local contexts. In order to encourage sustainability and flexibility, we will need to find multiple funders over many years. This article is just the first step in what we hope will be an enduring network of faculty engaging with community archives and supporting the proper valuation of student labor.

At the same time, more work needs to be done from the perspectives of community archivists. Do they see a need for this kind of program? If so, what kind of parameters would best meet their needs? It will be crucial to address their concerns as we move forward.

In conclusion, FOCAS participants shared much enthusiasm for working together to address these challenges. Lowry reports that CUNY students "would be thrilled at this opportunity, if we can knock down some of the barriers that exist in our program." Cifor added that her colleagues would be enthusiastic as well. She said, "I think not just our students, but there is a lot of support amongst my fellow faculty and the staff in this program for thinking about how we can do equity work more, and how we can both kind of serve our students better and do something like this. So, I think we would have a lot of support from my faculty colleagues." Brilmyer added, "These conversations are exciting to not just think of a network of people talking about this, but potentially a network of opportunities for students who want to go elsewhere and establish themselves elsewhere, or work with their own histories that may be really meaningful when a local opportunity is not available that aligns with what they're wanting to be doing."

Participants agree that addressing these barriers, through this and other programs, is not only possible but also crucial for the future relevance of archival studies as a field. Together, we frame it as a basic issue of equity, of who gets to see themselves and their communities in the archival studies classroom, of who can afford to get MLIS degrees, and who can get the training necessary to get paid professional work after graduation. As Vanessa Reyes from the University of South Florida (USF) summarized, "I just think this sells itself. I mean, we're doing something for our students, for communities, and for cultural heritage."

What does a liberatory pedagogy look like for applied archival education, and what is the role of applied archival education, supervised by and for community, in liberating archival education more generally from white and Western hegemony? What is the role of a collaborative and co-created community-based internship in forming a more representative

student body, and what does such a body, armed with community know-how, make possible for liberatory praxis in other archival contexts? The possibilities set in motion when we critique established educational arrangements open many new possibilities but also present certain challenges.

For FOCAS, working in places where dominant modes more or less shape curricula, institutional procedures, educational norms, and forms of community interaction, the challenges will include not parachuting in, not extracting knowledge, addressing financial inequity, and avoiding transactional consent. The Reciprocity in Research Records Collaborative's nine key principles provide a roadmap to beginning this work. Just like community-engaged archival research, community-engaged archival education should be shaped by relational consent, mutual benefit, investment, humility, accountability, transparency, equity, reparation, and amplification (Caswell et al., 2021). Crafting archival studies curricula and internships that embody these principles will take time and effort, but FOCAS is up for the challenge.

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Notes

1 See https://communityarchiveslab.ucla.edu/internships/
2 An additional 5% did not disclose their race.
3 For a recent example of this critique, see the student criticism of MLIS programs recently voiced, see Association of Canadian Archivists (2021). For a now decade-old analysis, see Pugh (2011). The Society of American Archivists has created mentorship programs to support MLIS students from BIPOC and disabled communities.

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