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LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY RECEIVES \$1 MILLION MELLON FOUNDATION GRANT TO EXPAND PUBLIC LIBRARY MEMORY LABS

Los Angeles (CA) – Wednesday, December 6, 2023 – The Mellon Foundation awarded \$1 million to bolster the Los Angeles Public Library’s (LAPL) memory labs for *Your Story is Ours: Memory and Belonging in Los Angeles*, a new LAPL initiative cultivating community archival practices. This marks the first investment of its kind by the Mellon Foundation to the Los Angeles Public Library, signifying a shared commitment to reveal, preserve, and tell more authentic, reflective, and nuanced stories.

The Library Foundation of Los Angeles (LFLA) will serve as a collaborator and fiscal agent for the five-year grant, which was awarded as part of the Mellon Foundation’s Public Knowledge program that aims to increase equitable access to knowledge to help build more informed, heterogeneous, and civically engaged societies.

LAPL’s *Your Story is Ours* initiative incorporates new strategies to empower individuals to preserve oral histories and digitize objects, both for personal use and potential inclusion within LAPL’s esteemed special collections. The project will support the creation of six new Memory Labs with technology and supportive services to cultivate community archiving and supplement LAPL’s existing publicly accessible digitization resources.

LAPL’s Memory Lab program currently includes the Do-It-Yourself Memory Lab, Mobile Memory Lab, workshops, and online resources. The DIY Memory Lab, housed in the cutting-edge Octavia Lab makerspace at Central Library, allows for free self-service digitization of photos, videos, sound recordings, and other media. The Mobile Memory Lab, led by LAPL Digitization & Special Collections staff, offers patron assistance and collects narratives, images, and diverse artifacts portraying L.A. life. Workshops and online resources aid users in preserving physical and digital possessions while accessing valuable resources for personal and community archiving.

With this grant funding, LAPL will spearhead the development of a scalable archiving model in collaboration with Los Angeles' Black, LGBTQ+ Latinx, and unhoused communities—integral populations to enhance its special collections. This initiative will establish robust processes and protocols for library staff to facilitate community-led archiving projects and host engaging activities promoting personal archiving among these historically underrepresented groups of Angelenos. Additionally, the grant will help facilitate a streamlined process to invite individuals and communities to contribute their digital artifacts and stories to LAPL's special collections, thus enriching and expanding its archival offerings to more closely reflect L.A.'s diverse communities.

“We are thrilled to have the Mellon Foundation supporting this critical work,” said City Librarian John F. Szabo. “This significant investment will enhance the Library's vital role as storyteller and memory keeper and allow us to discover, preserve, and celebrate the untold histories of the City of Angels.”

The project is expected to produce more than 140 public programs, including personal archiving days, community scanning sessions, and oral history gatherings. These inclusive programs encompass training sessions on Memory Lab equipment, engaging community talks, dynamic public presentations, live demonstrations, and captivating mini exhibits.

About the Los Angeles Public Library

Celebrating 150 years of service, the Los Angeles Public Library serves the largest and most diverse urban population of any library in the nation. A recipient of the nation's highest honor for library service—the National Medal from the Institute of Museum and Library Services—its Central Library, 72 branch libraries, collection of more than eight million books, state-of-the-art technology accessible at lapl.org, and thousands of public programs provide everyone with free and easy access to information and the opportunity for lifelong learning.

About the Library Foundation of Los Angeles

The Library Foundation of Los Angeles (LFLA) helps advance the mission of the Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL). LFLA has raised over \$160 million in support of the LAPL that serves the largest and most diverse urban population of any library in the nation. Through fundraising, advocacy, and innovative programs, the Library Foundation strengthens the Los Angeles Public Library and promotes greater awareness of its valuable resources. For more information, please visit lfla.org.

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