



Announcing California Humanities' 2023 Library Innovation Lab Awardees

Supporting public libraries through humanities programs that welcome immigrants.

For Immediate Release

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March 23, 2023—(Oakland, CA)— California Humanities is delighted to announce awards for the 2023 Library Innovation Lab (LIL) grant program to ten public libraries in rural, suburban, and urban communities across the state, ranging from Sonoma County in the north to San Diego County in the south.

Now in its seventh year, this nationally recognized program supports public libraries as they provide welcoming experiences to newcomers and strive to build more inclusive communities. This year's group of participating libraries aim to engage a wide range of immigrants, including people coming from Afghanistan, the Philippines, Mexico, Central America, Iran, and Ukraine. To date, 74 libraries have participated in the program, reaching over 50,000 Californians through oral history projects, film screenings and discussions, memoir and zine writing activities, podcasts and mini-documentaries, art and history exhibits, and celebrations of the food, music, dance and other cultural traditions immigrants have brought to our state.

LIL provides a nine-month practice-based professional development experience to each participating librarian along with grants of up to \$5,500 to associated libraries. Beginning this month, the 2023 cohort members will research, design, implement, and assess a small scale, short-term public humanities project at their library by the end of the year. Working in a collaborative learning environment that incorporates group meetings as well as individualized advising, they will experiment with new approaches to programming, acquiring new skills and knowledge, building capacity to serve immigrants as well as all constituents.

“We are proud to welcome this cohort to be part of the Library Innovation Lab,” said Julie Fry, President & CEO of California Humanities. “The libraries in this group follow the dozens of participants that have contributed to the success of the program to date and represent a wide swath of California’s geographic and cultural diversity. We are looking forward to seeing how they will continue building capacity in their communities in order to serve both newly arrived immigrants to longtime residents.”

2023 Library Innovation Lab Awardees:

Daly City Public Library, Celina Tirona, Project Director

Escondido Public Library, Azar Katouzian, Project Director

Hayward Public Library, Reina Escovedo, Project Director

OC Public Libraries, Saidy Valdez, Project Director

Oceanside Public Library, Jorge Garcia, Project Director

Riverside County Library System, Michael Jacome, Project Director

Riverside Public Library, Hayden Birkett, Project Director

San Leandro Public Library, Portia Carryer, Project Director

Sonoma County Library, Megan Jones, Project Director

Yolo County Library, Ruby Buentello, Project Director

About Library Innovation Lab:

The Library Innovation Lab was made possible with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, California Humanities, the State of California through the California State Library, and the generosity of individual donors. [Learn more here](#).

About California Humanities:

California Humanities, a nonprofit partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities, promotes the humanities—focused on ideas, conversation and learning—as relevant, meaningful ways to understand the human condition and connect people to each other in order to help strengthen California. California Humanities has provided grants and programs across the state since 1975. To learn more, visit calhum.org, or like and follow on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

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The 2023 Library Innovation Lab cohort convening on March 16, 2023. Photo by Kerri Young.