

Current Strategic Initiative: Research Awards Program

Review Questions

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In Brief (from the website <https://library.osu.edu/research-awards>)

University Libraries offers monetary research awards to support research projects that require travel to Columbus to undertake substantial on-site use of Ohio State's distinctive collections. These awards are open to non-Ohio State graduate students, faculty, and independent scholars who are at least 18 years old and live more than 60 miles from the Ohio State University's main campus.

Awards:

- Lucy Shelton Caswell Research Award - Funded by the Will and Ann Eisner Family Foundation, this award of up to \$2,500 supports researchers who need to travel to Columbus, Ohio, to use the collections of the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum.
- Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center Archival Program Research Award - This award offers \$5,000 to defray travel expenses, living expenses, or research costs for on-site use of Polar Archives collections to support researchers who might otherwise be unable to travel to Columbus, Ohio. (Award begun 2018)
- Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute Visiting Research Award - Funded by a bequest from Jerome Lawrence, the Lawrence and Lee Theatre Research Institute award supports research in the performing arts grounded in the collections of the Theatre Research Institute. (Award begun 2011)
- Irwin and Jane Spector Research Award - The Spector award provides grants of \$750 per week for a minimum of two and maximum of four weeks for research that requires significant use of the Lawrence and Lee Theatre Research Institute's collections on Dalcroze Eurhythmics. (Award begun 2017)

Strategic Directions & Focus Areas:

- Empower Knowledge Creators: Leveraging distinctive collections for use
- Model Excellence: Organizational efficiency and impact

How we got to where we are (brief history)

For years TRI has had funding from endowments to provide annual research awards to scholars wanting to use the collections. When BICLM and Archives also received sufficient funding to offer awards, the Special Collections Heads and Lisa Carter decided to pause the TRI awards program and develop a coordinated Research Awards Program for all special collections that had funding.

Where we are now?

After initial rounds of awards funding under these new guidelines, we understand where we need to define better processes and make some tweaks to the program. There are two main areas where we are working to address issues:

- a. Awarding money to foreign awardees: Awarding money is easy to do when the awardee is from the United States. However, for foreign awardees, we have encountered difficulties

effectively getting all the paperwork through Ohio State's system. As well, understanding the US/foreign country tax relationship and being able to explain the implications to scholars in advance is really important (Issues encountered last year in awarding the Byrd Award include the large number of forms, not knowing when to submit them, documentation that was received but not found/retrievable in the system, confusion on campus about optimal timeline for paperwork). Laura Kissel has been working closely with the Libraries business office in order to develop and document better processes and a timeline for awarding monies to foreign scholars. Next steps include creating an internal process document laying out steps and timeline, and an FAQ for awardees.

- b. Adapting the application timeline for each of the special collections: We have realized that scholars of each of the awarding special collections have different needs and would benefit from having for flexibility in creating their application deadlines. For example, TRI awardees typically need to ask for sabbatical in order to travel to the collection, and so need a longer period in which to complete their research. Whereas BICLM awardees typically want to come soon after getting their award. Polar may be a combination of the two, depending on the needs of the awardees, so we may need to have more flexibility in determining the period between the award and when the research is accomplished.

Is the project/initiative succeeding in meeting its intended objectives? How is success being measured against strategic priorities (measures of success)?

Yes, despite the issues described above, awards have been granted and awardees have come and successfully completed their research. All of the TRI scholars have had excellent research experiences that have resulted in significant publications and creative work. (Also see Successes/Highlights below.)

We are also contributing to the Invest in People and Model Excellence strategic plan pillars in our iterative approach to developing our Research Awards Program, learning from what's going right and making changes where improvement is needed.

Were the resources allocated for the project/initiative adequate? If not, why?

Yes, our endowments/gifts are sufficient to cover the expenses of our awardees as described on our website. For TRI, to be competitive, our research awards should compare favorably to similar awards offered by institutions with performing arts collections such as the Ransom Center and Harvard's Houghton Library. These amounts have increased over time, and we would like to be able to be in the ballpark. For Byrd Polar, with so many polar researchers coming from foreign countries, the size of the award is important. Laura Kissel has gotten good feedback from the first award winner about the amount of the award. He said that it was substantial enough to make foreign travel and research possible, whereas a smaller award would not defray all or most expenses. For these reasons, if times get tough, we will give the award less frequently, rather than reduce the amount.

Are there successes/highlights to share?

TRI: Our awardees give a public lecture, presentation, or master class that engages their work and OSUL collections with students and faculty in their areas of interest. The large work that is

the outcome of our first scholar, Dr. Sharon Marcus's (Orlando Harriman Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University) research, *The Drama of Celebrity*, is forthcoming in June from Princeton University Press. She has also published on her TRI work in *Theatre Survey*, journal of the American Society for Theatre Research. Melvyn Heard, internationally recognized expert on magic lanterns published on the TRI pose plastique slides in *TD&T*, journal of the U.S. Institute for Theatre Technology. That article has been translated and republished several times. Award-winning playwright Bianca Sams explored the Robert Breen collection documenting the 1952-56 Department of State funded tour of *Porgy and Bess* and wrote *Just Porgy* which focuses on the behind the scene struggles of actors and production team to deal with issues of racism and segregation.

Byrd Polar: It's too soon to provide more than anecdotal evidence, but signs point to success. Our first award winner was here in January, 2019. He gave a talk at the Byrd Center about his research here, and that was well received and well attended. We also recently had researchers in the reading room from Australia, Canada, and the UK, and all were aware of the award and mentioned the possibility of applying for the next round. So people in the Polar community are hearing about it and are interested.

Is the project/initiative encountering any barriers to success? If so, what?

Described above under "Where are we now?"

Is the project/initiative on time? Have you had to alter timelines? If so, why?

Described above under "Where are we now?"

Should the Libraries continue investments in this project/initiative? Why or why not?

Yes, this is an important service to scholars (including graduate students and independent scholars), makes our collections more accessible for research, and is a great way to promote the services and collection of The Ohio State University Libraries.

We anticipate increased funding to support research awards in other areas – for example, Rare Books and Manuscripts. And there is already funding that has been received from a donor to Japanese Studies to support a research award.