

Digital Commonwealth Educational Fellowship

Boston Public Library and Digital Commonwealth, Inc. are searching for a candidate with a background in education and curriculum development for a one-year fellowship to conduct research and outreach to the Massachusetts educational community to increase awareness and usage of digitized historical collections available on DigitalCommonwealth.org.

The Fellow will conduct a range of activities intended to increase educational engagement with online digital collections, including:

- Surveying K-12 educators and school librarians to learn about their current usage of digital primary source materials
- Engaging district-level curriculum directors and Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education administrators to promote integration of digital collections in the classroom
- Representing and promoting Digital Commonwealth at relevant educational conferences and meetings
- Assisting with the creation and testing of online learning resources covering themes relevant to Massachusetts history and social studies curricula

The goal of the fellowship will be to help Boston Public Library better understand how digital collections can be integrated into classroom activities and Open Educational Resources (OER), what primary sources are most relevant to statewide learning standards, and how Digital Commonwealth (as both an online collection and an organization) can be a more prominent resource for improving educational outcomes.

Background

Since 2005, the Boston Public Library has operated a successful and vibrant digitization program focused on making rare materials and primary source documents available for free online. Digital Commonwealth, Inc. is a non-profit collaborative organization founded in 2006 in partnership with BPL to support the creation, management, and dissemination of historical materials held by Massachusetts institutions. In 2012, the BPL received state funding to expand our digitization and access services to any library, historical society, museum, or cultural heritage institution in Massachusetts.

To this point, BPL and other Massachusetts libraries have collectively digitized over one million digital objects – including photographs, letters, manuscripts, postcards, artwork, audiovisual materials, newspapers, books, and more – and made them available on digitalcommonwealth.org or archive.org. Digital Commonwealth and the BPL are keenly interested in expanding access, awareness, and use of these resources in K-12 environments.

Goals and Outcomes

The fellowship's purpose is to build a roadmap to increase engagement and use of digital collections within schools in Massachusetts. As part of this effort, the fellow will investigate two major areas of interest:

Structure:

- How do teachers and students typically access primary source materials online and what types of materials do they use?
- How can the digitalcommonwealth.org website be improved to make research easier in a K-12 setting?
- What formats for educational resources (e.g. primary source sets, lesson plans, digital exhibitions, etc.) are most helpful for teachers and students?

Adoption:

- What is the best level to perform outreach to spread awareness of our resources? E.g., individual teachers, superintendents, DESE?
- What are examples of heavily used primary source materials resources, whether commercially offered or open source? Why are they so heavily used?
- What resources should the BPL and Digital Commonwealth commit (staff, money, time, equipment) to best assure wide use and adoption of our resources in a K-12 environment?

Duties

The Fellow will meet regularly with the grant project manager and other stakeholders to report on the progress and direction of their research. They will conduct this research by reading background materials, creating case studies, sending surveys, interviewing focus groups, attending professional conferences, and any other activities that could inform the above questions. In addition to the salary, there will be funding available to help facilitate these activities, including travel, conference fees, and stipends and honoraria for research participants.

The Fellow will coordinate with Digital Commonwealth and BPL personnel to identify collections and develop new educational resources that address the requirements surfaced through their research, with the goal of finding teachers willing to test these materials in the classroom during the latter half of the 2023-24 academic year. The Fellow will also create a set of online toolkits targeted at different grade levels and subject areas that can be used by any cultural heritage institution to conduct a digital collections-focused outreach program with their local school community.

Throughout the year, the fellow will communicate the results of their work and analyze those results for the grant project manager and other stakeholders. By the end of the fellowship term, the fellow will produce a white paper that summarizes and analyzes the results of all the research performed. They will also provide a proposed strategy for future work, sustaining collaboration, and developing a roadmap for permanent educational outreach positions at libraries to best serve the interests of BPL and Digital Commonwealth, Inc. to expand use and engagement of DigitalCommonwealth.org in K-12 schools in Massachusetts.

In April 2024 the fellow will present on the state of their work so far at the annual Digital Commonwealth conference.

Qualifications

1. Master's degree in education or a related field, or current enrollment in an accredited education or related graduate program
2. At least three years of classroom teaching experience, preferably in history or social studies.
3. Familiarity with Massachusetts curriculum standards and existing professional development opportunities for educators, particularly the [History and Social Science Framework](#) produced by DESE.
4. Coursework or experience in research methods. Experience with social science research methods like surveys and focus groups preferred.
5. Familiarity with primary source research and library practices.
6. Excellent writing and oral communication skills.
7. Massachusetts residence is preferred.

Term

July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024

This position is a one-year term-limited position. The compensation does not include benefits or paid vacation. This position will be primarily remote. There may be a few in-person meetings throughout the contract period at the Boston Public Library in Boston.

Salary

\$69,941.04.

The grant includes a budget to support travel and conference fees.

Health insurance and other non-salary benefits are not included in this fellowship.

Location

Remote, with quarterly on-site meetings at Boston Public Library. Massachusetts residents preferred.

To apply, please submit a resume and references to jsadow@bpl.org.