

November 15, 2014

Helen Cullyer, Program Officer

The Mellon Foundation

140 East 62nd Street

NY, NY 10065

Re: **Cover Letter**

Dear Helen,

The University of Texas at Austin School of Information respectfully submits the enclosed grant proposal, *Central Lunatic Asylum for Colored Insane: Applying digital technology to issues of access, privacy, and retention of historically significant state mental health records and documents.*

The School of Information at The University of Texas at Austin proposes to determine how the applications of critical policy analysis, contemporary digital technology, and archival preservation methods combine to assist state mental health systems to update their traditional approaches to competing policy issues of access, privacy, and retention of historically significant mental health records and documents. Although the initial focus of the project from 2008 to 2012 was on digitizing and preserving Virginia’s historically significant records and documents from the first mental hospital in the U.S. for African Americans, other state mental health systems have similar unresolved dilemmas about preservation, access, privacy, and retention. The project will accomplish three overlapping goals: (1) conduct an analysis that compares and contrasts existing state policies and federal laws that govern preservation, access, privacy, and retention of mental health records and documents; (2) adapt existing innovative web-based technologies, inclusive of a secure dark archive, to build a digital library model that balances access and privacy to historical mental health records and documents; and, (3) apply the web-based model to the 800,000 pages of historically significant records and documents from the Central Lunatic Asylum for Colored Insane to insure increased access for families and scholars and the long-term preservation of the original records and documents. The findings and policy recommendations from the project are expected to stimulate long-term legal, legislative, scholarly, and familial interest in access, privacy, and retention of historically significant mental health records and documents.

We are requesting $763,000 from the Mellon Foundation to support this three-year project that will start April 1, 2015, and conclude March 31, 2018.

Each member of our research team has read, discussed, understood, and agreed to comply with all policy guidelines of the Mellon Foundation.

Sincerely,

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