Instructions:
Please submit the narrative application as a single PDF file to Collaboratory@umich.edu by midnight on July 1, 2016 (we recommend writing the narrative in Word and saving the file as a PDF for submission). This form along with the budget form may be separate files from the application but need to be included in one single email submission.

Narrative Application:
Please observe the word limits indicated and indicate details in the narrative as outlined on the website.

2. Describe your research project. (Tell us why you want to pursue the project.) (1000 words)
3. Describe the centrality of collaborative activity to your project and explain how you will pursue the project collaboratively. (1000 words)
4. Describe the members of the research team. (500 words)
5. Describe the outcomes of your project. (500 words)
6. Describe your project management plans. (500 words)
7. Describe documentation and assessment plans for your project. (500 words)
8. Please provide a timeline for your project.
9. Please complete the Project Grant Budget Worksheet (available on the website)

Project Title
Precarity Lab: A Thick Humanities Collaboration on Digital Inequality

Provide a 250 Word Abstract of the Project.

Our project advances a new analytic for tracing how precarity unfolds across disparate geographical sites and cultural practices in the digital age. Digital technologies—whether apps like Uber built on the spine of “flexible” labor or platforms like Airbnb that sell themselves as services while they shift accountability to users—have assisted in consolidating the wealth and influence of a small number of players in the global north, even as they have produced increasingly insecure conditions of work and life for racial, ethnic, and sexual minorities, women, indigenous people, migrants, and peoples in the global south. At the same time, precarity has become increasingly generalized, expanding to include even the creative class and digital producers themselves.

The accelerated if highly uneven expansion of precarity demands a novel scholarship...
1. Identify the Research Team

**Principle Investigator (PI)** - include title, dept affiliation(s) & unique name

Lisa Nakamura, Gwendolyn Calvert Baker Collegiate Professor of American Culture, American Culture (lnakamur)

**Faculty Team Members** - include title, dept affiliation(s) & unique name

Irina Aristarkhova, Associate Professor, Stamps School of Art and Design (airina)
Anna Watkins Fisher, Assistant Professor, American Culture and Residential College (annawfis)
Tung-Hui Hu, Assistant Professor, English + Zell Writers’ Program (hhui) -- Fall 2017 only
Silvia Lindtnr, Assistant Professor, School of Information (lindtnr)

**Grad Student Team Members** - include dept affiliation(s) & unique name

Iván Chaar-López, PhD Candidate, American Culture, Latina/o and Digital Studies (ichaar)
Meryem Kamil, PhD Candidate, American Culture and Digital Studies (mkamil)
Others identified (alternative): Cindy Lin, PhD Pre-Candidate, Information (cindylky).

**Undergraduate Team Members** - if applicable

NA

Support of PI by Chair/Director/Associate Dean/Dean

The Project Investigator (PI) of each research team applying for Humanities Collaboratory funding must receive approval from each unit in which the faculty member holds a funded appointment. For LSA, this would normally be a department chair or program director; for a LSA chair/director, the Associate Dean; for faculty in SMTD or TCAUP, faculty may need approval from an associate dean or the dean of the school/college.

The collaborative team, if funded, will spend September 1, 2016 through August 31, 2018 working collaboratively to fully develop a research project.

By signing below the Chair/Director/Associate Dean/Dean signifies awareness that the PI has applied for Collaboratory Project Funding and agrees to support the terms of the project (one course release in Winter 2017 and one course release in either Fall 2017 or Winter 2018 to be agreed upon between the PI and his/her Chair/Director/Associate Dean/Dean). The Collaboratory will provide direct compensation for 25% of the PIs salary through the appropriate HR process thereby releasing 25% of the PIs salary to the unit/school/college where the course is released.

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Project Investigator (PI):

June Howard

Chair

**This form may be signed electronically.**
Precarity Lab: A Thick Humanities Collaboration on Digital Inequality

Our project advances a new analytic for tracing how precarity unfolds across disparate geographical sites and cultural practices in the digital age. Digital technologies—whether apps like Uber built on flexible labor or platforms like Airbnb that shift accountability to users—have assisted in consolidating the wealth and influence of a small number of players. These platforms have also furthered increasingly insecure conditions of work and life for racial, ethnic, and sexual minorities, women, indigenous people, migrants, and peoples in the global south. At the same time, precarity has become increasingly generalized, expanding to include even the creative class and digital producers themselves.

The accelerated if highly uneven expansion of precarity demands a novel scholarship capable of attending to its networked and multi-sited character. We propose prototyping such a mode of inquiry, which we loosely term “thick humanities,” to produce a multi-authored monograph and digital-born critical mapping project that interrogates the complexity of political, economic, and social systems of precarity as they transcend specific locales or individual data points. To accomplish this, Precarity Lab comes together as an interdisciplinary and intergenerational team to chart the geopolitical entanglements of precarity across sites our lab members have been studying for years: from the placement of Palestinian Internet cables and the manufacture of electronics by Navajo women, to the deployment of drones on the U.S.-Mexico border and the techno-cultural productions of Chinese makers, among other sites.

1. Identify the research team.

- P.I.: Lisa Nakamura, Gwendolyn Calvert Baker Collegiate Professor of American Culture, American Culture (lnakamur)
- Faculty team members:
  - Irina Aristarkhova, Associate Professor, Stamps School of Art and Design (airina)
  - Anna Watkins Fisher, Assistant Professor, American Culture and Residential College (annawfis)
  - Tung-Hui Hu, Assistant Professor, English + Zell Writers’ Program (hhui)--Fall 2017 only
  - Silvia Lindtner, Assistant Professor, School of Information (lindtner)
- Graduate team members:
  - Iván Chaar-López, PhD Candidate, American Culture, Latina/o and Digital Studies (ichaar)
  - Meryem Kamil, PhD Candidate, American Culture and Digital Studies (mkamil)
  - Others identified (alternative): Cindy Lin, PhD Pre-Candidate, Information (cindylky).

2. DESCRIBE RESEARCH PROJECT (Tell us why you want to pursue the project.) (1000 words):

- What original contribution(s) will the project make to the humanities field(s) in which it intervenes? Please account for its relationship to earlier or existing projects, both individual and collaborative.
What original contribution(s) does your project make to the humanities broadly conceived? In other words, how does the project advance the role of the humanities in the academy and in the world?

This project analyzes the role of digital technology in multiplying precarity. Borrowed from the European and Latin American left, the language of precarity has been taken up increasingly in digital studies to describe the new norms of risk and uncertainty generated by creative and digital economies unregulated by labor laws, as exemplified by sharing economy start-ups like Uber and Airbnb. We invoke the term precarity to refer to those populations that have been disproportionately affected by the forms of inequality and insecurity digital technologies have generated despite the new affordances and possibilities they offer. For example, Uber Passport, the online transportation company’s latest venture to transport passengers across international borders, promotes a brave new borderless world, while depending on the increasingly vulnerable labor of drivers who seek work in San Diego while living in Mexico, picking up passengers along the way.

Precarity Lab traces the unfolding of digital precarity across a network of geographical sites and critical practices, from the placement of Palestinian Internet cables to the manufacture of electronics by Navajo women, from the production and deployment of drones on the U.S.-Mexico border to the techno-cultural productions of Chinese makers. Our project contributes to, and helps bridge, ongoing debates on precarity and digital networks in the fields of critical computing, postcolonial studies, visual culture, and information sciences. Our question is not what but how and why. Rather than simply ask what these sites and practices are, we explore how they relate to one another and what motivates the connections and frictions between them. How do they participate in and how are they configured by larger flows of capital, bodies, cultural practices, trade, and labor?

Consider the stories of precarity told by two Precarity Lab members’ respective research sites: San Diego/Tijuana and Shenzhen, China. Both regions today appear on the global map of tech innovation; Shenzhen, formerly known as site of mere copycatting, is today celebrated as “Silicon Valley of Hardware” (WiredUK 2016), while San Diego/Tijuana has become “the new China” through innovative “quicksourcing” (Anderson 2013). Such stories of innovation and progress mask the costs of “development” and “opportunity,” whether the dire working conditions of the factory worker in China who assembles phones and computers we use on a daily basis, or the exploitation of software enthusiasts’ free labor in Tijuana that turns hardware into DIY drones and smart wearables. Together they demonstrate how precarity is masked through stories of technological innovation and progress. Examining sites like Tijuana and Shenzhen through one another, we can begin to understand how these cities are not just built on an infrastructure of precarity but further extend it.

Adapting Tricia Wang’s notion of “thick data,” which we find to be a promising template for an ambitious future of humanities scholarship, we term this multi-sited critical humanities approach “thick humanities.” A thick humanities approach insists on the central place of the humanities in large-scale and multi-sited research too often ceded to the big sciences and digital humanities. Synthesizing critical reading and theorizing, digital production and ethnographic methods, our approach is informed by a growing body of work in critical computing and digital studies that has challenged a tendency to overinvest in technological solutions, such as big data and digital mapping, to critical problems (Bell 2013, boyd and Crawford 2012, Crawford 2013, Wang 2013).
Wang (2013) argues that where "big data reveals insights with a particular range of data points, thick data reveals the social context of and connections between data points." Against the doxa that complex systems such as transnational financial networks, digital infrastructures, global commodity flows require more computational analysis, we insist on the urgent role of institutionally supported, "open source" collaborative humanities research.

Thick humanities interrogates the complexity of political, economic, and social systems of power that shape contemporary digital configurations and transcend individual sites, locales, or data points. It is committed to a crucial role for the humanities in a critical digital scholarship. As a method, a thick humanities approach complements critical reading with critical computing; it advocates collaborative research and writing; and it proposes a multi-sited research method rooted in self-reflexive and deep engagements with specific locales. In this way, we draw inspiration from Lisa Lowe’s 2015 *The Intimacy of Four Continents* that spans Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas to link colonialism to the rise of Western liberalism. Lowe’s project models the kind of self-reflexive, multi-sited deep engagement we aspire to perform in our own reading of new media as situated in larger systems of power before new media ceases to be new.

We intend to undertake this through a variety of forms of experimental collaboration: co-writing, joint theoretical and ethnographic research, the creation of a public research collective, and generating research outcomes that take advantage of new platforms for scholarly production and dissemination. The new platforms we examine will include Mukurtu—a free and open source platform for narrating, sharing, and managing culturally sensitive content in ethically and culturally responsive ways.

Precarity Lab imports the immersive and cooperative aspects of the lab model to our collective benefit as humanists, while remaining critically aware of the economic and cultural conditions that make this model intelligible to the market. Labs train junior participants through practical work and collaboration; lab members teach each other how to publish, how to conduct experiments, and how to present work to the academic community. Even as it facilitates mentorship for graduate students and junior faculty, the lab model potentially promises intellectual rewards for established faculty in a moment when they find themselves overburdened with service, alienated from new ideas in their fields, and fixed in the role of mentor rather than co-author.

Institutional structures in the humanities do not typically enable an analysis of systems, ecologies, and economies, especially as they are shifting under our feet. The Humanities Collaboratory grant represents a rare opportunity: the space and resources for opening up the insights of our respective research programs to each other in order to collectively redraw the boundaries of our thinking.

3. Describe the centrality of collaborative activity to your project and explain how you will pursue the project collaboratively. (1000 words)

Humanities research is typically thought of as an isolated act, and this model of single authorship persists despite the myriad ways scholars regularly depend and build on the work of others (e.g. peer review, reading and writing groups, conferences). In the spirit of collaboration, Precarity Lab brings together members’ expertises on different objects and regions (i.e., digital
inequality, identity, politics and cultural processes of digital production; U.S., China, Latin America, and Europe). Collaboration opens up an opportunity for new and unexpected insights.

Rather than a refined form of delegation or curation, our group understands collaboration as a process of transcending our individual intellectual projects to reach a different way of thinking and to produce new questions. We embrace the ambition of collective scholarship as both an effort to achieve an original, collective voice and to place the literatures on precarity and digital networks into conversation with one another. It is, in short, a way of establishing a new school of thought. Our group will put collaboration into practice through:

A) Team-based research and publication: co-authorship, co-editing, co-mentoring, co-interviewing, co-presentation

Precarity Lab models after peer research groups that engage in collaborative approaches to humanities research. In a moment when the risks of intergenerational academic collaboration are arguably the highest, with the normative model of academic accountability, merit, and credit based on individual productivity in flux, the work of Deep Lab, Matsutake Worlds, The Petrocultures Research Cluster, Media@McGill, and Disruption Network Lab models frameworks for humanities research that emphasize collaboration as social, improvisational, and flexible.

We therefore propose to engage collaboration as a means to aggregate, inter-animate, and transcend the local expertise of our individual research. Ours is a method that, borrowing from Anna Tsing (2015) of the Matsutake Worlds Research Group, seeks to “enabl[e] entanglements.” As Tsing elaborates, “[r]ather than knowing the object in advance, as in big science, our group was determined to let our research goals emerge through collaboration.” Inspired by the exciting new collaborative models established by groups like Matsutake Worlds, we ask what new reading practices and analytical forms are possible when the network is not merely an object of study (e.g. social networks, high-speed financial networks, networks of capital)—one in which we all share expertise—but when we use critical methods that link site-specific readings to broader insights into contemporary shifts in political economy.

To facilitate our collaborative skill-building, mapping, and writing, we will meet once a month during the Fall and Winter terms for years 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. Three-hour monthly meetings will be used as critical workshops. These consist of thematic reading discussions, research methods discussions, co-writing sessions, and peer review of our collective writings. We will hold intensive co-writing retreats off-campus in the summer (one in July 2017 and one in 2018, month TBA) lasting between 7 and 10 days. Finally, in 2017 we will use Book Sprints to write our multi-authored monograph that will be published in digital form and in print.

B) Joint research trip to prototype multi-sited and collaborative research in situ

Working as a collective demands that we break from our disciplinary and methodological silos to re-engage the question of digital precarity through an intersection of methods, from ethnography to computing to oral history and archival research. We will share our expertise in methods; those who have already made use of ethnographic and oral history methods (Lindtner, Aristarkhova, Nakamura), computing (Hu), critical reading (Kamil, Fisher), and archival research (Chaar-López) will mentor and help train other Precarity Lab participants.
Specifically, as part of our project, we will conduct a 7-day long collaborative fieldwork project to the digital manufacturing sites that span San Diego, Tijuana, and China for all members of the Precarity Lab. This fieldtrip allows us to prototype our collaborative multi-sited mode of inquiry, thick humanities, in situ. We will visit some of the key sites involved in the manufacture of so-called cutting edge technology including Udrones and 3DRobotics. We will conduct interviews with software developers, assembly line workers, engineers and designers. Two of our Precarity Lab members have established professional relations to these sites due to their long-term engagement with manufacturing, open source software, and hardware maker communities, which will guarantee access for Precarity Lab.

C) Collaborative project-building through critical mapping project on a digital platform

The goal of the critical mapping project is to trace previously invisible networks of digital creativity, use and production beyond more familiar Western-centric production cultures such as Silicon Valley. This mode of digital production allows us to visualize the connections between the several distinct but related sites where precarity manifests.

To do so, we will port selected parts of our scholarly archive to a digital platform such as Mukurtu.org to share and collaborate with research participants, potential collaborators from other universities, public intellectuals, and the public generally. Online platforms are central to us as a way to reach two audiences. One of the audiences is made up of non-academics: independent artists, digital workers, DIY makers and tech activists, and those whose voices are not normally included in academic writing except as informants or subjects. The other audience includes professors, doctoral students, librarians, and independent scholars from the wider academic community.

At the same time as our use of the digital opens up a new platform for collaborative scholarly work, Precarity Lab refuses the liberatory rhetoric around open source and digital networks that asserts accessibility and universality. Our work identifies the gaps, ruptures, and inequalities techno-utopianism does not account for. We self-reflexively engage with digital technology to highlight what Moten and Harney (2013) call the “undercommons of the enlightenment,” defined as “where the work gets done, [and] where the work gets subverted.” Digital platforms like Mukurtu highlight and integrate the limitations and undesirability of open source for precarious populations. Additionally, we plan to supplement our digital mapping project with other multimedia expressions of our work like podcasts, online articles in popular publications, exhibits, and co-authored scholarly publications with collaborators outside academia, among others.

4. Describe the members of the research team. (500 words).

- Diversity is known to increase creativity and to enrich research results. Describe the diverse perspectives represented by each member of your research team (including students, at least for the first year) and what scholarly expertise each team member contributes to your project.
- If you anticipate changes to the research team over the two years of the project, please explain. (Please note that faculty members cannot serve as PIs while on leave.)
Describe the roles and responsibilities of graduate student collaborators. What skills will the students learn? How will working on project-specific activities contribute to the students' intellectual development and to their profile on the job market? What outcomes of the project will be credited to the students?

Our group’s scholarly expertise across a variety of different geographical regions allows for a rigorous analysis of how precarity operates across multiple sites:

Nakamura’s work interrogates the racial/ethnic assumptions embedded in the representations of race in digital media. Nakamura is well acquainted with the digital scholarly community and the world of academic publishing and can find the right venue for publication and dissemination of the work both inside and outside of the mainstream academic community. Lindtner’s research focuses on histories and cultures of “making” and “hacking” in urban China. Lindtner’s training in Informatics brings expertise in social computing and ethnographic method to the group. Aristarkhova has written extensively on hospitality in theoretical approaches to sexual and cultural differences. Aristarkhova also brings her experience as a co-founder of a cyberfeminist postcolonial collective “Undercurrents,” which utilized an early experimental platform thing.net. Fisher contributes expertise on the emergence of new models of resistance under neoliberal conditions of precarity in the context of U.S. and European digital media and performance. As a media historian and former computer programmer, Hu’s research offers historical and material contexts to seemingly born-digital phenomena.

Chaar-López and Kamil are equal partners and contributors in this project because their area of expertise is unduplicated by other members of the group and their methods inspire a transnational focus that we could not achieve in any other way. Kamil’s research centers the materiality of information communications technology and the limitations and possibilities of platforms in facilitating online activism around Palestine. Chaar-López’s research traces how the contemporary use of drones to track and target immigrant bodies in the border is built on the trajectories of cybernetics and Vietnam-era intrusion detection systems.

Senior faculty in the group will take the lead in the following mentoring activities: 1. Map best practices for mentoring doctoral students in collaborative humanities work while keeping them on track with dissertation writing; 2. Train doctoral students how best to represent and claim credit for collaborative digital work on their c.v.’s and to potential employers in the academic and alt-ac job market; 3. Advise students on methods for measuring impact and prestige of digital platforms for their work, in particular new and rapidly changing forms of open access and multi-author humanistic writing.

We will employ advanced undergraduate students in the School of Information, Computer Science, and/or Art and Design who are paid hourly to assist with documentation, programming, design, and curation. Students will experiment with developing the digital form of this project by finding and fixing appropriate links and tagging content.

Should faculty participants go on leave during the time of the grant, we will refer to a roster of alternate faculty who could participate for the time of the leave. The second year’s graduate students will be chosen on a referral basis depending on the skills that are needed during the phase of the project.
5. Describe the outcomes of your project. (500 words)

- What will your collaboration produce? Describe the collaborative nature of the project outcomes (e.g. collaborative writing, collaborative production of a performance, curricular collaboration, etc…).
- How do you plan to communicate the results of your research and to what audiences? We are particularly interested in innovative approaches to scholarly communication and in plans to address the wider public.
- What platforms will you use to communicate your results and why? What technological support will you require and where will you get it?

The primary outcome of this collaborative work is the advancement of a new scholarship of thick humanities on multiple heterogeneous platforms open to academic as well as creative, non-profit, activist, and community-based audiences. We will create a series of concrete and interrelated products that will allow us to prototype this scholarship:

First, we will produce and publish a collaborative multi-authored (6+ authors) monograph, both digital and print, by the end of year 1.

Second, alongside the production of this book, we will document and release this new mode of scholarship as a critical mapping project on a digital platform. Both the multi-authored book and the digital platform constitute the prototyping of this novel mode of inquiry we call thick humanities. They are simultaneously method and outcome.

A third, related outcome of this work is the lab itself. We come together across disciplines and generations. The lab allows us to experiment with and test collaborative authorship/writing, multi-sited and collaborative research, mentorship across disciplines and generations, and the collective circulation of ideas through conferences. In terms of academic and activist audiences the Precarity Lab will present their work at the following conferences including but not limiting to 4S (Society for Social Studies of Science), Allied Media Conference, International/American Studies Association, ACM CHI (Conference on Human Factors of Computing), Society for Cinema and Media Studies, Incite! Color of Violence, the International Communications Association, and the Inter-Society for Electronic Art Conference.

Our methods are inherently tied to a strong commitment to communicate our process and outcomes to a wide variety of audiences including scholarly fields, policy makers, activists, creative makers educators, libraries, and the broader public. We will draw on our team members’ prior expertise in communicating their work to diverse audiences. Precarity Lab members have worked tightly with the communities they study and some of us have already written extensively about this form of deep partnership and collaboration with interlocutors and participants (e.g. Lindtner et al. 2015, Lindtner et al. 2016, Aristarkhova 2003, Aristarkhova 2012).

We will use two platforms to communicate our results to a broad audience: an open-source multi-authored print monograph and the critical mapping project to be hosted online. The critical mapping project will be comprised of the production of podcasts, video documentation, interviews, and visuals of our collaborative work as well as links to our publications, op-ed pieces, reactions to our work, etc. We focus on collaborative forms of scholarship itself by using digital media for production and distribution, but we are also reflexive about those platforms’
affordances and constraints. Like Duke University’s Ecology of Networks lab, we want “to create a dynamic scholarly digital publication that has the viability and esteem of a traditional scholarly print publication but that additionally takes advantage of the affordances of the digital and networked online medium.”

We have identified digital platform provider Mukuru as an open source data management system that allows for differential access—a feature that will be central to our study of precarity, as we may gather information on methods of resistance that cannot be disseminated to a wide audience. We also identified Goldsmith University’s new series titled “Future media speculative thinking for media and technological futures,” as an avenue for publication. The series is “strongly orientated toward feminist, queer, trans and anti-racist perspectives on media and technology,” a welcome fit with Precarity Lab’s expertise and goals.

6. Describe your project management plans. (500 words).

P.I. Nakamura will continue to lead the group, ensure that deadlines are met, meetings are scheduled, track budgets, approve hourly work payroll when needed, mentor graduate student participants, and keep a watchful eye on the workload of team members, in particular junior faculty and dissertators. She will share her professional network of publishers, funders, conference conveners, and other senior scholars with other members of the team and will be its outward-facing representative. Invitations to workshop participants or possible collaborators on and off campus will be originated from her email or snail mail address and signed by her. She will meet with Collaboratory staff and other units on campus to represent the group and report on its progress. She will produce a yearly report on Precarity Lab’s progress for the Humanities Collaboratory staff as well as coordinate the video and written documentation of the Lab’s work for the term of the grant. Drafts of these reports and this documentation will be shared with the Lab’s members to ensure accuracy.

Responsibility for answering general queries about Precarity Lab that come from the PrecarityLab.org email address (inquiries@precaritylab.org) on our website will rotate among other Lab members on a monthly basis.

A graduate student will be employed on an hourly basis as a logistical project manager to deal with tasks such as room reservations, meeting reminders, BlueJeans teleconference scheduling, event planning, travel planning for off site visits, and video documentation of Precarity Lab’s process.

Nakamura will meet one on one twice a semester with graduate students to discuss their progress towards degree, strategies for representing Precarity Lab’s work to employers, and the interface between their sole authored work and the Lab’s work. When doctoral student participants are chosen for Year 2, faculty Lab members from their home departments will perform the same mentoring duties for them.

Nakamura will arrange a facilitated focus group for all members in years 1 and 2 to evaluate the quality of the Lab’s mentoring from both the student and faculty perspective and to incorporate suggestions. Graduate students will fill out an evaluation each year for 5 years starting from year 1 of the project to evaluate the impact of the Lab on their publications, marketability, and professionalization and networking opportunities. These results will be used to produce a final
report on best practices for humanities collaboration. We will also measure the professional impact of the Lab’s copublications using quantitative methods such as Google scholar hits, Academia.edu hits, hits on the published book, tweets and retweets, and traffic on the PrecarityLab.org website.

7. Describe documentation and assessment plans for your project. (500 words)

Throughout the duration of the project, we will document in a variety of forms its unique process of collaboration. This is crucial as part of the success of the project hinges on the development of how-to guides as well as innovative pathways the team develops towards collaborative and networked scholarship.

We will work with a videographer to professionally document key moments during phases of co-authorship, interviews with key stakeholders, brainstorming and face-to-face meet-ups, field trips, writing retreat, and workshop. In addition to select moments of high-end video document, we will use audio recordings to provide insight into the work process as a whole. We will have these recordings professionally transcribed using services such as Scribie. Select video and audio content will be shared online to document and make visible to a broader audience both our process and progress of our work. These digital productions will accompany our massively-multi-authored publication to provide teasers and behind-the-scenes guides. Finally, the collaborative writing project that guides this project also constitutes one of its key outcomes and forms of documentation. The text will appear in both digital and physical form: as a traditional print publication accompanied by a critical digital mapping project produced alongside the monograph. We will work with Mukurtu to develop a repository of content.

Our project’s assessment and evaluation is rooted in a combination of established qualitative research and usability methods such as interviews and focus groups with experts and participants as well as digital metrics and publication metrics.

We will secure letters of support from four expert mentors to comprise an advisory board for our project, each having many years of experience in collaborative research and writing: Sheena Wilson, Anna Tsing, Kim Christen-Withey, and Paul Dourish. We will conduct yearly meet-ups with each of them, if possible in person or otherwise online. During these meet-ups we will discuss our progress as well as our challenges. By the end of the funding period, we will hire an independent researcher who will conduct an in-depth interview with each expert on the process of the group.

In addition to feedback from and assessment of the project through experts, we will also conduct a focus group and interviews with the participants in our group. Interviews will be conducted at the beginning throughout and after the completion of the project. Particular focus here will be on individual gain and progress, the role and functioning of mentorship, and the writing process itself. The focus group will utilize key artifacts produced throughout the duration of the project and the group will collectively reflect on best practices, challenges, and future opportunities. Like the expert interviews, this session will be facilitated by a professional and independent researcher.

Finally, the massively-multi-authored publication and mapping project will be productively used for assessment of the project. We will collect metrics such as citations, sharing, and
cross-referencing of the digital and the paper-based versions of the project. We will also track how the publication and critical digital mapping project appeared in the participant's tenure materials and how it was perceived in the respective academic units.

8. Please provide a timeline for your project.

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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>Spring</td>
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<tr>
<td>(0) Lab meetings &amp; Co-writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1) Writing Precarity Lab Manifesto</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) Multi-authored Book Sprint Residency</td>
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<td>(3) Critical Mapping as Digital Platform</td>
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<td>(4) Multi-Sited Fieldwork</td>
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<td>(5) Writing Refereed journal article</td>
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<td>(6) Presentation of outcomes at conferences</td>
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<tr>
<td>(7) Publications</td>
<td>X (1)</td>
<td>X (2)</td>
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In our timeline, we have accounted for our partially overlapping phases of the project:
To start, the Precarity Lab will hold 3-hour-long meetings every month (0) throughout the duration of the grant. These meetings will comprise of reading discussions, co-writing and peer-to-peer workshops.

Two other activities will be pursued throughout the duration of the grant and these include: contributing to and managing content in our critical mapping project (3), and presenting our outcomes at academic and activist conferences (6).

**Fall 2016** will see us writing our Precarity Lab manifesto (1) which will outline the goals, methods, and sites for our new mode of inquiry, the thick humanities. Our goal is to publish the manifesto in **Winter 2017**. During this same term, Precarity Lab will pursue a multi-authored book sprint residency at Banff, Alberta (2).

The work pursued there will continue as we develop and polish our book draft into a finalized version in **Spring 2017**.

Our critical mapping project’s website will be launched in **Fall 2017**.

We will embark on our multi-sited fieldwork to Tijuana/San Diego in **Winter 2018** (4). Materials collected and generated from this trip will be combined with our members’ independent research into a peer-reviewed article to be written in **Spring/Summer 2018** (5). This peer-reviewed article will be spearheaded by the graduate students and submitted to *Critical Inquiry*. 
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Dr. Kimberly Christen Withey  
Mukurtu Project Director  
Director, Digital Technology and Culture Program  
Washington State University  
Pullman WA, 99164  
kim@mukurtu.org  

July 1, 2016

Dear Humanities Collaboratory Review Committee,

I am writing in support of the Precarity Lab: A Thick Humanities Collaboration on Digital Inequality Humanities Collaboratory project lead by Dr. Lisa Nakamura. The project is a timely response to understanding and engaging critically and practically with issues of digital inequality across networks from Palestine to Najavo country, the U.S.-Mexico border to China. As the Project Director for Mukurtu CMS—a free and open source tool that built with and for Indigenous communities globally to manage, share and narrate their digital heritage in ethically-minded and culturally responsive ways— I have seen firsthand the need to explore how networks are created, transformed and managed across differences—linguistic, social, cultural and political. In fact, the projects that have used Mukurtu CMS to date have all leveraged local networks of kin, places, and relationships to highlight the diversity of cultural heritage.

The Precarity Lab project lends itself to the Mukurtu platform as a way to tell multiple stories, maintain ethical relationships to knowledge and provide an online and dynamic space for the texts and their digital components. Mukurtu CMS allows for varied types of media—texts, audio, video and photos—all to be woven together through “digital heritage items”—linked together with the ability to be annotated and curated. Mukurtu’s “multi-page document” viewer uniquely allows authors and other stakeholders to add comments, additional media, and notes to each page. We created this feature specifically for underserved communities whose stories were told by other. For example, one collection of boarding school yearbooks have been annotated, enriched with local stories and enlivened with new media by Umatilla, Warm Springs and Yakama tribal
members all using Mukurtu CMS as part of the Plateau Peoples’ Web Portal project. Different from other digital tools and platforms, Mukurtu CMS allows protocols for local viewing, circulation and access to be respected at all levels. Important when scholars are working with local communities whose histories include violence and neglect by the dominant literature.

The Mukurtu CMS platform will provide not just a key resource to scholars, local communities and other researchers, but more importantly it will produce a dynamic and adaptable tool set that encourages the creation and sharing of knowledge across varied stakeholders. Making this set of texts and multimedia objects not just “open”--but accessible to different users in locally meaningful ways build on the core Humanities values and shows the diversity of networks across multiple divides.

I have been the Mukurtu CMS Project Director since its inception in 2008 and have watched as it has grown from a stand alone tool for one local Aboriginal community in Australia with whom I worked, to a powerful, open source content management system for varied uses across many types of users. Mukurtu CMS benefits varied types of communities by providing a unique solution to their cultural heritage management needs that are not being addressed in commercial or open source products. It also allows scholars, academic institutions and collecting institutions to enlarge their knowledge base and provide scholars with a wide-range of knowledge sources for materials that have been previously minimally described. I am confident that Mukurtu will be able to help expand the project’s reach to the critical digital studies community and to the communities that Precarity Lab is studying.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Dr. Kimberly Christen Withey
Mukurtu Project Director