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(Un)Fair Labor: American Indians and the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition

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I received $5,000 from the University Small Grant Program to support travel for archival research trips in the 2014-15 school year. I was able to leverage this funding with funding from other sources, inside and outside of the university, as well as money from my pocket, to make numerous archival trips during my sabbatical. I used UGP funding to specifically help support two research trips to the Harvard University Archives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and two trips to Chicago where I divided most of my time between the Chicago History Museum and The Newberry Library. All of the funding I used from the UGP paid for either airfare or lodging. I paid for some of the lodging expenses for these trips from NAS department funds and some from funding I received from the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. I paid for other living and research expenses on these four trips with my own money.

Since I am still in the research phase of my book project, (Un)Fair Labor, I have spent the year since May 2014 visiting the major archival collections with holdings relating to the experiences of American Indians and other indigenous peoples with the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. With UGP funding I spent approximately three weeks in Cambridge and six weeks in Chicago, traveling to each place once during fall semester and once during spring semester.

I devoted most of my time in Cambridge, in October and February, to reading the Frederic Ward Putnam Papers in the Harvard University Archives. Putnam, one of the leading anthropologists of the late 19th century, oversaw most of the American Indian exhibits on the fairgrounds in one way or another. His extensive collection of papers, which are not digitized, contain correspondence and reports that have proven essential to developing the narrative for my manuscript. While I was in Cambridge in February 2015 the Peabody Museum invited me to give a public talk on my world’s fair research, which was well received and well attended (despite the heavy snows inundating the Boston area at the time).

I spent three weeks in Chicago in November 2014 and three more weeks there in February-March 2015. At the Newberry Library I was offered office space by the director of the D’Arcy McNickle Center and I was able to read rare books and manuscripts. The former are available in very few places and the latter, not being digitized, are available for use only in the library. I also spent a good deal of time at the Chicago History Museum Research Center, which maintains a strong holding of official records from the fair, also not digitized. In both of these places I was able to sift through a significant body of data. Also while in Chicago I was asked to give two public talks on my research in different Chicago public libraries in November, and was invited to
return in November 2015 to give talks there, at the Newberry Library and at Northwestern University. I have also since been asked to give talks on American Indian history in Chicago at the American Indian Center in Chicago and the Mitchell Indian Museum in Evanston, Illinois, in May 2015, which I will return to do.

In its most recent annual funding cycle I learned that I received support from Humanities Montana to visit Philadelphia and Washington D.C., so I concentrated my UGP resources on Boston and Chicago. I have visited other significant archival holdings and record collections during my sabbatical, spending approximately eleven additional weeks in various archival facilities. On those trips I visited Archives Canada, the U.S. National Archives in Washington D.C. and College Park, Maryland, the National Anthropological Archives in Suitland Maryland, the Smithsonian Institution Archives in Washington D.C., the Library of Congress, and the Hawaii State Archives and the Bishop Museum Archives, both in Honolulu. I was able to use other funding sources, including from my own pocket, to pay for those research trips.

Thanks to the generous support I received from the UGP (and other sources) I have been able to devote my sabbatical to both research and writing on my new book project, and I have made significant progress on it. Though I still have some more research to conduct, I am nearly at the point where I can devote the rest of the time on this project to writing and re-writing the book manuscript. I am very thankful to the University of Montana for providing me with this support.