

I Love My Librarian!

2017 Award

Natalia Fernández

Valley Library, Oregon State University
Corvallis, Oregon

Nominator: Bradley Boovy

1. Please tell us in 2-3 sentences why your nominee should win this award. What sets them apart?

As the Oregon Multicultural Archivist and Librarian, Natalia Fernandez has contributed significantly to expanding the boundaries of the library and multicultural archive to communities of color in Oregon. With charisma, commitment and social responsibility, she has led projects that have benefited hundreds of families in rural communities. Additionally, as the co-director and lead archivist for the Oregon State Queer Archives, Natalia has demonstrated her enduring commitment to preserving and sharing the stories and histories of LGBTQ+ community members in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. It is this commitment to fostering socially just archival initiatives that makes her an outstanding candidate for this award.

2. Please discuss how the nominee has helped you and/or others and made your experience of the library a more positive one. For instance, did the nominee assist you in a research project or enhance your students' learning experience?

Natalia has enhanced the experience of the library for students and faculty across Oregon State University. For example, the Office of Outreach and Engagement has worked with Natalia on various research and practice projects. Through her openness, creativity, and her flexibility to adapt to the challenges of the projects, she showed alternative resources that we had not considered possible until now. In addition, she has been a tireless volunteer, serving the families of our program in her personal time.

Similarly, in her work as the archivist for the Oregon State Queer Archives, Natalia has worked effectively and compassionately with two groups of undergraduate students in HST 368 (Lesbian and Gay Social Movements in the United States) to gather oral histories for the Oregon State Queer Archive. The students experienced the training Natalia offered as very helpful and thorough, and found the oral history experience the highlight of their course on LGBTQ history. (See: <http://wpmu.library.oregonstate.edu/oregon-multicultural-archives/2017/06/14/hst-368-oh-project-2/>).

Natalia is patient and generous with her time. In introducing students to archival materials, she helps bring those materials to life through creative activities and exercises.

For example, for the past two years Natalia has facilitated an event called Glitter in the Archives that gives students and community members the opportunity to craft with copies of archival materials. This is just one example of the kinds of innovative and creative ideas that she brings to her work with library users.

3. How does the nominee make the college, community college, or university a better place? Please be specific.

A better place is an open, accessible place. With her innovative way of seeing the work of the library, Natalia finally opened a space to collaborate, and bringing the library and multicultural archive to our rural communities. Similarly, through the connections she's made with the multicultural literacy centers across campus, Natalia has created numerous points of entry to the archives for students from diverse backgrounds who have often felt excluded from library and archival spaces. For example, in an era in which US culture is STILL struggling with the legitimacy of non-heterosexual relationships, Natalia helps students, and library users more broadly, to normalize and accurately historicize the experiences and contributions of LGBTQ individuals and communities.

4. How has the individual demonstrated leadership in the campus community?

Natalia is involved in multiple initiatives on campus. The most interesting thing is that her work has not only been with traditional groups, but she also has become a leader of social change in the University. She is recognized among her colleagues for her activism and participation in issues of equity and culture. A prime example in this regard is the leadership role she has taken on in campus-wide discussions on renaming four buildings on campus named after individuals whose legacies have been called into question because of potential connections with histories of white supremacy. As an archivist and active community member, Natalia has been a leader in this discussion. She is providing the teams of researchers who are investigating these histories with her expertise as an archivist, and navigating this discussion with her characteristic strength, sensitivity, and commitment to social justice.

5. How has the library, and the nominee in particular, had an impact on students and faculty and the teaching and learning process? Please be specific.

Natalia's impact is direct. All the projects that the Office of Outreach and Engagement has advanced with Natalia involve students, teachers and university staff, as well as the extended communities where OSU Outreach and Engagement conducts the program. Those of us who have had the opportunity to collaborate with her – be it as co-authors, instructors, researchers, or students – have felt the impact of her generous character and rigorous attention to detail and historical accuracy. Students who have worked with Natalia have consistently highlighted their time with her as some of the most beneficial and engaging they've had in their courses. Faculty across campus speak in glowing terms of Natalia's breadth of knowledge about archival materials and her expansive imagination in working with faculty to come up with creative and engaging materials and activities to help students understand and explore the complexities of history. These impacts are tangible in the high-level work that results from student and faculty collaborations with Natalia, such as the Social Justice Tour of Corvallis (See:

<http://wpmu.library.oregonstate.edu/oregon-multicultural-archives/2017/06/09/corvallis-social-justice-tour-3/>).

The less tangible impacts of Natalia's work are also visible in the encounters students have with history through her facilitations. For example, at the end of HST 368, students were invited to a reception with the community members they had interviewed. This past year, the students and the interviewees spent a couple of hours in a circle, exchanging stories, learning from and about each other, and building on the community that had emerged through the oral history interviews they'd shared. It is Natalia's passion, hard work, and dedication that makes such experiences possible for our students. Her contributions to the Valley Library and to the Oregon State community are inestimable, and we hope that you will give her nomination your utmost consideration.