

2021 PROSPECTUS

The House Lights Fellowship is a new artist residency program in public libraries, developing the next generation of artist-leaders who work to build more creative and connected communities.



HOUSE LIGHTS

What is the House Lights Fellowship?

A 501(c)3 nonprofit organization recruiting exceptional early career artist-leaders, placing them in residencies at public libraries, where they devise and deliver Creative Community Infrastructure: networks, events, and opportunities for people to come together and create together.

How does it work?

- We recruit recent graduates of all disciplines (visual artists, performing artists, digital artists) in search of purpose and fulfillment
- We train the Fellows to apply their creativity, charisma, and collaborative skills to community leadership
- We connect the Fellows with a host library that co-produces arts programming to enhance the library's impact and reach new patrons
- We support the Fellows and the libraries with ongoing coaching, mentorship, fundraising, and promotion

Why?

America faces a crisis of social cohesion in the 21st century. Economic inequality, political tension, and cultural divisions lead to disconnection, distrust, and dissolving community bonds. We need more opportunities to come together as citizens and neighbors, to imagine and create and celebrate together.

At the same time, we graduate thousands of young artists from art schools and universities every year, into fields with long odds and limited prospects. These young artists have developed exactly the skills needed to create the opportunities for connection we need in our communities- they are entrepreneurial, compassionate, forward-thinking, and enthusiastic.

Training these young artists and placing them in a fundamental civic cornerstone- the public library- is a way to bring creative practice into the everyday life of a community. At the library, the artist will have a home base to launch artistic projects and events that engage the community, amplify local voices, and illuminate the many ways in which we need our neighbors.





IMAGINE

WHAT AN ARTIST RESIDENCY COULD DO FOR YOUR LIBRARY:

AMPLIFY

Sasha, a sculptor and digital artist, is a Fellow at Shady Run library, in a medium-sized suburb. The library has a lot of foot traffic and high circulation, but many people are unaware of the programs the library offers beyond books. The county library system is especially eager to highlight the new 3D printers at Shady Run. Recognizing this need, Sasha develops a series of workshops on game design, using the 3D printers to print new board game pieces for participants. The series becomes a weekly Game Night at the library, where patrons show off their creations, play each other's games, and build community.

ENGAGE

Writer/illustrator Eduardo is a Fellow at South Adams branch library, a small urban library near a public high school. A group of students from the school hangs out at the library after school every day (often causing some disruptions). Eduardo spends time with this group, and finds out they love comic books. He creates a series of weekly graphic novel and comic book workshops, helping students craft their own material. Over the course of several months, these students put their creations together into a zine that Eduardo helps edit and produce. Eduardo also hosts a zine launch party at the library so these students can invite their friends, teachers, and family to celebrate. With the success of this program, Eduardo formalizes the group in partnership with the school, creating an afterschool club that can continue to publish more material.

ILLUMINATE

Helen, a singer-songwriter, is a Fellow at Blue Springs library- a rural county library with a dispersed population. A large portion of this community are older veterans who come to the library for internet access and basic services. These veterans are dealing with loneliness and PTSD. Helene starts offering a music hour during the most high-traffic times for these patrons and starts to form relationships with the regulars, who often want to tell Helene their stories. Helene collaborates with these patrons on crafting folk songs out of their stories, and they participate in a live performance of this collection of songs. After the success of this event, these veterans form a community band, directed by Helen, and in partnership with a music therapist, have weekly rehearsals/therapy sessions at the library.

OUR DREAM: HOUSE LIGHTS INTENDS TO BE A LEADING CATALYST FOR THE INTEGRATION OF CREATIVE PRACTICE INTO OUR COMMUNITIES, REVOLUTIONIZING THE ROLE OF THE ARTIST IN OUR SOCIETY.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The House Lights Fellowship is poised to launch and place our first cohort of Fellows in public libraries in September 2022. The enthusiasm we have seen from potential partners in the library, higher education, and arts fields has been remarkable, and we feel strongly that what we are building meets a wide range of needs.

House Lights Co-Founders Alex Johnson and Sarah Mass have always believed, since their time teaching theater together in the Boston Public Schools, that *young artists were our nation's great untapped resource: energetic, compassionate, and able to get the job done.*

The Summer of 2020 demonstrated how much that energy and compassion was sorely needed. The pandemic revealed deep divisions and inequalities in America, but also new movements towards justice. Young artists were often at the forefront of these efforts, whether they were protests or mutual aid organizations or new ideas about how we structure our society.

Finding a way to link this emerging cohort of artists to organizations addressing our longstanding community needs became our mission.

We set about interviewing a wide range of leaders, mentors, and colleagues to better understand: **How would a public service organization use an artist in residence? What kinds of organizations were interested? Where is the most potential for impact?**

These questions and interviews, well over 100, led us to a clear insight: public libraries, with their wide reach, open access, and programs nurturing culture, were an ideal partner. We admire the way that libraries enrich the community, the way they have endured through so many social shifts, and the ways they have adapted to new demands. Libraries are foundational to community health, and they will be foundational to any effort to heal from the pandemic and its many effects. Artistic practice- fun, collaborative, connective- is an ideal way for libraries to advance their work.



Over the Summer of 2021, in partnership with the Delaware Division of Libraries and Americorps, we were able to test this idea in a pilot program. Six Fellows were placed in three libraries across New Castle County, in urban and suburban settings.

- At the Rt. 9 Library and Innovation Center, they were searching for a way to reach patrons while their doors remained closed to the public; we designed and ran workshops about making movies on your phone, engaging patrons and leading up to an online 2-minute film festival.
- At the Bear Public Library, they were looking for events that could bring together a community with a high percentage of short-term residents; we developed a Summer Showcase, for patrons to demonstrate their skills, hobbies, and culture, and to connect across shared interests.
- At the Woodlawn Public Library, they were looking for a way to help new residents of a nearby public housing project feel at home at the library; we threw a Neighborhood Housewarming, with local bands, local restaurant offerings, and an installation of “outdoor living rooms”, designed and decorated by neighborhood kids.

In running these programs, even during the Delta wave of the pandemic, we learned so much about what libraries, communities, and artists need to make these residencies meaningful. Our three biggest takeaways are:

- The value of artists being ingrained in the library and its operations
- The need for a robust partnership between House Lights and the library, beginning with selecting the Fellow all the way through culminating events
- The importance of blending digital and in-person offerings to reach a wide range of patrons

The pilot has proven our core assumptions correct: that libraries want this kind of programming and would host an artist, that artists want to engage with the community in this way, and that the community is eager for opportunities to connect and create.

As we look towards the future, we are seeking a founding partner or partners- libraries or library systems that know the value of the arts, that care about building social cohesion, and are excited to try something new. We hope to secure this partner or partners as soon as possible, to prepare for a Spring 2022 recruiting cycle and a Fall 2022 residency start for Fellows.



PROCESS TIMELINE

The House Lights Process: *how do we make sure you get the Fellow you need, to deliver projects you care about?*

Phase One: *Establishing A Baseline*

We meet with you, the interested library or library system, to determine your unique needs, wants, and assets for a House Lights residency. In this phase, we will work with you to set clear goals for artistic projects at your library; for example, engage 100 new patrons, add two new teen programs, or launch one annual event for seniors. The House Lights team will prepare a report summarizing ideal project parameters to guide the search and recruitment process.

Phase Two: *Finding the Fellow*

We work with colleges and universities to find recent graduates with artistic talent, a passion for community organizing, skills in project management, and a belief in the value of public libraries.

Phase Three: *Selecting the Fellow*

We work with your library staff to interview and vet the pool of qualified candidates, making a decision together based on the parameters we established in Phase One.

Phase Four: *Training the Fellow*

We train the Fellow for their residency, building up their knowledge of library operations and procedures, local demography and culture, and community art programming. We also will include training and development specific to meeting the goals your library has set for the program.

Phase Five: *Residency*

The Fellow begins their residency at your library, and the House Lights team provides ongoing coaching, support, and mentorship for the Fellow while they share their craft, serve your mission, and build Creative Community Infrastructure.

	Library does...	House Lights does...	Fellow does...
Phase One: Winter	Provides parameters	Prepares a dossier	
Phase Two: Winter/Spring		Connects with colleges and universities to source applicants	
Phase Three: Spring	Interviews Fellows	Interviews Fellows	Applies and Interviews
Phase Four: Summer	Onboards Fellows	Trains Fellows	Develops skills and plans projects
Phase Five: Ongoing	Hosts Fellow, supports programming	Support, coaching, and mentorship	Delivers programming

OUR MODEL

The House Lights model places the Fellow at your library as a direct hire on your staff, working 3 days per week on general library services (anything from shelving to circulation to story time) and 2 days per week on building the Creative Community Infrastructure project- see the weekly schedule below for more information.

In this model, the library provides the Fellow's salary and benefits as a full-time staff member, and gets a high-quality employee to fill gaps and support library initiatives, while also delivering unique arts programming. As a library employee, the Fellow can be tasked with whatever work is necessary for library functioning, and receives the same feedback, coaching, reporting, and evaluation as any other employee.

The salary scale for a Fellow will vary depending on the region and overall library budget, but should be roughly the salary of a full-time Library Assistant or Library Staff member. Additionally, House Lights asks for a \$5000 administrative fee per Fellow to help offset the management and support costs.

We understand that not all libraries may be able to meet these requirements, and we are willing to discuss adjustments or unique arrangements for the right library or library system.

A Week in the Life of a Fellow

What would the Fellow be doing at your library? Each week would vary depending on your needs and the project the Fellow is currently focusing on, but here is a broad sample of what that might look like for a Fellow developing a photography portrait project linking a local middle school and a local senior center.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Circulation Desk, 10am-12pm Children's Story Hour support, 12pm-1pm Marketing for upcoming events, 1pm-3pm Interlibrary loan support, 3pm-5pm Circulation Desk, 5pm-7pm	Workshops at local middle school, 9am-3pm Meeting with coordinating staff at senior center, 3pm-4pm Fundraising campaign launch, 4pm-6pm	Circulation Desk, 10am-12pm Children's Story Hour support, 12pm-1pm Meeting to discuss programming budget, 1pm-2pm Taking new staff portraits, 2pm-4pm Meeting with Fellows at other libraries, 4pm-5pm Circulation Desk, 5pm-7pm	Meeting with local gallery: 10am-11am Building community at Senior Center: 11am- 1:30pm After-school photography class 2:30-3:30 Contacting local businesses about catering for event, 4:00-5:00pm	Open Studio Hours, 11am-2pm Evaluation meeting with House Lights staff, 2pm-3pm Leading Outdoor Photo Safari, 3pm-5pm Hosting weekly Open Mic event, 5pm-7pm

This model was developed in the spirit of other service residency programs like Americorps and Teach for America, and based on our research and experiences running a pilot program in Delaware. We feel it is an ideal way to build strong relationships between the Fellow and the library staff and community, and to create a system of mutual support that will lead to more robust and more successful programming.

Our ideal residency would be a three-year duration, which would allow the artist to build truly deep and meaningful relationships and projects within the community. However, in the interest of taking things one step at a time, we would ask the libraries to sign the Fellows up to an initial one year contract, renewable contingent on the success of the program.

Once the Fellow is placed in residency at your library, we will begin to guide them through the following general process:

- Beginning Conversations- meeting and getting to know library staff, patrons, and community members
- Library Processes- working at the library to better understand its functions and needs
- Workshops and Classes- testing ideas and gauging interest through a series of one-time events and classes
- Regular Programming- taking the successful programs and running them on a regular, repeating basis, building up capacity and interest
- Creative Community Infrastructure- launching the major project for the year, drawing on previous engagement and learning

Models of Support

House Lights works to make sure you and your Fellow have everything you need to deliver successful projects and processes. That includes support on fundraising and grant writing for materials and other costs, marketing and promotional support, and in-person logistical help at events.

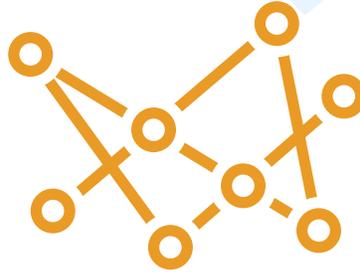
In addition, House Lights Fellows will establish a well-rounded support system for their programming at the library by seeking various key partners for each project. These partners include:

- A community partner (e.g., community center, YMCA, or other social service organization) to expand outreach and deepen engagement
- A business partner (e.g., a local supermarket or local insurance company) to provide supplies, donations, and event support
- A creative partner (e.g., local theater, gallery, or music group) to offer project-specific artistic resources or guidance

We value and recognize the partnerships and community connections each library already has, and we would encourage our Fellows to tap into that capacity and those relationships whenever possible. To ensure you, the library, are not alone, House Lights will also maintain partnerships with higher education and arts advocacy organizations to help run research and impact surveys.

CONNECT WITH US

Help us build more creative, connected communities



Contact us for more information or to set up a conversation

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And keep up with us on our social media



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