1. Description of grant-related activity.

During the summer of 2016, I traveled to three different cities (Rochester, NY; Washington, D.C. and Chicago, IL) in order to gather primary source material from various libraries in reference to my topic, Chicago pianist and composer Arne Oldberg. He became an important faculty member at Northwestern University, and exerted a strong influence on important American composers of subsequent generations.

From June 13-15, 2016, I gathered information at the Sibley Library of the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY. Oldberg had a close professional relationship with American composer Arthur Farwell, a visionary with an unconventional advocacy for both “native” and “Native” American music. The Sibley Library is a main repository for letters and scrapbooks of Farwell. In addition, there were original scores and letters in their Arne Oldberg Collection. By examining these artifacts, I was able to trace the development of their relationship, and gather some sense of the influence that they had on one another. Placing Oldberg’s life and works within the context of other important American composers in the early twentieth century was important for my topic.

Since the longtime director of the Eastman School, Pulitzer prize-winning composer Howard Hanson, had been a student of Oldberg’s, I was hoping to find recordings or programs from concerts with Oldberg pieces performed. However, the Eastman School recordings of concerts, held only at this library, though meticulously archived, did not include Oldberg works.

From June 28-July 10, I spent nine days at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. I had already examined several boxes of the Arne Oldberg collection in the summer of 2015, connected to my research on one of Oldberg’s teachers, Frederic Grant Gleason. I had some sense of the letters within the collection and was able to examine the extensive correspondence between Farwell and Oldberg. These letters proved to be
the most valuable material of the collection, since they documented the passionately high regard in which Farwell held Oldberg. Farwell was also extremely articulate in explaining why Oldberg should move to the East Coast to forward his (Oldberg’s) career. This helps to prove the crux of my larger argument, which is that turn-of-the-century Midwest composers were overlooked, to a certain extent, due to their location.

For several days in July, 2016, I visited various libraries in Chicago: the Newberry Library, the Roosevelt University-Chicago College of Performing Arts Music Library, and the archives of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO). At the Newberry, I examined letters of conductors who corresponded with Oldberg. At the other two libraries, I was hoping to secure historical recordings of Oldberg works, but no such recordings exist. However, the program notes from the many CSO concerts in the early to mid-twentieth century with Oldberg’s works at the CSO archives was very helpful. At the time of the proposal, I thought that an additional library visit to Northwestern University would be necessary, but I found that materials that I had gathered in 2015 were sufficient.

One pleasant and unexpected outcome of this research was locating several living family members of the composer. I drove to the Cleveland area for an in-person interview with one of Arne Oldberg’s grand-daughters (a woman born in 1939). In addition to personal information about the composer and teacher from her unique perspective, she was able to give me recordings of Oldberg himself performing his own piano works. This is an invaluable resource for my research.

2. Were you able to complete the project? Describe any difficulty you had.

In my project proposal, I outlined a timeline for travel for gathering information, and I met those deadlines. During the trips to these libraries, I took many (more than 1,000) photographs of original documents. I spent time, when I returned, to organize and examine this massive amount of information. Part of my challenge was to ascertain the most pertinent documents that can most effectively support my ideas about Arne Oldberg. I am confident that I have the information I need to complete the article of original research on this topic.
3. Did, or will the project result in a specific product-- a manuscript, composition, syllabus, etc? If so, please describe and indicate state of development.

The other anticipated outcome, in addition to gathering information, was to start to write a scholarly article on the topic of Arne Oldberg. So far, I am meeting that goal as well. I have begun an article that I hope to complete in early 2017 and submit for publication. I see two angles that are most intriguing about my findings: a focus on the connection between Arthur Farwell and Arne Oldberg, including Farwell's choice to publish several of Oldberg's works through the innovative Wa-Wan Press in the early 1900's; and the discussion of specific characteristics and performance practice considerations of Oldberg's solo piano music.

In addition to the goal of writing an article, the over-arching goal was to increase awareness of Oldberg's music, from the perspective of both a performer and scholar. I submitted a proposal to several conferences for a lecture-recital on Arne Oldberg's solo piano music (decisions have not yet been made regarding acceptance). In addition to the proposed abstract, I also made a demo quality recording of myself performing a virtuosic and representative piano piece by Oldberg (a piece that is unavailable in a commercial recording).

Another project outcome was the invitation to present my Oldberg research at the Dean's Seminar series, and my presentation will be on April 21, 2017.