1. Description of grant-supported activity

As specified in my proposal, the IUSB Faculty Research Grant funds went to summer (2015) salary, which enabled me to continue full-time work on the book manuscript to which I had devoted my 2014-15 research leave.

My proposal, which I wrote in mid-summer 2014, described a book project that would articulate a new theoretical framework for understanding the role of literary value in literary production and reception, and then use this framework to examine key works of four Middle English authors. The plan was to draw on scholarship that I’ve already published, as well as perform substantial new research. However, from the feedback that I received from various forums in which I presented the project’s ideas and some of its initial readings, I realized that it is actually best conceived as two, complementary books: one primarily meta-critical, which articulates the theoretical framework and then focuses on the role of literary value in the reception (e.g., criticism, editing) of particular Middle English texts; and one more directly literary critical, which draws on the theoretical framework and focuses on the role of literary value in production (i.e., authorship). My published work includes articles relevant to both projects, and informal talks with interested publishers about both ideas have been encouraging. Given the momentum of my most recent research, however, the second project seemed better poised for completion. But because this project draws on my theoretical framework but is not itself focused on articulating it, I realized that I first needed to develop that articulation as an independent article, to which the book may then refer. This I have done: the article appeared at the end of August, 2015 in the journal New Literary History.

Throughout the fall of 2014, I was engaged in research for the book project, which I began drafting in the winter. By the time I completed a draft of the first chapter, it became clear that the study would achieve more rigor and depth, and make a more substantial critical intervention, if it focused on a single author—Geoffrey Chaucer—rather than the four that I had originally planned. This single-author project is then what I have pursued through the spring, summer, and up to the present. At this point, I have drafted 305 pages out of likely total of 360-400.

2. Completion

My goal was to have completed a full initial draft of the book by the end of summer 2016, which was ambitious—a tad overly so, as it turns out. With more than 3/4ths of the book written, however, the finish line is in clear sight: I’m halfway through the fourth of four chapters, with an outline for the rest of it; and then, with the body of the book written, I will draft an introduction. I believe, therefore, that I am still on schedule to be position to devote the summer of 2016 to revision work and to submit the typescript to a publisher by the end of 2016, as I outlined in my Research Grant proposal.

3. Results

As mentioned above, the grant enabled me to complete over three-quarters of a book manuscript, and has put me in a strong position to submit it to a publisher within the timetable that I proposed.