Category #5: Support for faculty members in fields where there is little external funding available. This category does not include fields where there is significant external funding available, albeit this funding may be difficult to obtain due to the level of competition.

The Centennial Stage: Mexico's Old Regime and the Centennial Celebrations of 1910
Patrick J. McNamara
Department of History
University of Minnesota, UMTC

CATEGORY JUSTIFICATION
I am applying for a GIA under Category 5. There is little or no external funding available to pay for a research assistant to work on the documents and photographs I have collected for this project. In addition, limited funds are available to pay for international and domestic travel to conduct the research for this project. I will be applying for other grants that would provide salary support for a planned sabbatical year in 2007-08.

ABSTRACT
In 1910, after nearly thirty-five years in power, Mexican President Porfirio Díaz convened a massive celebration to commemorate his country's 100th anniversary of independence from Spain. Díaz and his supporters envisioned a series of events that would demonstrate national unity and appreciation for Diaz's long political career. Within three months of the celebration, however, the entire nation divided along revolutionary fault lines and Diaz retreated to exile in Europe. This glaring contradiction between an imagined sense of unity and a violent rejection of the entire regime has led historians to dismiss the 1910 Centennial as a façade, as nothing more than state-managed theater for foreign consumption. Remarkably, as we approach the bi-centennial of Mexican independence and plans for another series of celebrations get underway, we have yet to examine the 1910 Centennial outside of Mexico City and outside of a state-centered analytical framework. My project will provide the first book-length study of the 1910 Centennial.

PRESENT STATUS OF KNOWLEDGE
This book examines the turn from "order and progress" under Díaz to a decade of revolutionary upheaval as a complicated, contradictory, and contingent moment in Mexican history. The Centennial Stage: Mexico's Old Regime and the Independence Celebrations of 1910, analyzes the ways in which planning and participating in the celebrations actually set the stage for revolution. Rather than marking the simple end to the Díaz regime, I argue that the 1910 Centennial facilitated the complex consolidation of an interpretation of Mexican history that emphasized local actors instead of elite politicians. As an "event" that spanned more than three years in planning, ultimately mobilizing thousands of people across the country, ordinary Mexicans—peasants, workers, Indians, men and women—used the Centennial "stage" to tell their own multilayered versions of national history in a local context. In unpredictable and imaginative ways, rural Mexicans dismissed the omnipotence of Mexico City, describing instead a nation where political power was more widely dispersed. As they reflected on the past, individual Mexicans essentially reclaimed their histories, which produced multiple narratives, multiple viewpoints, and multiple complaints against the government.

This project allows me to analyze one of the most often repeated maxims about studying history—that examining the past will help us understand the present. Usually this idea is repeated as if historical knowledge simply leads to benign conversations about origins, traditions, or changes over time. I am interested, however, in the ways in which reflecting on the past actually leads to a new consciousness about the present. I believe the 1910 Centennial initiated a nation-wide discussion about the course of politics and society over the previous 100 years. For too many Mexicans, the economic gains had been too few, the loss of land too great, and their disillusionment with the government too bitter to ignore.

This project also allows me to examine how nationalism is performed as a ritual within the political culture of a community. How does nationalism require outward signs of expression? How carefully are those expressions planned? What limits are there within the rituals of nationalist devotion and how do individuals push those limits? Organizers worked for three full years to carefully orchestrate local and national celebrations for the 1910 Centennial. Their efforts, documented in copious correspondence preserved in the Archivo General de la Nación and in state and municipal archives around the country, were met with both accommodation and resistance. The Centennial "stage," re-imagined and reconstructed in towns and villages across the country, became local sites of memory (or "lieux de mémoire" in Pierre Nora's terms) where citizens gathered to perform, observe, and debate ideas about Mexican history and politics.
I have begun research on this project, working in archives in Mexico City and in local archives around the country. This project relies on an interdisciplinary approach to analyze the cultural and political meanings of the 1910 Centennial. In addition to correspondence between local and national planning commissions, I use poetry, fiction, theater, art, music, architecture, and photography to explain how Mexicans understood their place in national history at the moment of centennial celebrations. Although preliminary, my research has already produced a picture that departs from the inherited orthodoxy of a Mexico City-centered narrative about the 1910 Centennial. A national planning commission in Mexico City authorized literally thousands of local commissions throughout the country to plan events for 1910. Popular mobilization on this scale had not occurred since the civil wars of the 1850s and 1860s.

These local planning commissions exacerbated pre-existing tensions within communities. Planning commissions became embroiled in class, ethnic, and political disputes even as they tried to emphasize Mexican unity. These conflicts grew as local commissions selected development projects and/or new statues, kiosks, and parks to commemorate the 1910 Centennial. In fact, the Mexican government poured millions of pesos into rural Mexico during a serious recession, raising expectations that the regime might turn its full attention to aiding struggling communities. But after the celebrations ended, the national government disbanded local commissions, shut down the lines of communication between the city and the countryside, and turned its back on the economic problems of most citizens. Eventually, widespread discontent coupled with anger towards the regime in the wake of the 1910 Centennial found new expressions in Francisco Madero’s revolt in the north and Emiliano Zapata’s revolt in the south.

The scope of this project actually extends across international borders. For the first time since the US/Mexico War in 1847, the Mexican government acknowledged the racial, cultural, and legal bonds of Mexicans and Mexican Americans living in the United States. The national planning commission worked closely with representatives in communities along the border, particularly in Texas, as they organized Centennial events. As in Mexico, the 1910 Centennial in the United States contributed to greater conflicts within communities. Mexican citizens tried to exclude American citizens from the planning responsibilities, and workers and businessmen disagreed over how to interpret Mexican independence. Their conflicts revealed evolving notions of racial and class status within increasingly complex and diverse communities in the US. Eventually, anti-Díaz rebels would raise money to buy arms and supplies from these same communities. Thus, this project re-integrates an analysis of the border region into both US and Mexican national histories.

In this book I raise a broad set of historiographical, comparative, and contemporary issues, which transcend the details of the case study. First, it fundamentally revises Mexican historiography, which has dismissed the importance of the 1910 Centennial. In general, historians of Mexico have argued that most peasants and workers were too busy to care about 1910. The perspective of the people of San José de Gracia in the state of Michoacán as described by prominent historian Luis González y González has been projected onto the rest of Mexico’s rural population: “There were no Centennial fiestas in San José...The people of San José were disinclined neophytes in patriotism, and they had not yet come to identify with the state.” While San José may have ignored the Centennial, seventy-eight other villages and towns in Michoacán organized committees in 1907 and planned celebrations for 1910. Preliminary research suggests San José was probably the exception rather than the rule.

Second, this project connects the 1910 Centennial to broader issues of important political transformations in other parts of the world. My subtitle consciously draws on Alexis de Tocqueville’s classic study of the factors leading to the 1789 French Revolution. Reminiscent of the Estates General and the cahiers de doléance that marked the consolidation of popular resentment against the Old Regime in France, I argue that the Díaz government created the conditions for its own collapse by convening local commissions throughout the country to commemorate the 1910 Centennial. As Tocqueville and other French historians note, the writers of the cahiers had actually professed their loyalty to the monarch for allowing them to express their opinions in the Estates General. The cahiers did not call for a revolution, only for the opportunity to address particular concerns, and to share in a dialogue about the ways in which the government could better meet the needs of the people. Local commissions of the 1910 Mexican Centennial functioned in a similar fashion. The committees did not themselves become radical vehicles of opposition. Rather, they sought a new relationship between national and local governments that would establish a more popular approach to addressing local concerns.
Finally, I want to emphasize that this project will be completed and published prior to the 2010 bicentennial of Mexican independence. Starting in 2006, the bicentennial of Benito Juárez’s birth, Mexico will begin a series of celebrations that mark monumental anniversaries of significant events, particularly anniversaries dealing with the 1910-20 Revolution. If studying the past can actually change the way people think and act in the present, then Mexican society may well be on the verge of profound political and cultural transformations. In fact the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the ongoing Indian uprising in the southern state of Chiapas, and the election of Vicente Fox to the presidency indicate that these changes are already underway. The interconnectedness of Mexico to North America, other parts of Latin America, and the rest of the world suggest that these transformations will reach far beyond Mexico’s own borders. How Mexicans make sense of these changes, and how they use them to reconsider their past, present, and future remains unclear. My project on the 1910 Centennial will offer an original and significant contribution to the discussions and debates that will surround these upcoming celebrations and their impact on Mexican political culture. In that sense, The Centennial Stage will itself become a part of the performance of independence commemorations in 2010.

**PLAN OF WORK**
I have been working on this project for several years and have completed some of the research. Most recently I worked in the Genaro García collection at the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Library at the University of Texas-Austin in summer 2006. Working with a research assistant will allow me to organize and extend the research I have already collected.

In spring 2007 I will be a faculty fellow at the University of Minnesota’s Institute for Advanced Study. I will begin organizing and writing during my time at IAS and will present at least one chapter for a workshop with other fellows. I am also applying for a two-semester sabbatical leave for the academic year 2007-08. I will need to make one more trip to Austin, and at least two more trips to Mexico. Research at the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City and at the Nuevo Leon state archive in Monterrey, Mexico will be conducted in summer 2007. I expect to have the research completed by the start of fall 2007 and finish the first draft of the manuscript in spring 2008. The University of Texas has offered an advanced contract for this book and I need to send it to them by the end of 2008 so that it is available for readers in 2010.

**WORD COUNT:** 1815 words