

Interim Report to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

*Building Collections, Building Services, and Building
Sustainability: A Sustainable Framework for the HBCU Library
Alliance*

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INTRODUCTION

Much progress is being made in an effort that will develop a sustainable program to support digitization activities at the 100+ HBCU Library Alliance (HBCULA) member institutions. During the first year of the HBCU-CUL Digitization Initiative, all milestones for business planning, increasing the number of digital images and contributing HBCU Library partners to the HBCULA digital collection, and developing digital service centers at a select few HBCU Libraries is on track. In the pages that follow the interim report describes in detail the project activities during the year, evaluation outcomes, and areas for improvement.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The partnership between Cornell University Library (CUL), in cooperation with and on behalf of the Historically Black College and University Library Alliance (HBCULA) and the Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center has resulted in over fifty HBCU library staff collaborating to develop an online collection of over 16,000 HBCU historic documents for teaching and learning. As a result of this success, the HBCU Library Alliance leadership in 2007 agreed to extend this collaboration to all members of the HBCU Library Alliance. In the final phase of the HBCU-CUL Digital Initiative a HBCU Collaborative Digital Model is now in place that allows members to contribute digitized archival holdings to a growing online collection.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The third phase of the project began on July 1, 2009 and will end on June 26, 2011. Phase three of the project will expand the number of HBCU digital collections for research and teaching; create a business plan for HBCU Library Alliance digital initiatives and programs; and host a workshop devoted to digital sustainability and digital asset management.

Activities

This report provides a summary of major project objectives and the status of each. A list of next steps is provided at the end. This project is on target for first-year deliverables.

Specific activities were as follows:

- Establish HBCU Library Alliance sub-contract
- Hold March 2010 Focus Session for project partners
- Submit a draft of the business plan for Digital Committee member review and comment
- Meet to establish digital service centers at a few HBCU partner libraries
- Add new HBCU partners to HBCU-CUL Digital Initiative
- Disseminate project information to HBCU Library Alliance members and to library and information science professionals

Financial and Resource Contributions - Cornell University

Cornell administers two subcontracts under the grant account: one to Robert W. Woodruff Library for staff, equipment, and software and the second to the HBCU Library Alliance to coordinate logistics and hire staff for the Focus Session. The RWWL subcontract was put in place in January 2010.

Although the Primary Investigator initiated the HBCU Library Alliance subcontract request in August of 2009, the subcontract was awarded late in March 2010. At least two factors delayed the subcontract award to the HBCU Library Alliance. First was reorganization within the Cornell University Office Sponsored Programs (OSP), which was a result of budget cuts within that office. Second was the requirement to advance the Alliance funds from the contract, which would allow the Alliance to hire a staff person. Having little experience in the Cornell University procedure for advancing funds on a grant contract, new OSP staff assigned to coordinate the project subcontract award was uncertain how to accomplish this task in a timely manner, which therefore, caused the delay.

As a result of the delay, the HBCU Library Alliance was unable to hire a temporary staff person until a few weeks prior to the Focus Session event. This resulted in Cornell University Division of Library and Information Technologies administrative staffs and CUL Accounting staffs taking on the responsibility for coordinating travel and logistics for the twenty-five HBCU Library staffs that attended the March Focus Session. Subsequently leaders within Cornell University Library Accounting met with OSP leaders to discuss the delay and its impact on project staff and partners in order to affect improvements in inter-office communication in hopes to prevent a delay of this kind from happening again in the future.

Cornell University Budget Report Details

In addition some incorrect reporting in the original Cornell University financial report are worth explaining. First, there is an overage of \$1009.62 in the Services category because of audio/video needs totaling \$222.95 during the HBCU Focus Session and underestimate of the food budget.

Second, is that the Cornell report originally provided incorrectly captured line items that were meant for other categories. At least three expenses were incorrectly placed in the Services category. These include Julie Walker's consultant's fees, the travel and hotel expenses for HBCU library staff to attend the Focus Session, Cornell University Library Digital Project Management Group fees, and the CONTENTdm license renewal. The revised interim budget report represents line items in their correct location on the budget spreadsheet. Finally, plans for reimbursing an expense for the CUL computer backup, which was not included in the original budget request are underway.

PROJECT STAFF

Both HBCU Library Alliance and CUL Division of Library and Information Services staffs were involved in the planning and logistics of the program. HBCU Library Alliance staff: Sandra Phoenix, Etta Royster, and Karen Sweeny (the temporary administrative assistant hired only two weeks prior to the HBCU Focus Session) helped secure the meeting venue,

printed materials for the Focus Session, and provided on-site support to all program participants.

CUL Division of Library Information Technologies staff: Mary Beth Martini-Lyons, Jinhee Roper, and CUL Accounting staff Ann Crowley and Tami Magnus arranged travel for all twenty-five HBCU Library staff who attended the program. Both Mary Beth and Jinhee coordinated travel reimbursements for the partners. Martin Kurth, Director of IT Infrastructure in the Division of Library Information Technologies gave a presentation on the topic of digital sustainability and answered questions about sustainability efforts at Cornell University Library and the broader community of digital libraries to the HBCU Library participants . Martin replaced Oya Rieger, Associate University Librarian for Information Technologies who was the original presenter for the Focus Session. A scheduling conflict prevented her from participating.

EVALUATION OUTCOMES TO DATE

The business planner submitted a near-final draft of the plan on June 30, 2010 electronically and in print to project staff and members of the HBCU Library Alliance's Digital Committee. Cornell University project staff, business-planning consultant Julie Walker and HBCU Digital Committee members contributed to developing the business plan content through phone meetings and discussions. As we move towards finalizing decisions, a final version of the plan will be made available in the spring of 2011.

Outcomes of the first year of the project are below. The purpose of the sustainable HBCU Library Alliance "Digital Connections Program" which resulted from business planning activities is to support HBCU Library digitization efforts and grow the existing founding documents collection.

Year one project evaluation outcomes are on target and they include:

- Written business plan and buy-in gained from HBCU project partners.
- The development of new collections in the HBCU founding documents collection. We have met and exceeded this goal by growing the collection from 6,000 items to over 16,000 items.
- 65% of participants who attended the HBCU Focus Session agreed that the Focus Session met their needs. 21 of the 22 HBCU partner Libraries sent at least one representative to attend the daylong event. Some library directors brought additional staff at their own expense.
- The four Library Directors who comprise the HBCU Library Alliance Digital Committee reached consensus on developing three digital service centers to support HBCU Libraries efforts to preserve and promote access to archival collections.

Cornell University and the HBCU Library Alliance

Results of Business Planning

In late October an expanded Committee on Digitization met with CUL project staff (the Primary Investigator and Digital Project Management Group staff person Fiona Patrick), and Julie Walker in Atlanta, Georgia to discuss the framework for the HBCU Library Alliance program that will begin once the grant project ends. Among several decisions that were made about the new program, the Committee determined to:

- Explore costs of program components such as staffing, marketing, and growing the existing digital collection,
- Name the program “The HBCU Library Alliance Digital Connections Program,”
- Meet by phone at least twice monthly to discuss business planning topics and set goals for implementing the economic model.

Currently, the Committee is considering funding opportunities from the Institute of Museum and Library Service that will enable the Alliance to hire a part-time coordinator who will work with Sandra Phoenix on implementing a digital project management workflow that involves three of the HBCU Libraries on the Committee. The libraries are Alabama State University, Robert W. Woodruff Library, and Virginia State University. These libraries are the proposed digital service centers and their directors proposed that the funding opportunity would allow them to explore the functional requirements of the Digital Connections Program in order to continue supporting digitization activities within HBCU libraries once the grant project ends.

Results of the HBCU Focus Session

In March 2010, twenty-five HBCU Library partners participated in a Focus Session event at the Atlanta Airport Marriott Hotel. The purpose of the full-day event was to allow the project partners to meet for the first time to share sustainable digitization practices on their campuses. Representatives from four Library partners presented case studies. They were: Jessie C. Smith, Library Director at Fisk University; Fatima Barnes, Library Director at Meharry Medical College; Tracey Hunter Hayes, Library Director at Lincoln University of Pennsylvania; and Patricia Briddell, Head of Cataloging at Virginia State University. Martin Kurth, Director of IT Infrastructure at CUL presented on the topic of digital sustainability.

Both HBCU Library Alliance and CUL project staffs were involved in the planning and logistics of the program.

Perhaps the most pressing concern expressed by several of the individuals during the meeting was their ability to continue digital image production in the face of looming budget cuts. Participants also said marketing digital collections and refreshing staff training in digital librarianship were among their concerns.

Results of Digital Service Center Planning

An outcome of the project is to establish digital service centers at a select group of HBCU Libraries that are partners in the Digital Initiative. These centers will serve to support HBCU libraries that want to contribute digital collections to a shared HBCU Library Alliance digital library, but are unable to do so on their own.

A meeting was held on August 2nd in Atlanta, Georgia to discuss establishing digital service centers. Specifically, the meeting objectives were three-fold:

- To begin laying the foundation for establishing digital service centers at HBCU Libraries
- To answer questions and gather feedback on the business plan
- To plan project Year Two activities

Related to establishing digital service centers, Danielle Mericle, Coordinator of the Digital Media Group at CUL gave a presentation to project staff and HBCULA Committee on Digitization members. Actions that resulted from this discussion are as follows:

- Alabama State University (ASU) will assist both Trenholm College and Oakwood University make contributions to the digital founding documents collection. ASU will explore providing Digital Media Services as its digital service center. This service may involve all or a few of these components: Still Image & Audio/Video Digitization, Image Processing, Structural and Technical Metadata, Optical Character Recognition, and Digitization Consultations.
- The Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center (RWWL) will assist both Florida A&M University and Florida Memorial College make contributions to the digital founding documents collection. RWWL will explore providing Copyright and IP Education and Awareness as its digital service center. This service may involve all or a few of these components: Education & Awareness, Copyright Clearance, Intellectual Property & Licensing Consultancies, and Digital Rights Management
- Virginia State University (VSU) will reach out to Norfolk State University and Virginia Union University. VSU will explore providing Digitization and Metadata Services as its digital service center. This service may involve all or a few of these components: Metadata Standards, Subject Schemes, Descriptive Metadata, Structural Metadata and Preservation Metadata.

Since the meeting early in August 2010 to discuss digital service centers, the Primary Investigator has posted technical documents, budget spreadsheets, and materials that will transition the project into a program and assist the HBCU Digital Service Centers in following-up with new HBCU Library project partners. Documents that she shared include the following:

- Site visit agenda template.
- Digital workflow considerations chart
- Decision tree for adding new partners
- Digitization equipment, software, and training budget spreadsheets

CUL project staff held a follow-up meeting with the Library Directors/Deans from the three digital service centers on September 13, 2010 in Atlanta. Results from that meeting are

discussed in a forthcoming quarterly report to both Cornell University Library and the HBCU Library Alliance.

Results of Adding New HBCU Library Partners

During the past 12 months the current twenty-two project partners continued to scan archival materials at their libraries and grow the collaborative digital collection. At present the digital collection contains over 16,000 digitized items. In an effort to continue growing the digital collection, library directors at new project partners that were not previously included in Phases One or Two of the project have asked to contribute archival materials to the digital collection. They are as follows:

- Florida Memorial University
- Florida A&M University
- Trenholm State Technical College
- Oakwood University
- Langston University
- Wilberforce College by way of Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center in Wilberforce, Ohio

The Primary Investigator at Cornell, Ira Revels, conducted site visits with Library directors, staff, and campus administrators at Florida Memorial University and Oakwood University to help them prepare to implement the digitization activities on their campuses. Follow-up with these new partners involved phone discussions and site visits by staff at established project partners Alabama State University, Atlanta University Center, and Virginia State Universities.

While Library Directors at the new partner libraries are eager to begin scanning materials for the digital project, they each have specific needs and concerns to address prior to scanning the first object. Both Oakwood University Library and Florida Memorial University Library the Library must accomplish the following:

- Secure a computer and scanner
- Train library staff to carryout the scanning process
- Upload digital images to a Oakwood University digital collection on the project serve

Trenholm library staff has already scanned founding documents and is in the process of arranging a site visit with project staff at Alabama State University. Revels is working with the library director at Langston University to select materials for the digital collection. Museum staff at the Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center received a grant award from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and will select and scan materials from their holdings that pertain to Wilberforce College.

Robert W. Woodruff Library

The Robert W. Woodruff Library provides database and helpdesk support to HBCU Library partners of the digital initiative for the growing founding documents digital collection. The

HBCU Library Alliance digital collection titled: *A Digital Collection Celebrating the Founding of Historically Black Colleges and Universities* has grown since 2005 from just over 1,500 digital images to 16,074 photographs and publications from the twenty-two contributing libraries' archives and special collections.

Technical support activity at the Woodruff Library during this reporting year focused on the following:

- Standard maintenance and oversight of the CONTENTdm server
- Working with project phase two participants to resolve technical support issues such as connectivity and uploading digitized images and metadata
- Participating in in-person project meetings, the HBCU Focus Session, and conference calls related to general technical support, migration, sustainability and business models
- Planning for the migration to version 5.x of CONTENTdm and any subsequent training which will be required

DISSEMINATION

The Primary Investigator and project staff at the Robert W. Woodruff Library presented at three conferences (two national and one international conference) and a workshop. The conferences include:

- The Association of Worldwide African Diasporas Conference in Accra, Ghana to faculties who from across the globe study issues pertaining to the African Diaspora in August 2009.
- The annual American Library Association Conference in Washington D.C. at panel of the African American Studies Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries in June 2010.
- The Black Caucus of the American Library Association National Conference of African American Librarians in Birmingham, Alabama in August 2010.

Project staff at the Robert W. Woodruff Library gave presentations at two notable events dedicated to digital scholarship. They were:

- Collection Building and Curriculum Enhancement through Use of Digital Resources at the Digital Workshop IV – Digital Scholarship, for the Librarians for the Digital Age Project at Emory University in April 2010.
- Establishing and Working with Digital Projects at the E-Black Studies Conference at Savannah State University in July 2009.

Currently, the Primary Investigator plans to attend the third national conference of the HBCU Library Alliance in Montgomery, Alabama where she will report on the progress of the digital initiative to Alliance members and present a poster session that will describe how libraries can participate in the digital collection.

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

As the project moves into its final year several areas for improvement are noted. First, is the need to spend more face time with the library directors who are expected to carry out the functional requirements of supporting the Digital Connections Program. During the business planning process, HBCULA Committee on Digitization members expressed some dissatisfaction with repeated phone meetings to discuss business plan documents and decision-making. Their preference instead is to make formal decisions and discuss documentation during face-to-face meetings. Given the prudent budget planning at Cornell, it may be possible for the Primary Investigator to provide additional face-to-face meeting opportunities as we all work towards achieving the digital service centers at the three HBCU campuses.

Next, is the need to increase the number of contributors to the HBCULA founding documents collection either through improved communications with HBCU LA members or by gaining a better understanding of member needs so that their special collections and archives are able to be included in the digital collection, which has its own standards and templates. Activities are already underway in which to poll HBCULA members about their perceived interests and needs for digitization support during the upcoming membership meeting in Montgomery, Alabama.

Third and finally, is the ability to improve dissemination about the project. Committee on Digitization members expressed an interest in publishing an article about the project and in the future a book that displays some of the materials within digital collection. These publications will be a great enhancement to promoting the digital collection as a valuable teaching and learning tool.

CONCLUSION

In sum, as project staff at CUL, the HBCULA, and the RWWL continues to provide support to existing project partners there is an increased need to gain buy-in among HBCULA member libraries that are not already contributing to the digital collection. While staffs are successfully realizing project evaluation outcomes, the task at hand is to ensure the sustainability of the Digital Connections Program once the grant funding ends. What is encouraging is the support among the HBCU Library Directors/Deans at the three digital service centers who are willing to explore the risks and rewards of helping HBCU libraries – both large and small select, scan, and store their digital images using standards developed in collaboration with other HBCUs.

NEXT STEPS

Next steps for the digital service centers involve implementing the guidance set forth in the planning documents that CUL project staff within the Digital Project Management Group provided. CUL project staff will visit with each of the three digital service center directors to make presentations to campus administrators and promote the digital service centers during staff meetings. CUL project staff also will help HBCULA leaders develop policies that support sustainable digital libraries. HBCULA Committee on Digitization members continues to develop a communications strategy for all

stakeholders in the Digital Connections Program (those individuals who will likely be impacted by the establishment of digital service centers at the three HBCU Libraries).

ATTACHMENTS

BUSINESS PLAN DRAFT & APPENDICES