

**Annual Report to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation on
*Building Collections, Building Services, and Building Sustainability:
A Collaborative Model for the HBCU Library Alliance***

Cornell University Library
Instruction, Research and Information Services

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Executive Summary

The Cornell University Library, in collaboration with the HBCU Library Alliance, the Southeastern Library Network, and the Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, is pleased to present a report on the first year of activities in the *Building Collections, Building Services, and Building Sustainability: A Collaborative Model for the HBCU Library Alliance* project. This report presents key objectives of the project and the activities that have been accomplished covering the period of July 1, 2005 through July 1, 2006.

Our goal as outlined in the grant was to train a cadre of HBCU librarians and archivists in collaborative digital collection building. Over the past twelve months several key objectives have been accomplished. This report contains the results of our activities, which included training HBCU library staff in collaborative digital image production, providing workflow support to HBCU libraries during the production of digital images, and guiding HBCU library deans and directors in the creation of policy and recommendations for the development of a shared web portal of HBCU digitized collections.

Already, the efforts of the project partners have resulted in numerous positive outcomes for the HBCU libraries that are involved in the project. First, the Project Advisory Committee agreed that a common theme for the collection was important, and concluded that participants should scan and make available at their home institutions the founding documents that speak to the cultural legacy of HBCUs. Several of the participating libraries chose to send more than one person to attend the digital imaging workshop and paid registration, travel, and accommodations for the additional staff, a mark of how needed was the training and how much they valued the goals of the project. As a result, we trained a total of fifteen HBCU library staff, five more than we originally envisioned. Information about the project has been disseminated widely by project partners through media sources including radio, web, print, and during planned conference presentations. HBCU library staff is digitizing archival materials and already nearly 200 records appear in CONTENTdm – a digital content management system.

This report synthesizes the activities involved and our results. The report concludes that the effort to train HBCU library staff in collaborative digital collection building was successful and that continuing efforts to assist HBCU libraries in identifying the issues involved in developing a collaborative digital web portal are underway. The steps involved are many, but we realize that success for this project involves the dedication of the partners involved, motivation and support of HBCU libraries to contribute overall to digital collection building, planning, and sustainability of shared access to digitized HBCU cultural heritage materials.

Introduction

In June 2005, Cornell University Library (CUL), in collaboration with the HBCU Library Alliance, Southeastern Library Network (SOLINET), and the Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center was awarded a grant by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to develop a training and digital collections production initiative for HBCU Libraries. This is a first of its kind digitization effort between the project partners, and represents a unique opportunity to assist HBCU libraries with providing access to and preserving the cultural heritage of their collections.

Objectives

Significant progress has been made on the project since the grant was awarded in June 2005. Our goal was to build a cadre of HBCU librarians who were trained in collaborative digital collection building. In order to achieve this goal we identified several key objectives. The first objective was to select ten historically black college and university libraries to participate in the project. Once libraries were selected, our next objective was to train library staff at the participating institutions in digital imaging. Once trained, HBCU library staffs were expected to apply their new skills and knowledge in the production of digital images and metadata at their home institutions. Our final objective was to enable the project Advisory Committee to develop policies and recommendations related to the creation of a shared portal of digital HBCU collections.

Selection of HBCU Libraries

The first project objective was to select ten HBCUs to participate in the project. In order to achieve this objective, selection criteria were developed by members of the HBCU Library Alliance Board of Directors. Institutions were selected based upon a combination of institutional commitment to the project, the richness of their holdings that speak to the legacy of HBCUs, previous participation in the HBCU Archives Institute, and geographical and institutional diversity.

The institutions selected for participation were: Alabama State University, Bennett College for Women, Fisk University, Grambling State University, Hampton University, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Southern University and A&M College – Baton Rouge, Tennessee State University, Tuskegee University, and Virginia State University. Once they were identified, Loretta Parham, President of the HBCU Library Alliance Board of Directors, forwarded a letter inviting the selected institutions to participate in the 18-month project; all agreed.

Training HBCU Library Staff in Digital Imaging

The second objective of the project was to train HBCU library staff in digital imaging techniques. We selected November 13th through the 18th as the dates for the digital imaging workshop. A welcome letter was forwarded to the deans and directors of the participating institutions that described the November digital imaging workshop. Lillian

Lewis, Program Officer for the HBCU Library Alliance, hired a half-time administrative staff person to assist with logistics and planning for the workshop and subsequent meetings of the advisory committee.

During the months of August through October, Cornell made preparations for the digital imaging workshop. Cornell also set up subcontract accounts for project partners SOLINET and the Woodruff Library. We implemented a project website to share workshop information, recommendations about the production of digital images and metadata, and supporting websites on copyright and CONTENTdm digital collection management software.

We reviewed hardware and software specifications that we made in the grant proposal, updated them to reflect currently-available equipment, consulted with Cornell information technology staff on the best way to purchase and maintain the equipment, and placed orders for scanners, computers, and digital imaging software. One solution recommended by the IT staff was to develop a “ghost” image of the software installation on each machine to ensure that all computers were configured the same way during training and production ramp-up, and to allow the project manager to be better prepared to answer minor questions that project liaison’s might have once they began. Once computers arrived, the project manager set them up in a staging area and ghosted them. We coordinated with IT staff at the Robert W. Woodruff Library on purchasing the server and software for the CONTENTdm digital collection management system that is housed at the Woodruff Library.

During mid-September, we sent email correspondence to the library deans and directors and asked them to identify an individual from their institution whom they wanted to attend the digital imaging workshop. During early October, Cornell began customizing its award-winning tutorial *Moving Theory into Practice: Digital Imaging for Libraries and Archives*. Meetings were held with Anne Kenney and Peter Hirtle to discuss and develop the curriculum for the November digital imaging workshop. We developed workshop content, including lectures and exercises and produced a binder for each participant in the workshop. The contents of the binder included handouts on lectures, lab exercises, assignments, as well as production information of use to the participants.

Next, Lillian Lewis assisted by making travel arrangements for the participants who were selected by their dean/director to attend the workshop that was held at the Georgia Archives in Morrow, Georgia. We coordinated the reception, meals, and breaks for participants with Clayton College catering service and Brenda Banks, Deputy Director of the GA Archives. We held a phone conference with Brenda Banks to discuss the training room layout, accommodations for a training lab during the weeklong workshop, and other workshop logistics.

Near the end of September, Ira Revels participated in an online digitization course offered by the University of Illinois. Through an arrangement with the Cornell University Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, she received manuscripts and photographs

in order to practice scanning using the Epson Expression 10000XL scanner that was purchased for the project.

Prior to attending the workshop, participants were encouraged to complete an online tutorial *Moving Theory into Practice*. The purpose of the tutorial was to ensure that participants were introduced to base-level information on the use of digital image technology, from conversion to presentation to preservation. It was also used to provide background information on reformatting paper and film-based library and archival materials; demonstrate material preparation, scanning equipment, and storage media; and familiarize participants with various content types, metadata creation, and the use of digital imaging in a networked environment.

The purpose of the workshop was to familiarize HBCU library staff with the scanners, computers, and software they would use to develop digital collections at their home institutions. The workshop was attended by a total of fifteen HBCU library staff from ten participating libraries as well as staff from the Georgia Archives. Library directors could send one person to the workshop from their institutions; however, several directors sent an additional staff and paid registration, travel, and accommodations for the attendees.

The workshop opened on Sunday, November 13, with an introductory session where staff learned about the schedule for the week ahead and asked questions about the project. On Monday morning, Anne Kenney laid the foundation for digital imaging by emphasizing best practices. Peter Hirtle discussed various hardware and software issues and provided an in-depth discussion on assessing copyright and ownership of materials. Ira Revels had created in the Georgia Archives an impromptu computer lab using the computers and scanners that were purchased for the project. Using this equipment, she led workshop participants in exercises designed to give them hands-on experience using the hardware and software for the production of digital images and metadata. Geri Ingram, Customer Service Specialist from DiMeMa, Inc. taught a full day on CONTENTdm digital collections management software, the content management solution being used by the HBCUs.

On the final day of the workshop Lillian Lewis introduced a communications plan. The plan contained a list of conferences, their dates, and locations. At least six attendees indicated that they planned to attend several of the conferences that were listed on the communications plan and they agreed to participate in panel discussions or presentations during those conferences.

The workshop proved to be a success with the attendees. It averaged an overall score of 3.5 on a scale of 4.0 on the workshop evaluation form, which CUL staff thinks is exceptional for an initial pilot presentation.

After the workshop ended, the computer workstations and scanners were repackaged and mailed from the Georgia Archives to the participating institutions. Shortly after the Thanksgiving holiday and as a follow-up to the training, the Project Manager called the project liaisons at the participating institutions and asked them the following questions:

- Had project liaisons received the hardware that had been shipped to them after the workshop?
- Had project liaisons met or planned to meet with the library dean/director to discuss what they learned during the workshop?
- Were they prepared to begin planning their approach to digitizing materials from their archival collections?

Everyone with whom she spoke responded favorably to all three questions.

Post-training Activities

Once we returned home, we updated the project website to include suggestions for improvements to the digital image and metadata production guidelines. We added links to similar consortia digitization initiatives, a job description for scanning technicians hired for the production of digital images, and project talking points for conferences. The website is housed on a HBCU Library Alliance server and it can be found at: <http://hbculibraries.org/html/programs.html>.

In addition to updating the website, we implemented a project electronic mailing list for participants to share important updates with their colleagues about building collections and to receive project updates. Any participant who is subscribed to the list may post questions to the Cornell consultants regarding issues such as workflow or copyright. Project liaisons, library deans/directors from the ten participating institutions, project advisors, workshop participants, and Cornell consultants are subscribed. Anyone who is subscribed to the list may post freely without having to wait for list manager approval.

In December, the CONTENTdm server was installed by Gail McClenney and her staff from the Robert W. Woodruff Library. In addition, the HBCU Library Alliance Program Officer with assistance from Josephine Smith, the Executive Assistant of the Robert W. Woodruff Library arranged a meeting of the project Advisory Committee.

Finally, one task that was more complicated than expected was the preparation of subcontracts to the participating institutions. With assistance of the Cornell University Office of Sponsored Programs, finalized subcontract agreements were mailed to SOLINET and the library directors and deans of the participating institutions by December 2005.

The First Advisory Committee Meeting

In January the Robert W. Woodruff Library hosted the first meeting of the project Advisory Committee. The meeting was attended by the HBCU library deans and directors, Anne Kenney and Ira Revels. During the meeting, advisors discussed their role in the project and made decisions concerning the collaboration. Advisors discussed the development of a report outlining key recommendations on access and use of shared

digital collections in a HBCU Library Alliance web portal. They also discussed the types of materials that participating institutions should begin digitizing.

During the meeting, Janice Franklin shared a draft of the “Digitization of Cultural Heritage Materials Values Statement” that was prepared for review and comment by the Alliance’s Working Group on the Digitization of Cultural Heritage Materials. “The Digitization of Cultural Heritage Materials Values Statement” was presented as one of three working documents that will be produced and disseminated to HBCU Library Alliance member institutions that decide to undertake digitization projects. Ms. Franklin also shared a draft of the Group’s “Digitization Frequently Asked Questions.” This document will allow the HBCU Library Alliance to provide HBCU member institutions with answers to baseline questions about contributing images and metadata to the eventual HBCU Library Alliance web portal.

Ira Revels gave a presentation on CONTENTdm. In preparation for executing the requirements of the subcontracts, a representative from Cornell’s Office of Sponsored Programs discussed the details of the subcontract process with Advisors by phone conference. Project advisors discussed the utility of a single historian and agreed instead to involve the faculty at their home institutions in discussions about the use of digitized materials. By the conclusion of the meeting, the advisors had agreed that it was very important that a common theme drive the organization of the project. Participants agreed to scan and make available at their home institutions the founding documents that speak to the cultural legacy of HBCUs. Finally, the project Advisory Committee agreed to meet again in May to share their individual progress and to begin business planning discussions.

Once we returned home, with the assistance of Elaine Engst, Cornell University Archivist, we began identifying items that are exemplars of university founding documents. We also consulted monographs on the history of HBCUs in order to determine which types of documents had proven to be the most useful to the authors. Once we completed our research, we forwarded an email correspondence to project advisors and liaisons that described founding institutional records such as president’s letters and photographs, architectural drawings, Board of Trustee reports, and letters from religious organizations that founded many HBCUs.

During February, HBCU project liaisons began selecting founding documents for digitization from their university archives. Next, they began setting up their project workstations. In order to facilitate uploading digital images and metadata to the server housed at the Robert W. Woodruff Library, project liaisons installed the CONTENTdm acquisition station on their computer workstation. Gail McClenney set up workspace on the server so that each participating institution could contribute images and metadata to their own individual collections in CONTENTdm.

Late in February we learned that the process of setting up individual subcontracts for HBCU libraries was taking longer than we had anticipated. Our challenge was to identify individuals at each HBCU who were responsible for signing and approving the terms and

conditions set forth in the subcontract agreements. The project manager with assistance from the Cornell Office of Sponsored Programs was able to augment this process by making personal contacts with the library dean/director and individual grants and contracts staff at each participating institution. By March 2006, all subcontract agreements for the ten participating institutions and Julie Walker – our business planning consultant were signed and approved.

The Second Advisory Committee Meeting

During the month of March, we made plans to hold a second meeting of the project Advisory Committee. Lillian Lewis arranged travel for the advisors. Ms. Lewis, with the help of Josephine Smith and the half-time administrative assistant hired for the project, arranged logistics for the meeting participants.

The second meeting of the Advisory Committee was held on May 10, 2006 at the Robert W. Woodruff Library in Atlanta. In attendance were Peter Hirtle, Ira Revels, Julie Walker, and the deans and directors of the participating libraries. Peter Hirtle gave a presentation on institutional control, copyright, use, and access issues. At the conclusion of his presentation, Advisors expressed their concerns about protecting their collections from unauthorized use by commercial and other unknown entities. Mr. Hirtle suggested to the Advisors that they apply techniques such as digital watermarking and the development of use policies and statements to address their concerns.

After Mr. Hirtle's presentation, Julie Walker gave a presentation on business sustainability related to digital web portals. Ms. Walker's presentation included case studies and models of collaborative digital collections such as the Colorado Digitization Program (CDP), the Resource Libraries Group Cultural Materials Alliance (CMA), the Museum Online Archives (MOA), and the Ohio Memory project. Ms. Walker introduced project advisors to several key questions related to business planning. At the conclusion of her presentation, advisors asked several questions related to funding models for sustaining a collaborative web portal. They agreed to share with the Committee models that they have successfully implemented at their home institutions.

Following Ms. Walker's presentation, Yildiz Binkley shared a draft of the "Selection Criteria for HCBU Digitization Projects," for review and comment. It was the last of three documents prepared by the Alliance's Working Group on the Digitization of Cultural Heritage Materials. The "Values Statement," "Frequently Asked Questions," and the "Selection Criteria" will be used to guide the development of project Advisory Committee recommendations and policies related to a collaborative HBCU Library Alliance digital library.

Site Visits

Starting in late April, Ira Revels began conducting site visits at individual participating institutions. The purpose of the site visits is to provide workflow support to HBCU library project liaisons and conduct quality control as they build collections at their home

institutions. These visits include a day-long training session with the project liaison and scanning technician. Additional project staff members, including catalogers, IT, and archivists are invited to a feedback session where they can ask questions and discuss their role in the project. The project manager also meets with the library dean/director to follow-up on workflow progress and administrative issues.

Thus far, Ms. Revels has visited Fisk University, Tennessee State University, Grambling State University, and Southern University and A & M College. During the month of July, she plans to visit Hampton University, Virginia State University and Bennett College for Women. The visits have had numerous benefits to individual project liaisons and the project overall.

One immediate benefit of the site visits is that we have refreshed project liaisons skills in properly scanning, saving, and documenting preservation quality images. On a typical visit, Ms. Revels begins by reviewing with liaisons and scanning technicians additions and updates to production documentation that have been implemented on the project website. Second, project liaisons share with Ms. Revels their unique workflow practices. In some instances practices at one institution have benefited another. For example, a project liaison found it challenging to use the CONTENTdm Acquisition Station to implement transcripts for the journal that she wanted to include in her institution's digital collection. She and the database administrator at the Woodruff Library spent time investigating the problem with DiMeMa, Inc. – the company that created CONTENTdm. Once the problem was resolved at one institution, Ms. Revels learned that on a subsequent visit to another institution a project liaison had the same problem. Ms. Revels was able to apply solutions learned from the previous institution she visited to help resolve the issue at this institution. Ms. Revels uses experiences like the one described above to update production documentation and often shares solutions on the electronic discussion list, which benefits everyone involved.

Dissemination

The project has generated wide community interest from the start. Shortly after the project began, Ms. Revels was invited to discuss the project on a national, live, telephone radio interview on "Mind Yo Business" with Brian Higgins, a radio program broadcast on XM Satellite Radio Channel 169 "The Power." In January 2006, the project manager attended the American Library Association MidWinter Meeting in San Antonio and participated in an OCLC-sponsored panel presentation. The presentation focused on digital collection building through collaboration and partnerships.

We updated our project talking points and communications plan with the assistance of Adrian Carver, Director of Communications for the Robert W. Woodruff Library. We developed a newsletter that contains press statements, facts, photos, and updates about the project. The newsletter and a cover letter were shared with library staff during the American Library Association's Annual Conference in New Orleans. Additional copies were mailed to library deans and directors, university presidents, and project liaisons.

Recently, HBCU library directors and staff participated in the ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana. During the conference, approximately 17,000 library staff from all over the country attended meetings, workshops, and panel presentations. Participants in the project disseminated information about the project to over 300 library professionals at two scheduled panel presentations and during the meeting of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association.

Next Steps

We are in the process of developing the Advisory Committee report. This process involves developing questions for project advisors related to planning an eventual HBCU Library Alliance web portal. Presently, Peter Hirtle and Julie Walker are designing an online survey instrument that library deans/directors will complete in the coming weeks.

Ira Revels has completed at least 50% of the project site visits. She continues to update the project website with the assistance of the half-time administrative assistant hired for the project. Since most of the institutions will hire a scanning technician in the fall, Ms. Revels will develop an online training manual for scanning technicians to use during the production of digital images. We are also in the process of developing and disseminating a questionnaire for library deans and directors to report who on their campuses is directly involved in the project, how much time they spend on project activities, and additional information about the collections HBCUs are digitizing.

During the last Advisory Committee meeting, Advisors requested mockup's of an interface for the HBCU Library Alliance web portal. Beginning in August, our web designer, in consultation with Gail McClenney and staff at the Robert W. Woodruff Library, will begin developing mockups of the web portal interface. Individual libraries have also requested consultation support for the development of customized CONTENTdm interfaces. Our plans include benchmarking design elements used by the Digital Library of Appalachia and a few other institutions, presenting sample designs to the HBCU libraries who requested them, and providing consultation support for implementing the designs using CONTENTdm customizable website templates.

At present, Cornell staff is in discussion with the HBCU Library Alliance Board of Directors about applying for a second round of funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The new funding would allow ten additional institutions to receive training, workflow support, and consultation for the production of digital collections. The institutions would also have the ability to contribute founding documents to the HBCU Library Alliance server in Atlanta.

Conclusion

While it is too early to quantify the results of digitization efforts at individual HBCU libraries, we believe that the feedback received from project partners, stakeholders, and colleagues has been valuable. As evidenced by their activities, HBCU library staffs that have been trained are invested in their institutional success. Library deans and directors

actively participate in Advisory Committee meetings and are working outside of the meetings to draft recommendations and policy documents. Areas where work is needed for the purpose of drafting policies and recommendations for a shared HBCU Library Alliance portal of digitized collections are:

- Decisions about access to and use of HBCU Library Alliance digitized collections outside of the HBCU community.
- Proposing a funding model in support of the maintenance and continued development of the shared web accessible portal.
- Developing the capacity of individual HBCUs to contribute to the shared portal (including investigating copyright, compliance with state-mandated revenue guidelines, and institutional policies).
- Exploring governance of collaborative HBCU library collections and the means to protect ownership of digital HBCU Library Alliance cultural heritage materials.

Overall, the issues that lay ahead are moving successfully to resolution. It will take the collective wisdom, energy, and leadership of the project partners to develop workable solutions. Yet, given the investment of the HBCU libraries, Cornell, the Alliance, SOLINET, and the Robert W. Woodruff Library we are confident that success in the end will mean having been apart of a truly collaborative and unique experience.