Final 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
Public Services and Assessment

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Executive Summary

Shared digital libraries offer unprecedented possibility to develop ubiquitous access to digital images and metadata created by institutions having a common mission and serving similar constituents. In 2002, over 100 HBCU libraries met and identified the need for a shared digital library to provide access to and promote the preservation of unique materials held in their archives. The HBCU Library Alliance was formed and the library deans and directors decided that a collaborative effort would further the mission of each university and provide opportunities for networking, collaboration, and sharing among HBCUs.

In June 2005, support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation made it possible for Cornell University Library, on behalf of the HBCU Library Alliance to partner with SOLINET and the Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center to undertake a collaborative effort among HBCUs and the project partners. On July 1, 2005 the project partners began development of a training and digital production initiative. The HBCU-CUL Digitization Initiative (as it came to be known) was the first effort of its kind to involve ten historically black colleges and universities and the project partners. Eighteen months later, the HBCUs created a collection of historic and founding documents that celebrates the rich cultural heritage found in HBCU archives and libraries. This report presents key objectives and outcomes that were accomplished during the project from July 1, 2005 – March 31, 2007.

The goal of the project was to build a cadre of HBCU library staff trained in digital imaging. The objectives were to: 1) train HBCU staff in the fundamentals of digital collection building; 2) advance the skills and capacity of HBCU librarians to digitize images around a common theme; 3) make available to HBCU libraries digitization workflow and consultation support; and 4) provide guidance and support to HBCUs in planning the construction and sustainability of cooperative digital collections as part of a future HBCU Library Alliance digital library.

By the conclusion of the first project phase, participants had agreed on and accomplished the following:

- The selection of ten HBCU libraries for the project.
- Training of fifteen HBCU librarians and IT staff, plus five additional staff paid for by the host institution.
- The development of a shared HBCU digital collection, containing nearly 800 digital objects and records.
- The development of a HBCU Library Alliance committee to explore business and sustainability planning for HBCU digital initiatives.
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 historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). This was a first of its kind digitization effort between the project partners and ten HBCUs. The collaboration among the project partners provided a unique opportunity to assist HBCU libraries in their attempt to provide access to and preserve their cultural heritage.

The HBCU-CUL Digitization Initiative (as the project came to be known) allowed Cornell University Library the opportunity to share its award-winning tutorial *Moving Theory into Practice: Digital Imaging for Libraries and Archives* in a classroom environment with numerous HBCU librarians and IT professionals. During the course of eighteen-months, the participants in the workshop successfully applied their training towards collaborative digital collection-building. In support of their efforts, CUL staff visited each institution and offered workflow advice. CUL and HBCU Library Alliance staff developed a website containing written technical guidelines that participants used to accomplish scanning and metadata creation. SOLINET, the HBCU Library Alliance, and the Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center assisted throughout the project by providing administrative, logistical, and database support for the ten partner institutions. Finally, the project partners spent a portion of the first year exploring business planning models for the development of a successful HBCU Digital Library.

Objectives & Outcomes

During the first phase, the project goal was to build a cadre of HBCU librarians who were trained in collaborative digital collection building. Project objectives involved selecting the ten HBCU institutions, training librarians and IT professionals, developing guidelines for metadata creation and scanning, and disseminating project results. CUL staff met with HBCU library deans and directors who decided on the digital collection theme, shared their ideas about ramping up production of digital objects, and adopted a set of values upon which HBCU digital collections will continue to be built. The following outcomes resulted from the first project year:

- **Selecting ten HBCUs.** 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 were: Alabama State University, Bennett College for Women, Fisk University, Grambling State University, Hampton University, the 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.
• **Installing equipment and software.** Cornell IT staff installed a ghost image on the hard drives of the project computers to ensure that all were configured the same way during training and production ramp-up. The project manager’s computer was also configured using the ghost image. This allowed her to be better prepared to answer minor questions that the project liaisons might have once they began. This method was successful at helping to prepare her for minor issues that surfaced during her site visits with the institutions. CUL staff also worked closely with IT staff at the Woodruff Library to develop specifications for and order the project server and CONTENTdm digital collection management software.

• **Training HBCU Library staff in digital imaging.** The training workshop familiarized HBCU library staff with the scanners, computers, and software they would use to develop digital collections at their home institutions. CUL staff asked library deans and directors to identify an individual from their institution whom they wanted to attend the digital imaging workshop. 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. A total of fifteen HBCU library staff from ten participating libraries in addition to staff from the Georgia Archives attended the workshop.

Cornell staff developed workshop content, including lectures and exercises and produced a binder for each participant in the workshop. The binder contained handouts on lectures, lab exercises, assignments, and production information. Cornell also customized its award-winning tutorial *Moving Theory into Practice: Digital Imaging for Libraries and Archives.* Prior to attending the workshop, participants were encouraged to complete the online tutorial. 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. Lillian Lewis, the HBCU Library Alliance Program Officer, made travel arrangements for the workshop participants. The reception, meals, and breaks were coordinated Clayton College catering service and Brenda Banks, the Deputy Director of the GA Archives.

During the first day of the workshop, Anne Kenney, the Cornell University Library Interim University Librarian, laid the foundation for digital imaging by emphasizing best practices. Peter Hirtle, Primary Investigator; Cornell University Library Intellectual Property Officer and Technology Strategist, discussed various hardware and software issues and provided an in-depth discussion on assessing copyright and ownership of materials. Ira Revels, Senior Assistant Librarian and Project Manager of the HBCU-CUL Digitization Initiative, led a series of hands-on lab sessions. The lab contained the computers and scanners that were purchased for the project. During the lab, workshop participants gained 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 day-long session on CONTENTdm digital collections management software, used in the project. Evaluations indicated that the workshop averaged a score of 3.5 on a scale of 4.0, (which CUL staff thinks is exceptional for an initial pilot presentation.)

On the final day of the workshop, Lillian Lewis, HBCUL Library Alliance Program Officer, 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. During the course of production, the binders and the tutorial served as tools that project partners used to introduce new staff to project requirements and scanning techniques.

HBCU librarians and project leaders at a November 2005 digital imaging workshop conducted by Cornell University Library staff at the Georgia State Archives.

- **The project website and email list.** Once the workshop concluded, CUL and the HBCU Library Alliance Administrative Assistant updated the project website to include suggestions for improvements to the digital image and metadata production guidelines. CUL added links to similar digitization initiatives by other consortia, a job description for scanning technicians, 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](http://hbculibraries.org/html/programs.html). In addition to updating the website, CUL implemented a project electronic mailing list for
participants to share important information with their colleagues about building collections and to receive project updates. The project website and email list are used by the project partners, staff, and the project manager to share conference calls for papers, digital library and metadata symposia announcements, and to communicate project information.

- **The Project Advisory Committee.** A project Advisory Committee comprised of HBCU library deans and directors was formed early in the fall 2005 to decide policy and guide decision-making for the project. In January 2006, the Robert W. Woodruff Library hosted the first meeting of the project Advisory Committee attended by the HBCU library deans and directors, Anne Kenney and Ira Revels. During the meeting, advisors discussed their role in the project, made decisions concerning the collaboration, and determined the theme for the digital collection, *A Celebration of the History and Founding of HBCUs.*

During the meeting, Dr. Janice Franklin, Dean of the Alabama State University Libraries and Chair of the HBCU Library Alliance Digital Initiatives Committee, shared a draft of the “Digitization of Cultural Heritage Materials Values Statement” a HBCU Library Alliance Board of Directors Initiative. The Values Statement was authored by the Alliance’s Working Group on the Digitization of Cultural Heritage Materials, which was composed of Dr. Franklin, and included three HBCU Library directors and deans: Dr. Yildiz Binkley, Assistant Vice President of the Tennessee State University Libraries and Media Centers; Dr. Elsie Weatherington, Dean of the Virginia State University Libraries; and Loretta Parham, Chair of the HBCU Library Alliance and CEO/Director of the Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center. “The Digitization of Cultural Heritage Materials Values Statement” was developed to guide HBCU Library Alliance member institutions that undertake digitization projects. Dr. Franklin also shared a draft of the Group’s “Digitization Frequently Asked Questions,” authored by Dr. Weatherington. Both documents were adopted by the Advisory Committee members. Later, during a meeting of the member libraries of the
HBCU Library Alliance, the Values Statement and FAQ’s were adopted by the general membership and both documents were added to the Alliance’s website.

In March, we held our second meeting with the project Advisors at the Woodruff Library. Lillian Lewis with the help of Josephine Smith, Administrative Assistant at the Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, and a half-time HBCU Library Alliance assistant arranged travel and meeting logistics for the participants. The meeting was attended by Peter Hirtle, Ira Revels, and Julie Walker in addition to the deans and directors of the participating libraries. Peter Hirtle gave a presentation on institutional control, copyright, use, and access issues.

After Mr. Hirtle’s presentation, Julie Walker, the project business planning and sustainability consultant presented 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 digital collection.

- **Site visits.** In late April, Ira Revels the Project Manager, began conducting site visits at the ten participating institutions. The purpose of the site visits was to provide workflow support, project advice to library and IT staff, and to review the quality of scanned images and metadata they created for the project. Where needed, the visits entailed day-long training sessions. Ms. Revels met with a variety of individuals including, the library directors, catalogers, scanning technicians, IT staff, and archivists.

Several benefits emerged during the site visits. One immediate benefit was refreshing the skills of workshop trainees in proper techniques for scanning, saving, and documenting preservation quality images. Another benefit was that Ms. Revels was able to build upon knowledge gained at one institution for the
benefit of others. The visits served as a way to eliminate inefficiencies across several partner institutions. Finally, staff at participating institutions eagerly shared with Ms. Revels their best practices, such as written workflow protocols and documentation and encouraged her to share this information with other partners she visited. Ms. Revels was able to help coordinate a follow-up visit involving project staff at Hampton University (HU) and Virginia State University (VSU) so that VSU staff could provide HU staff with in-depth assistance to HU staff on creating compound objects in CONTENTdm.

- **HBCU Digital Collection.** Production of the digital collection began early in February 2006. Prior to production, the library staff trained in the digital imaging workshop in November 2005 held meetings with their colleagues to establish workflows for image and metadata creation. They worked with archivists to select historical and founding documents for digitization. They hired scanning technicians and trained them in the operation of scanners, image editing software, and CONTENTdm. (In addition to the production of digital collections and metadata at partner institutions), Cornell staff developed a copyright and user agreement for the collection website. Project partners experimented with scanning a variety of materials, while remaining within the scope of the project theme.

Near the end of the project, in March 2007, CUL staff asked the library directors and project liaisons to report the number of digital objects in CONTENTdm, the total number of items digitized the number of staff who worked on the project, and the total number of hours they contributed. The results of the surveys and select responses are below in Tables 1.

**Table 1: Quantitative data reported by the ten participating HBCU libraries.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRAND TOTALS</th>
<th>No. items digitized</th>
<th>No. records in CONTENTdm</th>
<th>No. staff involved</th>
<th>No. staff hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3,519</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5,776</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total number of items digitized might suggest that project participants were selective when choosing which images to share in CONTENTdm. Taken together, the number of items digitized, the total number of staff involved, and the total number of staff hours might suggest that less staff time was spent in scanning than on performing more managerial and administrative project activities. CUL staff also asked participants open-ended questions such as “Describe your experience working on the HBCU Digitization project” and “How will your library use the collection?” The responses, which are below, suggest that libraries benefited greatly from having funding to hire additional staff or students in order to scan documents and create metadata. They also point out that, although the partners could benefit from improvements in managing their workflow, the concerns about staffing and pacing scanning with metadata creation is common for a large-scale collaborative effort.
“Staff worked extremely well as a team. Our student worker was exceptional. His strong technical and organizational skills were very helpful. As a team we were able to effectively troubleshoot the myriad of problems we encountered during the project. It was a groundbreaking project that propelled us to begin the creation and development of our digital library.”

“Workflow could have been better had we been better staffed in our institution.”

“Utilizing additional staff persons was a tremendous help to our project especially where there may be limited staff personnel.”

“The digitization process was a collaborative effort among the library staff. The items were scanned at such a rapid pace we sometimes had difficulty keeping up with creating the metadata.”

“The digital collection will be valuable as a tool for university orientation classes and the library's information literacy courses. It will also be useful in attracting alumni support and can serve as a resource for marketing Alabama State University.”

“By digitizing the collection we have succeeded in reducing the handling along with the wear and tear of the images scanned. The project was such a success we have hired a full time scanning technician. The images we digitized are the first step in presenting our collection to a broader and distant audience.”

CONTENTdm

While it might have been desirable for each institution to maintain its own digital collection in its own networked environment and on its own equipment, CUL staff decided against that approach. CUL staff decided instead to use an HBCU Library Alliance-administered server running CONTENTdm. This approach has proven to be very successful.

Hosting the digital collection on one shared server has had several advantages. First, it was less expensive than buying ten servers and ten copies of software and asking ten individuals to learn how to administer both. Second, the database administrator at the Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center has been very accessible, knowledgeable, and helpful to our partner institutions. Having a centralized contact for answering CONTENTdm-related questions
has enabled our partners to contribute images and metadata with relative ease. Having a centralized server has enabled timely server updates. Finally, CONTENTdm makes possible collection-level customization and the customization of individual contributed collections. Institutions will easily be able to make it appear as though they are running a unique version of the collection on its own library website.

**Dissemination**

The project partners used several methods in order to promote the project among our colleagues and constituents. First, CUL staff with guidance from the HBCU Library Alliance developed a press release announcing the grant award to the professional library community. CUL staff shared the press release with the HBCU Library Alliance and it was immediately posted it to its website. The announcement went to BlackPR.com where it was shared with 150 black news, radio, television, and print media. This proved very successful and in September 2005 Ira Revels participated in a national, live, telephone radio interview with Brian Higgins named “Mind Yo Business” on XM Satellite Radio Channel 169 “The Power.” In 2006, Ms. Revels participated in a second radio interview, which aired on WEOS 89.7 a public radio station based in Geneva, NY. The interview was broadcast on Thanksgiving Day. The name of the show is “Out of Bounds” with Tish Pearlman.

The November/December 2006 issue of “The Crisis” magazine featured an article about the project titled “HBCUs Digitize Black Experience.” The project also was featured throughout the year in numerous Cornell University Library publications, the HBCU Library Alliance website, and professional organizations. Several examples follow.

- Black Caucus of the American Library Association website.
- Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) African American Studies Section (AFAS) electronic mailing list.

Prudent budget administration enabled six project liaisons to attend and participate in national conferences so that they could share their experiences with their library colleagues. The first conference was the American Library Association’s Annual Conference held in New Orleans in June 2006. A panel presentation involved four project liaisons who spoke on behalf of their institutions: Cedric Davis, Systems Coordinator of the Alabama State University Library; Cecilia Iwala, Systems Coordinator of the Grambling State University Library; Elizabeth Gail McClennery, Deputy Director of the Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center; and Angela Proctor, Archivist of the Southern University and A&M College Library. The second conference was the Joint Conference of Librarians of Color, held in Dallas in 2006. Three panelists spoke on behalf of their institutions: Andrea Jackson, Curator of Manuscripts and Archives of the Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center (RWWL); Lucious Edwards, University Archivist at Virginia State University (VSU); and Cedric Davis.
Next Steps

In April 2007, Cornell University Library on behalf of the HBCU Library Alliance was awarded a second grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in the amount of $450,000 for a second phase of training and development of digital collections with ten new HBCUs. The project is well-underway. The institutions are: Lincoln University - Missouri, Miles College, Morehouse School of Medicine, North Carolina Central University, Paine College, Southern University at Shreveport, South Carolina State University, St. Augustine’s College, Texas Southern University and the University of the District of Columbia. The second group of HBCUs was trained at the Georgia Archives in Morrow, Georgia in a four-day workshop, held on 31 July 2007 – 3 August 2007. The workshop featured as instructors two project liaisons from the first ten participating libraries.

Several activities are taking place during the continuation project that involve the first project participants and that will contribute to promoting sustainability. First, the project partners from the fist round will refine their metadata using a revised set of metadata guidelines. Second, a subset of the first ten partners will attend a Digitizing Audio and Video and Advanced Issues in Digitization workshop in the spring 2008 at Cornell in Ithaca, New York. The purpose of the workshop is to develop the skills of a core set of librarians at partner institutions to enhance the digital collection through the development of audio and video media. Finally, the project partners will explore the creation of digitization centers at some of our project partner institutions to digitize paper-based, audio, and video materials for HBCU libraries (that are for various reasons) unable to do so on their own.

A subset of five library deans, the database administrator, and the HBCU Library Alliance Program Officer comprise the new seven-member project advisory committee. The committee continues to make policy decisions and offer guidance on the meaningful engagement of project staff. Janice Franklin, Dean of the Alabama State University Libraries; Loretta Parham, CEO and Director of the Robert W. Woodruff Library; and Elsie Weatherington, Dean of the Virginia State University Libraries, leads the Digital Initiatives Committee. The Committee is responsible for steering the activities involved in business and sustainability planning, HBCU Library Alliance Digital Initiatives, and the digital collection. It meets regularly by phone.
Conclusion

The eventual goal of the HBCU Library Alliance is to enable all HBCUs to participate in a HBCU Digital Library. Though CUL and the project partners haven’t solved all of the problems associated with building a digital library, such as developing digital library services and insuring sustainability, the project partners contributed to the capacity for HBCUs to develop collaborative digital collections. The project goal was to build the knowledge, skills, and behaviors of individual HBCU librarians through training and the production of digital images and metadata. Each of the ten participating institutions has its own unique mission and administrative structure and yet they have met with ease the challenges faced in collaboration. The project partners have witnessed their remarkable efforts on behalf of everyone who is involved. Over the past eighteen months, the HBCUs demonstrated an unwavering commitment to building a quality digital collection representing their individual and collective histories. As the project partners move forward with another ten partner institutions, we hope to build on past successes and apply the lessons learned to produce a digital collection worthy of celebrating the history and founding of historically black colleges and universities.
Appendix A: Screenshots from the HBCU Digital Collection

A photograph and metadata of the Conference for Colored Women at Southern University and A&M College, 1929.
A browseable list of digital objects contributed by Virginia State University.