

HBCU Library Alliance
Building Capacity for Humanities Special Collections at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Introduction

The HBCU Library Alliance is a consortium that supports the work of the information professionals at the libraries, archives, and special collections of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Created in 2002 by deans and directors of HBCU libraries, and incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 2006, the HBCU Library Alliance is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors who oversee the development and implementation of activities to serve the 71 member libraries that serve 75 colleges and universities, all of which are HBCU institutions as designated by the White House Initiative on HBCUs. Since its founding the HBCU Library Alliance has provided an array of resources and programs to transform and strengthen its membership by developing library leaders, preserving collections, and planning for the future.

In this narrative, Challenge Grant funding is requested for *Building Capacity for Humanities Special Collections at Historically Black Colleges and Universities* (hereafter referred to as “Building Capacity – HBCU”), a five-year program designed to build capacity for the long-term preservation and conservation of collections at each of the 71 member libraries. “Building Capacity – HBCU” will offer a menu of preservation planning documents, collection surveys, treatment and rehousing services, and educational programs to the member libraries. Through this outreach, the HBCU Library Alliance will assist the libraries in building capacity for fundraising for special collection initiatives, documenting cultural heritage materials, increasing accessibility of special collection items, and promoting the humanities significance of their broad collections of rare materials and their irreplaceable cultural heritage artifacts.

Significance and Intellectual Quality

The humanities special collections of the HBCU Library Alliance’s 71 member libraries contain the unique stories of the development and evolution of HBCUs dating back to the early 1800s. The

manuscript, book, photograph, and audiovisual material in these special collections provide vital perspectives on local and regional history in 19 states, as well as the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands. Perhaps even more importantly, they offer irreplaceable documentation on the African-American experience in the 19th and 20th centuries, reflecting the monumental themes of slavery, Civil War, Restoration, the Great Migration, the Harlem Renaissance, the Civil Rights Movement, the recent Black Lives Matter, and so much more.

Complementing these broad themes, the HBCU special collections also spotlight the contributions of individuals in countless fields—from science to politics and from arts to athletics—with the work of very well-known names preserved alongside lesser-known figures who nonetheless left material that can offer unparalleled insight into their time or area of expertise.

While nearly all colleges maintain archives documenting their own institutional history, the HBCU special collections can boast unusually interesting archives of this kind, with many of the institutions emerging from visionary ideals often operating in the face of unwelcoming environments. The stories of the early years of HBCUs are key to understanding the communities from which they emerged. From these HBCUs, faculty leaders, students, and alumni engaged with their times, often playing strong roles—as leaders and interpreters—in virtually every important movement that have defined American life in the past 200 years.

The following collections offer a hint of the depth of important humanities material found in the HBCU special collections:

- At the Atlanta University Center Woodruff Library (GA), the Cullen Jackman Memorial Collection contains original manuscripts, poetry, and correspondence relating to the Harlem Renaissance writer’s ongoing efforts to document “Contemporary Negro Life.” In addition to the Cullen material, the collection includes an original handwritten poem by Paul Lawrence Dunbar and an original draft of *Giovanni’s Room* by James Baldwin.

- At Bethune-Cookman University (FL), the Mary McLeod Bethune Papers cover her remarkable career as educator and civil rights activist, including manuscript material relating to her advisory roles during the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration and her close friendship with Eleanor Roosevelt.
- At St. Augustine’s University (NC), the Robinson Library preserves the archive of the Delany Family, a prominent African American family whose members provided leadership in education, religion, medicine, law, civil rights, and politics from the late 19th century through the 20th century. The family’s last two survivors, centenarians Sadie and Bessie Delany, achieved international fame with the publication of their life story, *Having Our Say*, in 1994.
- At Spelman College (GA), the Audre Lorde Papers preserve 40 linear feet of manuscript and printed material relating to the life of the celebrated 20th century poet, feminist, and civil rights activist.
- At Johnson C. Smith University (NC), detailed records of African-American neighborhoods in Charlotte, NC, offer insight into daily life under segregation.
- At Prairie View A&M University (TX), the library cares for a collection of unique material related to W. E. B. Du Bois’ educational philosophy, including manuscripts of unpublished speeches.
- At Tennessee State University (TN), the Edward S. Temple Collection documents the life of the legendary women’s track coach who nurtured the athletic careers of 40 Olympic athletes including three-time Gold Medal winner Wilma Rudolph.
- At Philander Smith College (AR), the D. W. Reynolds Library is home to the Melissa and Kevin Katz African Art Collection, comprised of 44 sculptures and carvings crafted by the indigenous people of nine African countries.
- At Southern University at New Orleans (LA), the Washington Memorial Library cares for a collection of New Orleanian festival costumes, including the elaborate costumes of the Mardi Gras Indians.
- At Tuskegee University (AL), the Booker T. Washington Collections preserve over 300 boxes of archival material chronicling his extremely influential life’s work as an educator and author.

- At Fisk University (TN), the Franklin Library maintains the Julius Rosenwald Rural Negro Schools collection which gathers together photographs, printed, and manuscript information on over 800 schools for African Americans in 15 southern states.
- At Morgan State University (MD), the Matthew A. Henson Collection documents the polar expeditions of the first African-American Arctic explorer, donated by Henson’s widow.

In recent years, writers and producers have used HBCU special collections to research many published works, including books such as *Making the Unequal Metropolis: School Desegregation and Its Limits* by Ansley T. Erickson, *Spectacular Leap: Black Women Athletes in Twentieth Century America* by Jennifer H. Lansbury, *Jim Crow Campus: Higher Education and the Southern Social Order in the Mid-Twentieth Century* by Joy Williamson-Lott, *Sorting Out the New South City: Race, Class and Urban Development* by Thomas Hanchett, *Citizen of the World: A History of W. E. B. Dub Bois’ Late Career* edited by Phillip Luke Sinitiere, and the *Kentucky American Encyclopedia*, as well as documentaries such as *Tell Them We Are Rising: The Story of Historically Black Colleges and Universities*, *My Ancestral Kentucky Home*, *Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools*, *Thomas M. Campbell—the First Extension Agent*, and the National Park Service film *George Washington Carver*.

Long-Range Plans

The HBCU Library Alliance worked with facilitator Kate Nevins (former LYRASIS Executive Director) on the development of its 2018-2023 Strategic Plan (included as an appendix), which was formally approved by the Board of Directors in January 2018. The “Building Capacity-HBCU” program will fulfill Action Step #2, and the corresponding Expected Results #2, under Section D: Network:

-- Actions Step

2. Identify partnerships that can provide resources and training opportunities for the HBCU Library Alliance members.

-- Expected Results

2. Increase in broader selection of training opportunities for members and access to resources.

Formally incorporated as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization in 2006, the HBCU Library Alliance has succeeded in administering a variety of complex and ambitious programs over the past ten years. These programs have worked so well in part because of the intentional nurturing of partnership relationships with much larger organizations such as the Atlanta University Center Woodruff Library, the University of Delaware – Department of Art Conservation, LYRASIS, Cornell University Library, Wayne State University School of Library and Information Science, and the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts.

Three successful applications to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for multi-year photograph preservation programs were prepared by the University of Delaware and LYRASIS, with the HBCU Library Alliance and its member libraries serving as the focus and principal recipient of services through the grants. These programs were extraordinarily successful in improving the collection stewardship of photograph collections at competitively selected HBCUs and in increasing accessibility to the photograph collections (see the HBCU Library Alliance Digital Collection homepage at: <http://contentdm.auctr.edu/>), and student mentorship and HBCU staff development. This series of grant-funded projects began in 2007 and concluded in 2016. The “Building Capacity – HBCU” proposal builds upon the work and many of the strategies used in the implementation of the Mellon-funded projects.

The HBCU Library Alliance and the University of Delaware – Department of Art Conservation have continued this collaborative approach toward planning and implementing grant-funded projects with a successful 2017 request to the Samuel H. Kress Foundation to establish a competitive summer internship program for five HBCU students at leading library preservation laboratories. With the application period recently closing, there have been 27 student applications received to be considered for the first round of internships.

The HBCU Library Alliance received its first direct grant from the Mellon Foundation in 2010 for “Preserving the Story of the HBCU Library Alliance,” a project to both document the history of the HBCU Library Alliance and to share the success stories of nine member HBCU libraries. In 2013, the HBCU Library Alliance received a second direct grant from the Mellon Foundation for “Expanding Library Support for Faculty Research in HBCUs.”

The HBCU Library Alliance’s 2018-2023 Strategic Plan builds upon the work of the past ten years, with special emphasis on nurturing professional development and capacity building at the member libraries, the continuing use of partnerships to encourage capacity building and strategic resource development at the member libraries, and fostering the financial health of the HBCU Library Alliance through development of a more diverse financial portfolio. While the HBCU Library Alliance is serving as the lead organization in the submission of this application, it is strongly supported by its existing partnerships with both the University of Delaware – Department of Art Conservation and the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts, both of whom have submitted letters of institutional commitment which are included as an Appendix.

Impact

Grant funds for “Building Capacity – HBCU” will strengthen and improve knowledge and understanding of the humanities through capacity building strategies focused on the preservation and conservation of special collections at 71 HBCU member libraries. The total \$730,000 project, with both federal and 1:1 nonfederal matching funds, centers upon the use of \$658,000 in Spend-down Funds to assist the 71 member libraries in improving collection stewardship through a menu that will include preservation planning documents (preservation needs assessments, preservation plans, emergency response plans, and collections management development policies); item-level conservation assessments and condition reports for paper, photographs, books, paintings, textiles, objects, or

audiovisual media; conservation treatment and/or housing; and educational programs that can be delivered at the requesting library and customized to meet the library's needs.

A pool of \$520,000 of Spend-down funds will be established to provide four years of funding (through equal allocations of \$130,000 in Years 2, 3, 4, and 5) of projects at the member libraries. While the libraries will be encouraged to follow a systematic process for improving collections (with an initial investment in preservation planning and any needed environmental improvements, followed by assessments of collections and items by conservators who will generate condition reports and cost estimates for treatment, and last of all, the implementation of recommended treatment and/or rehousing), the libraries will be granted freedom to apply for funding for any projects from the menu which they feel will benefit their institution most or that are most urgently needed.

A seven-member Advisory Committee (members are identified in the Appendices), with strengths in the humanities, library management, and conservation, will review applications annually, selecting a total of \$130,000 in funded projects in each of the four rounds. Applicants may apply for up to \$30,000 in projects, and may request a variety of projects in a single request. Treatment and housing requests must be based upon cost estimates from a conservator. In the requests for treatment, the applicants will describe a plan for promoting access to the items to appropriate audiences, including researchers in the humanities. A draft menu of eligible projects is included as an Appendix.

In the first two annual rounds, successful applicants will receive full funding for projects. The applicants will assume responsibility for implementation of the project and agreed-upon dissemination of the funds, submitting final reports to the HBCU Library Alliance at the conclusion of their projects. In the concluding third and fourth rounds, applicants will receive a reduced 50% of project costs with a new requirement for them to raise 1:1 matching funds. This system is designed first to encourage the member libraries to grow comfortable with using targeted fundraising to improve collection

stewardship, and then to grow in ability to implement successful strategies for raising matching funds. The HBCU Library Alliance will provide resources to assist the member libraries with their fundraising.

As this is a complex project that supports capacity building at 71 unique institutions, there is a necessary expenditure of \$141,900 in project management, promotional outreach, and evaluation included within the budget. In the first year, project management Spend-down funds will be used to launch the project at the October 2018 biennial meeting of the HBCU Library Alliance, a series of four introductory webinars produced by the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts that will run from October 2018 through February 2019, development and dissemination of the applications, ongoing consultation with member libraries, and an in-person meeting of the Advisory Committee (subsequent meetings will be facilitated via phone or video conferencing) to select a set of first-round projects.

At the 2020 meeting of the HBCU Library Alliance, Lee Price, Director of Development at the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA), will make a presentation on strategies to raise matching funds, and will offer a series of fundraising clinics—one-on-one opportunities for attendees to privately discuss potential projects and funding strategies.

The 2022 meeting of the HBCU Library Alliance will be organized as a final celebration of the program, with presentations from CCAHA consultants and from a selection of library applicants who have enjoyed success through their projects. The meeting will conclude with a final session to brainstorm on next steps. Individual consultations through fundraising clinics will also be offered, as many attendees will be engaged both in raising matching funds and planning for the future.

Apart from the Spend-down Funds, the budget includes \$72,000 in Direct Expenditure Funds designated for fundraising costs needed for the HBCU Library Alliance to raise the required \$365,000 match. Sandra Phoenix, Executive Director of the HBCU Library Alliance, will dedicate time toward fundraising of the match, assisted by Adrienne Lance Lucas of Lance Lucas & Associates, a nonprofit consulting service. In addition to providing valuable fundraising expertise, Ms. Lucas will also use this as

a training opportunity for Ms. Phoenix, sharing information on best practices for fundraising, thereby building fundraising capacity at the HBCU Library Alliance.

Audience

The primary focus is on the caretakers of special collections at the 71 member libraries, but the ultimate beneficiaries will be future generations of researchers in the humanities, as well as the students at the schools and the general public. Through this program, the HBCU Library Alliance is working to ensure the long-term preservation and accessibility of the irreplaceable items within these special collections.

Plans for Raising Funds

While the primary goal of “Building Capacity – HBCU” is to build capacity for collections care (ensuring long-term preservation and accessibility of special collection items) at the 71 HBCU member libraries, a very important secondary goal is to use this opportunity to build financial and fundraising capacity at the HBCU Library Alliance itself. This secondary goal is key to meeting the objectives in sections B: Professional Development and C: Finance in the HBCU Library Alliance 2018-23 Strategic Plan.

Through the use of the Direct Expenditure funds for fundraising costs, the HBCU Library Alliance will enter into a first-time partnership with a nonprofit management and fundraising agency, drawing upon their expertise to expand the circle of foundation, corporate, and major donor support. Adrienne Lance Lucas, President and CEO of the nonprofit consulting service Lance Lucas & Associates, will work one-on-one with HBCU Library Alliance Executive Director Sandra Phoenix to identify prospects for major support, prepare strategies for nurturing relationships, and compose written requests and applications. They will build on the HBCU Library Alliance’s well-established relationship with the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the new relationship with the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, and research prospects from the existing pool of funders with a history of supporting HBCU projects. Ms.

Lucas is particularly well-positioned to lead this work as her agency has developed a specialized niche in fundraising for HBCUs, with a client base that includes both Morehouse College and Spelman College. The HBCU Library Alliance's past successes in managing portions of large grant-funded programs speaks to the strong administrative capacity of the HBCU Library Alliance, positioning it as a powerful force in the HBCU system. While the donor prospects certainly include the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the HBCU Library Alliance is viewing this as an optimal opportunity to grow a more diverse circle of funders of foundations, corporations, and major donors committed to the preservation of the great cultural heritage accessible at the HBCU special collections.

In addition to the expertise brought to "Building Capacity – HBCU" by Lance Lucas & Associates, the HBCU Library Alliance will benefit through the existing close relationships with both the University of Delaware – Department of Art Conservation and the development department at the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts. Both organizations have submitted institutional letters of support, included as an Appendix, that stress their willingness to assist with the fundraising efforts to raise the match through the sharing of resources and connections. Both organizations have been enormously helpful to the HBCU Library Alliance in past years, providing many of the resources for growth that have made the past ten years so productive. With these layers of support in place, the HBCU Library Alliance is very confident that it will successfully raise the required matching funds in a timely fashion and become an even stronger organization in the process.