

## **HBCU Library Alliance and CLIR Hidden Collections Africa Partnership Proposal**

### **Introduction**

The relationship between the HBCU Library Alliance (HBCULA) and the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) involves strategic collaboration and mutual support. HBCULA, representing Historically Black Colleges and Universities' libraries, works closely with CLIR, a renowned organization dedicated to advancing research, teaching, and learning through the transformative power of libraries, cultural institutions, and information resources. Together, they foster a dynamic partnership focused on enhancing access to information, promoting professional development, and addressing unique challenges HBCU libraries face. The collaboration between HBCULA and CLIR underscores a commitment to diversity, equity, and excellence in library services and information management within the context of historically significant institutions. Through joint initiatives and shared resources, they enrich library services and knowledge dissemination in the academic landscape.

### **Project Justification**

The HBCU Library Alliance is thrilled to propose an innovative exchange and education program for the CLIR Hidden Collections Africa Initiative. This cross-continental exchange fosters collaboration between HBCU librarians and African librarians to share knowledge and expertise, bridging the gap between African and African American heritage and advancing the preservation, accessibility, and promotion of African collections. By forging this new and direct partnership, we are committed to jointly enhancing the safeguarding of cultural materials in Africa, marking a significant milestone in the African diaspora.

#### *Mutual Exchange*

*The HBCU Library Alliance and CLIR Hidden Collections Africa Initiative Exchange and Education Program* will be a collaborative and inclusive process. Before the program's implementation, a crucial pre-planning phase will be undertaken. This phase will include joint meetings, workshops, and dialogue sessions, during which both parties will work together to identify the stakeholders' specific needs, goals, and aspirations. This inclusive approach ensures that the program is tailored to address the unique requirements of African librarians and the communities they serve. It allows for the thoughtful consideration of diverse perspectives, ensuring that the program's framework and content are innovative and genuinely responsive to the participants' shared interests and objectives. This provides an opportunity to learn more about each other and plan the details of the exchange, fostering a sense of mutual understanding and common purpose that will underpin the program's success.

*The HBCU Library Alliance and CLIR Hidden Collections Africa Initiative Exchange and Education Program* will focus on the professional development and skills enhancement of academic, research, and cultural organization staff participating in the CLIR Hidden Collections Africa Initiative. It aims to facilitate the exchange of best practices in collection preservation, digitization, archiving, and outreach to empower librarians on both continents. This transformative initiative will strengthen bonds between HBCU and African librarians, uniting their expertise to preserve and promote the invaluable African Diaspora collections. By encouraging cross-continental collaboration, knowledge sharing, and cultural exchange, this program will leave a legacy in the efforts to protect and celebrate the interconnected histories, cultures, and contributions of Africa and the African diaspora.

### **Proposed Program Components**

*Collaborative Workshops:* A series of workshops will address digitization, archival management, and collection preservation. Experts will lead these workshops from both HBCU libraries and librarians from African institutions.

*Thematic Micro Digitization Projects and Exhibitions:* Librarians from HBCUs and African institutions will collaborate on thematic digitization projects to make African Diaspora collections accessible to a global audience.

*Cultural Exchange:* The program will encourage cross-cultural engagement and understanding, facilitating connections between librarians from different continents through local community events and programming.

*Outreach and Education:* Participants will develop outreach programs to educate their respective communities about the significance of African Diaspora collections and the importance of preserving this cultural heritage.

### **Program Logistics for Consideration**

*Duration:* The program will span an initial one-year pilot with the potential for extension after evaluation. Logistics for the exchange, including housing identification, travel, and meeting logistics, will be scoped during the pre-planning phase.

*Location:* Workshops and collaborative projects can be conducted on-site and virtually, ensuring accessibility and flexibility.

*Funding:* The program will provide travel grants for HBCU Library Alliance members and seek additional financial support from CLIR and aligned donors who share the vision of preserving and promoting African cultural heritage.

*Resource Sharing:* An online platform will allow participants to share resources and engage in discussions.

*The HBCU Library Alliance and CLIR Hidden Collections Africa Initiative Exchange and Education Program* promise significant benefits. It champions cultural exchange and understanding, fostering profound collaboration between HBCU and African librarians. Participants will emerge with enhanced skills in collection preservation and management, elevating the quality of library services on both continents. Furthermore, collaborative efforts within the program ensure the preservation and accessibility of Africa's rich cultural heritage, benefiting future generations. Ultimately, this initiative is a platform for nurturing global understanding and internationally spotlighting African history, culture, and contributions.

### **Additional Opportunities for Education and Cultural Exchange with CLIR Hidden Collections Africa**

*Meetings of Participating African Institutions at HBCU:* As the collaborative efforts between the HBCU Library Alliance and CLIR progress, there could be organized meetings hosted at an HBCU, potentially Howard University. The involvement of Howard University is significant, considering the institution's President Ben Vinson is a member of the CLIR Board of Directors. These gatherings will serve as platforms for African institutions to share progress, and there's an exciting opportunity for sponsorships to enhance collaborative initiatives.

*Meetings of Participating HBCU Institutions in Africa:* Parallel to the progress in activities, there will be meetings hosted at an African institution, with the University of Lesotho being a potential option. The University Librarian, Buhle Mbambo-Thata, who previously chaired the CLIR Board during the project's initiation, adds valuable insights to these gatherings. These sessions will facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences among HBCU institutions involved in the collaboration.

*Collaborative Teaching by Faculty:* Faculty members from African and HBCU institutions will join forces to collaboratively teach in-person courses across various participating institutions. This unique approach aims to foster a rich educational experience, leveraging the strengths and expertise of educators from both regions.

*Sharing Experiences and Creating Toolkits:* HBCU members will actively share their experiences and collectively create toolkits. A special convening in a participating African country will provide a platform for select HBCU Library Alliance members to share the story, challenges, and impact of the Digital Initiative project.

*Conservation/Preservation Summer Internship Program:* Since 2018, the HBCU Library Alliance has been dedicated to preparing future librarians through its annual Summer Library Conservation/Preservation Program. This initiative focuses on providing HBCU undergraduate students in the humanities, arts, and sciences with a six-week internship at a host site. Excitingly, a participating African institution will host one edition of the conservation/preservation summer internship program, fostering hands-on experience, contributing to preservation efforts, and promoting cultural exchange between institutions.

*Peer Engagement between Students:* To support project activities, peer engagement initiatives will involve students from African institutions and African students at HBCU institutions. This cross-cultural interaction aims to enhance collaboration and understanding among the student communities.

*Membership Meetings with Partner Institutions:* Regular membership meetings will take place with presentations by partner institutions. These meetings may occur virtually or in person, providing a platform for continuous dialogue and updates on project developments.