Report on the HBCU-CUL Digitization Initiative II for CY 2007
January 2008

In April 2007 Cornell University Library (CUL) on behalf of the HBCU Library Alliance was awarded a grant by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for the second phase of the HBCU Library Alliance – Cornell University Library Digitization Initiative. Since then, project staff at Cornell and the HBCU Library Alliance have been busy with numerous project activities. This report outlines our efforts during the period April through December.

The second phase of the Initiative began with the selection of ten new partner libraries. Once the HBCU Library Alliance Board of Directors selected the ten new libraries, Cornell staff began updating specifications for computers and scanners for the libraries' production activities. In May, Project Manager Ira Revels and Primary Investigator Peter Hirtle met with staff from the CUL Information Technology (IT) Department to arrange computer support with Cornell's Information Technologies OnSite Solutions team for equipment that was used for the project. CUL's IT Department staff placed orders for the computers and scanners and CIT's OnSite Solutions staff picked them up at the Library. They installed project software on the hard drives and created a workbook that contained important information about the computer set-up for each of the participating libraries. After OnSite Solutions completed the equipment set-up, CUL Shipping and Receiving mailed the computers and scanners to the Georgia Archives. Georgia Archives staff Adam Parnell and Anne Smith received the equipment and stored it in a secure location until set-up for the workshop began in July. Several days prior to the workshop, Adam, Anne, and LAN Engineer Loeghman Nejad assisted Ira with the set-up of the computers, scanners, and the training room.

In 31 July through 3 August 2007, Cornell staff taught a four-day workshop on scanning techniques, metadata creation, and digital project management to HBCU library staff. Representatives from the ten new partner institutions participated in the training. The grant covered expenses for one person to attend the training from each partner institution. Perhaps a testament to the importance of the workshop to the partners, two institutions sent an additional staff at the expense of the home institution. As part of an effort to make the HBCU Library Alliance responsible for future training, two HBCU library staff from the previous year's workshop – Gail McClenney and Cedric Davis – returned to the Georgia Archives and taught sessions.

The workshop began with a reception on Monday, July 30 in which Ira, Peter, and Lillian Lewis discussed the activities for the week and other logistics. On Tuesday, Peter kicked off the first part of the workshop with lectures on image quality and benchmarking and legal considerations. Ira led a session on selection considerations. After lunch we went on a tour of the Georgia Archives. After the tour, Peter and Ira led a hands-on session where trainees benchmarked image resolution using a hand-out, calculator, and analog images. On Wednesday morning, Ira and Cedric led a lecture on technology considerations for digitization projects. Cedric described workflow and security measures in place at Alabama State University to ensure the safe handling of archival assets during the

production process. During Wednesday afternoon, Ira led workshop participants in hands-on labs using the computer and scanner. Workshop participants learned how to scan photographs, printed text documents, and manuscripts.

On Thursday, Gail led a nearly day-long workshop on setting up the CONTENTdm Acquisition Station and adding images to the server, which she administers at the Robert W. Woodruff Library. On Thursday afternoon, Peter, Cedric, and Gail led a discussion on what staff should do once they returned to their home institutions. On Friday, the final day of the workshop, Ira and Lillian led a session in which workshop participants discussed the state, regional, and national conferences they were interested in attending in order to disseminate information about the project. Several people agreed that they were willing to share information about the project during professional meetings and conferences. Bernard Forrester, Archivist at Texas Southern University, offered to assist Ira with the submission of a proposal to the Society of the American Archivists for its 2008 National Conference.

Once the workshop concluded and everyone returned to their home institutions, Ira contacted Mr. Forrester and discussed the details of the proposal. We submitted the proposal to SAA reviewers and we will share the results when they are available.

Late in September, project staff at Cornell began customizing the HBCU Digital Collection. The HBCU Library Alliance Digital Projects Committee directs the website customization and marketing of the digital collection. Dr. Janice Franklin, Dean of Libraries at Alabama State University is Committee Chair. Loretta Parham, CEO and Library Director of the Robert W. Woodruff Library and Dr. Elsie Weatherington, Director of the Virginia State University Library also are members of the Committee. The Committee set November 19 as the release date; however, for a variety of technical and logistical reasons as well as the desire to ensure that everyone had an opportunity to submit (as well as correct) content, the release date has been pushed back tentatively to late January. To support the release Cornell staff customized the website interface, created a press release, and produced a draft full-color brochure highlighting collection features.

Ira began site visits in October at the University of the District of Columbia. The purpose of the site visits is to assist library staff set up image production workflow, answer questions related to scanning and metadata creation, and review the quality of images and metadata that they create prior to the visit. Since October, Ira has visited Paine College in Augusta, Georgia; Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta, Georgia; and Southern University in Shreveport, Louisiana. During the visits, she met with library directors and project staff, and other library staff. She will resume site visits in February after the American Library Association Annual Meeting in Philadelphia.

The primary purpose of the site visits is to refresh the staffs knowledge. Several months have passed since project participants were trained at the HBCU Digital Image Workshop. Ira uses the visits as an opportunity to review key concepts. First, Ira meets with library staff to evaluate materials selected for the scanning. Next, she meets

scanning technicians and observes their scanning and image editing techniques (providing corrections when necessary). Then, she answers staffs questions about file management. Finally, Ira and staff review the CONTENTdm Acquisition Station and discuss how best to manage workflow involving several library staff located throughout the building. Some institutions utilize more than one or two library staff to review and upload images and add metadata. When this happens, it might not be feasible for staffs who are not regularly working on the project to come to the area where the project equipment is set-up. Under these circumstances, Ira works with staff to identify a workflow that will enable access to image files, the CONTENTdm server, and metadata easily. This is often accomplished by loading an additional copy of the Acquisition Station on the staff's computer. Because the total number of licenses is limited, those additional staffs; however, must erase this extra copy of the software once the project is complete.

In June Ira attended the FRYE Leadership Institute at Emory University. Each participant in the program selected a topic that combines libraries and information technology into a year-long research project. Ira's topic of inquiry is to measure the attitudes and perceptions of HBCU community members related to the establishment of a HBCU Digital Library. To help Ira gather responses for her Frye Leadership Institute survey, Library directors at each of the institutions arranged small group meetings. Students, faculty, and campus administrators attended these meetings. Attendees discussed numerous topics related to libraries and the World Wide Web. They explained which library electronic resources they use and how they use them. Some people described their preference for websites over a library's electronic resources. Ira will compile their responses into a brief survey that she will administer to members of the HBCU community in the spring.

Looking forward to 2008, Cornell staff will work with Lillian Lewis and her assistant Yolanda Gandia to announce a call for participation in a spring workshop. This three-day workshop will explore advanced issues in digitization, digital audio, and digital video techniques. The workshop will be held in Ithaca, New York on the Cornell University campus. Instructors from the Cornell Academic Technologies Center and the Library Department of Metadata Services will lead the workshop. The workshop will include tours and hands-on activities involving streaming audio and video and importing a/v media into CONTENTdm. Library directors that wish to participate will be asked to complete an application, ensure that their library meets a minimum set of criteria pertaining to audio and video materials, and submit a signed letter of support from their university president. Institutions that are chosen to participate will receive a high-end multimedia computer and a/v software for the purposes of developing and promoting access to their digital a/v resources.