

AACR Newsletter

Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable

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Research on African American women's papers at Emory supported by NHPRC grant

by Sarah Quigley, Emory University Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library

Collections of personal papers documenting African American women writers, musicians and artists held by Emory University's Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library (MARBL) will be processed and available for researchers, thanks to a \$126,976 grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC).

The grant will allow MARBL to hire a professional archivist who will work for two years to arrange and describe nine different collections, which will then be available for research. The collections include correspondence, writings and compositions, photographs, audiovisual and printed material, and other papers chronicling the lives and creative endeavors of African American women intellectuals in the 20th century.

The project, entitled "Revealing Her Story: Documenting African American Women Intellectuals," will help make available material that has been largely inaccessible to scholars and the public. Once fully processed, the papers will reveal not only the creative processes employed by each woman, but also the extensive personal relationships and professional networks that influenced and shaped her life.



*Portrait of May Miller, undated.
May Miller Papers,
MARBL, Emory University*

(MARBL continued on p. 4)

Inside this issue

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Senior Co-Chair's Letter

by Derek T. Mosley

Ernest J. Gaines Center,
University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Greetings Archivists and Archives of Color
Roundtable:

I am grateful to serve the roundtable over the next year as chair. I am pleased to announce some of the items that I would like to address during my tenure. Over the past few years, the leadership has worked to advocate and promote archives of color. I want to continue that initiative and have created a task force to oversee and make sure that we are on the frontlines of issues that arise. You can view a list of all task force members later in this issue.

In the member survey done this summer, one major theme was the history of the roundtable and how we preserve and promote it. To address that, we have another task force that has members from the past and present. They hope to accurately document the history via oral interviews and research. The officers are very excited about this task force and cannot wait to see the results.



*AAC Roundtable leaders at the 2013 SAA conference
in New Orleans.*

*From left: Derek T. Mosley, Steven D. Booth,
Stacie Williams, Harrison W. Inefuku*

The final task force that is being implemented this year is a nominating task force that will work to nominate roundtable members and institutions for SAA awards. Last year, the nominations team successfully wrote nominations for a fellow and the distinguished service award and I hope that we can continue to highlight our membership and institutions.

The roundtable is looking toward a very engaging and active year. I welcome the new vice chair, Gabrielle Dudley from Emory University, newsletter editor, Raegan Stearns from Southern University-Shreveport and returning webmaster, Harrison Inefuku from Iowa State University. If you have any concerns, suggestions or ideas, feel free to contact me. This is our roundtable and we must continue to work toward excellence.

Editor's Note...

by Raegan C. Stearns

Happy Archives Month! I want to thank the roundtable members for your enthusiastic response to the recent call for content for this issue of the newsletter. It is apparent from the items submitted that you do a vital and fantastic work!

A special thank you is also extended to Erica Hubbard and Mark Isaksen of the Red River Sankofa Project and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, respectively, for their contributions. Just in time for National Family History Month, Ms. Hubbard recounts how her quest to learn more about her family resulted in the creation of a public genealogy resource.

Mr. Isaksen's article highlighting a grant opportunity was submitted against the backdrop of the United States government shutdown, and at the time of this writing, the IMLS is closed. I send encouraging thoughts to roundtable members who are likewise affected.

Again, thank you and happy reading!

Congratulations...

The 2013-14

AAC Roundtable Task Force!

History Task Force:

Rebecca Hankins, Texas A&M University (chair)

Barrye Brown, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

E. Evan Echols, University of Delaware

Jameatris Rimkus, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Denise Villegas, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) Research Library and Archive

Nominating Task Force:

Jarrett Drake, University of Michigan (chair)

Natalia Fernandez, Oregon State University

Tammi Kim, University of Delaware

Outreach & Advocacy Task Force:

LaToya Devezin, New Orleans Public Library (chair)

Aisha Johnson, Fisk University

Berlin Loa, Casa Grande Valley Historical Society

Lisa Cruces Welty, University of Notre Dame

Social Media Coordinator:

Ardra Whitney, Avery Research Center

The collections are of potential benefit to numerous researchers, including scholars from the fields of African American studies; American history and literature; women's, gender and sexuality studies; art history; film history; and music. Access to these collections will encourage interdisciplinary studies, since the work of these nine women often transcended disciplinary boundaries.

About the collections

Pearl Cleage papers: Cleage (1948-) is a noted novelist, playwright and activist.

Delilah Jackson papers: Jackson (1928-2013) was a scholar and filmmaker who specialized in the history of African American entertainment.

Samella Lewis papers: Lewis (1924-) is an artist, educator, filmmaker and author. She is the founder of the International Review of African American Art journal and the Museum of African American Art in Los Angeles.

Almena Lomax papers: Lomax (1915-2011) was an author, newspaper publisher and activist. She co-founded the Los Angeles Tribune with her husband Lucius Lomax in 1941, and served as co-publisher, editor and reporter until 1960.

May Miller papers: Miller (1899-1995) was an author, playwright and educator. She published her first play, "The Bog Guide," in 1925, subsequently becoming the most-published female playwright of the Harlem Renaissance.

Undine Smith Moore papers: Moore (1904-1989) was a composer and educator, prolific throughout the early and mid-20th century. She was the first graduate of Fisk University to receive a scholarship to Juilliard.

Geneva Southall papers: Southall (1925-2004) was an award-winning musician, educator and author. The first woman to earn a PhD in piano performance from the University of Iowa, she taught at both the University of South Carolina and the University of Minnesota and published multiple books on the African American musician and former slave "Blind Tom" Moore.

Mildred Thompson papers: Thompson (1935-2003) was an artist, writer and editor whose work was heavily influenced by her readings in spiritualism, metaphysics and astronomy. Her artwork forms part of the permanent collections of such prestigious institutions as the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C. and the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

Sarah Wright papers: Wright (1928-2009) was a poet and novelist, perhaps best known for her critically acclaimed 1969 novel "This Child's Gonna Live," which explores the lives of an African American woman and her family in Maryland during the Great Depression.



Professor Ervin L. Jordan, Jr., a thirty-four year employee and research archivist at the University of Virginia's Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library and SAA member since 1980, has been appointed by UVA President Teresa A. Sullivan to the President's Commission on Slavery and the University.

This "newly-formed 27-member commission will explore the University of Virginia's historical relationship with slavery and provide input on how the University should address this legacy including the creation of a memorial on Grounds to commemorate the history of slavery at the University of Virginia and will also explore other opportunities for commemoration on Grounds and in the community."

Passion unfolded

by Erica Hubbard,

Houston Community College Central

Back in 2004, sitting at my aunt's house in Houston, TX, the topic of her grandfather came up, someone she hardly ever spoke about. I'd heard about him through other family members but nothing really concrete outside of the fact that he was a farmer and he died in 1921. My aunt told me her mother, as a child, would often watch him sit under a mulberry tree with a shotgun perched, ready to shoot anything that threatened his property and family.

As I began listening carefully and asking questions, it quickly became clear that outside of his name, no one had any idea where this man came from or knew anything about his life outside of the fact that he sat under a tree with a gun. I thought to myself, surely we can find his birth certificate. After a quick online search, I discovered the state of Louisiana did not make issuing birth certificates a law until 1918, well after he was born.

"Who was this guy, where did he come from? How did he acquire this property?" I wondered. Then I began thinking a lot about my 79 year-old aunt, this woman who by all accounts is a living repository of family information that appeared slightly uncomfortable for her to recall. She lived through Jim Crow and segregation so understandably she's seen a lot in her lifetime. If anything ever happened to her, she and this priceless oral history goes away forever.

That day, whether I realized it or not, my mission was born, a calling that would eventually start piecing my family's past together initially through a combination of long emails, phone conversations, recorded interviews and message board postings.

That method later transitioned to many trips to local & state libraries, repositories, and eventually led me to county courthouses across three states. My courthouse trips expanded into graveyard hunts that eventually led me to a huge 'Aha moment'. While in the midst of this crusade to uncover my family's history, my passion was discovered and three years later earned me a Master's Degree in Library Information Science with a concentration in Archives and Manuscripts from Drexel University.

The simple need to trace and document my ancestors' migration also landed me in front of an audience at Seattle University where I presented a conference paper at the Association for African American Historical Research and Preservation. While still in my last semester of graduate school, I shared with the audience my thought processes in a presentation entitled "Strained Liaisons: Archivists and Family Researchers."

My unique point of view rested in my own experiences as both the researcher and archivist intern particularly when searching for records that identified people of color. When the family researcher is seeking records of African Americans and they desire documentation before 1870, many of them including myself hit the proverbial 1870 brick wall. African American researchers know what this means as it is well known that the 1870 census was the first official roll count where blacks were finally identified on the census by their surname and first name as oppose to being counted by age, gender and slaveholder's name. I can't think of any other group of people who've had to search for their ancestors like tracking down old receipts for merchandise purchased.

(Passion continued on p. 6)

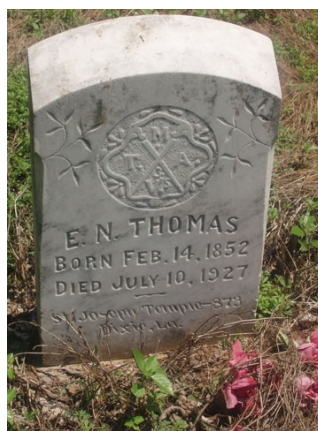
(Passion from p. 5)

AS it happened, the five years of research I collected uncovered my African American family history which I always refer to as undocumented American history. Through my process I discovered all too often that sometimes the only evidence that a person actually existed was not through census or vital statistics records but through a faded, deteriorating grave maker located in an overgrown graveyard.

I was then faced with a quandary on what can I do to preserve this type of information. So I thought, why not take a photograph of the grave marker and publish it online. I eventually called it the Red River Sankofa Project, a labor of love that brought a lifeline to my ancestors who I discovered were enslaved at many of the plantations that existed along a 13 mile stretch of the Red River in the Caddo/Bossier parishes of northwest Louisiana.

It wasn't enough just to publish the names and grave markers but something needed to be done about the conditions in which the grave markers rested. I began coordinating with family and we organized clean-ups and fundraisers to plant cemetery maintenance seeds with many of the rural churches and individuals responsible for upkeep. Today the goal is now shifting on declaring some of the older gravesites as historical markers with the State of Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism.

The Red River Sankofa Project website is now on hiatus as I am updating it with more data and more user friendly, search options. Check www.redriversankofa.org soon for more updates and details about the project.



Images of visited gravesites courtesy of Erica Hubbard and Red River Sankofa.



The Driskell Papers of African American art: an important scholarly art resource

by Stephanie Maxwell, David C. Driskell Center

In 2009, Prof. David C. Driskell—Distinguished University of Maryland Professor Emeritus of Art, Artist, Art Historian, Collector, and Curator—donated his papers to the David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland, College Park. The Driskell Papers, amassed over six decades and consisting of 50,000 objects, became the core of the Driskell Center Archives. With the help of a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, from 2011-2012, this extensive collection was accessioned, inventoried, and procedures for processing were developed.

The Center was also awarded a grant in 2013-2014 by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation through the Council on Library and Information Resources [CLIR], Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives program. The CLIR grant created the positions for the Center Archives staff including a full-time Archivist and two Graduate Assistant positions. The CLIR grant is allowing the Archives staff to continue processing all of the David C. Driskell Papers with the goal of completing the project by December 2014.



Prof. David C. Driskell

The ultimate goal of this exciting project is to make the Driskell Papers accessible to the public and to support research and scholarship in the field of African American art. As an avid collector and a pioneer in the study and practice of African

American art, Driskell's collection of correspondences, articles, ephemera, and both personal and professional writings is an essential and vital resource for the holistic study of African American and African art and culture.

This unique collection will give scholars and researchers access to such material as original letters to and from artists

Romare Bearden, Elizabeth Catlett, Keith Morrison, and Martin Puryear as well as many materials documenting Driskell's work promoting the study of African American art.

The David C. Driskell Papers document the development and importance of African American art as well as the personal and extensive life of David C. Driskell as an artist, scholar, curator, mentor, and professor.

(Driskell continued on p. 10)

Mark Your Calendar:

October 23 - registration deadline for the Heritage Preservation's Connecting to Collections "Outreach Activities for Collections Care" four-part online course. Earn archival recertification credits upon completion.

<http://www.connectingtocollections.org/courses/outreach-activities-for-collections-care/>

December 3 - application deadline for the National Endowment for the Humanities' "Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections" grant which funds preventive conservation projects.

<http://www.neh.gov/grants/preservation/sustaining-cultural-heritage-collections>

Spotlight on...

IMLS Museum Grants for African American History and Culture

by Mark Isaksen, Institute for Museum and Library Services



Deadline to apply: December 2, 2013

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) provides African American museums and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) with opportunities to enhance their institutional capacity through the African American History and Culture (AAHC) grant program. This grant program was established in 2003 by the U.S. Congress in the National Museum of African American History and Culture Act which authorized the Smithsonian to create a National Museum of African American History and Culture. The act also authorized IMLS to create a grant program to improve operations, care of collections, and development of professional management at African American museums and to provide internship and fellowship opportunities at African American museums.

Eligible applicants include museums whose primary purpose is African American life, art, history, and/or culture; Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCUs) are also eligible. Since 2006 the program has received 308 applications requesting \$31,949,072. Each application is peer reviewed. IMLS has awarded 91 grants totaling \$9,539,740 with \$10,319,970 in matching funds to African American museums and HBCU's in 25 states. The program was designed to address the need for capacity building through professional development in order to increase impact and sustainability.

To find out more about the projects that have been funded in this program, you can use the [search awarded grants tool](#) on the IMLS website. You can also read stories about recently funded projects in the [AAHC Forum blog series](#) written by grant recipients.

If you are interested in applying to this program for the December 2, 2013, deadline, you will find detailed [program guidelines and instructions](#) for the upcoming deadline posted on the IMLS website. In addition to the webinars available to potential applicants, you may contact one of the program staff for a consultation about eligibility criteria, application guidelines, and review process.

Mark Isaksen, Senior Program Officer
Phone: 202-653-4667
E-mail: misaksen@imls.gov

Jen Rehkamp, Program Specialist
Phone: 202-653-4781
E-mail: jrehkamp@imls.gov

The Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church resides on a parcel of land located on the corner of Sixth and Lombard Streets purchased in 1791 by Richard Allen. The first structure was an old blacksmith shop which was converted into a place of worship and dedicated in 1794. In 1805, a second larger structure and additional land were needed to accommodate the growing membership. By 1841, a third church was built of bricks and stone. The fourth church, a finer structure, was dedicated in October 1890. Over time the church has been refurbished and upgrades have been made, but the church has never left its original site. More than two centuries and four buildings later, Mother Bethel continues to serve the African American community and others who pass through the church doors by providing the spiritual, educational, social and civic needs of the people.

Mother Bethel African
Methodist Episcopal
Church Museum and
Archives

by

Margaret Jerrido

As early as 1876, the church began a systematic effort to organize its materials and in 1912 established a Historical Commission for the purpose of collecting, preserving and cataloging its holdings. As part of these efforts, the Richard Allen Museum was established and includes over one hundred items on display and receives thousands of visitors annually.

In the early 1990s, attention was given to the historical documents and space was made available to house the materials. Some of the major holdings include minutes of the Board of Trustees, Board of Stewards and various organized groups in the church; records of conferences and meetings of the African Methodist Episcopal denomination; funeral programs; information about prominent leaders of the church and denomination; photographs; scrapbooks; Bibles; and books. The bulk of the collection covers the 1820s through the 1990s time period. Detailed information about the history of the church and a finding aid can be found at the Mother Bethel's African Methodist Episcopal Church website.

**Researchers, historians,
students, genealogists,
and all interested in the
history of the Mother
Bethel A.M.E. Church,
the African Methodist
Episcopal Church and
its people, call**

(215) 925-0616 or visit

www.motherbethel.com

Margaret Jerrido was hired in 2008 to be the archivist on a part time basis. The Archives is open by appointment on Tuesday and Wednesday from 11:30 to 2:30. Tours are provided by appointment, to individuals or groups Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

(Driskell from p. 7)

Led by Archivist Stephanie Maxwell and assisted by University of Maryland graduate students Nick Beste and Molly Campbell, the large collection is being processed and the information entered into a PastPerfect database, updated weekly with newly processed materials, which allows users to find archival materials using keyword and advanced searches. A finding aid for the collection will also be available to the public by December 2014.

The Archives staff is working to promote the collection through the Driskell Center Archives Blog where bi-weekly posts detail the most interesting items found in the collection, progress on the project, and newly available materials.

Driskell Center links:

Website	http://www.driskellcenter.umd.edu/index.php
Email	driskellcenter@umd.edu
Blog	http://driskellcenterarchives.wordpress.com/
Database	http://driskellcenter.pastperfect-online.com/37341cgi/mweb.exe?request=ks



The Driskell Center Archives' display accompanying the current exhibition "Alison Saar: Still..." which is open at the David C. Driskell Center until December 13, 2013.

The display pulls together letters, essays, and photographs that look at sculpture and sculptors through the eyes of Prof. Driskell.



Media in motion: dance students examine images

Updates from the Dance Theatre of Harlem by Kathleen Bell

The Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH), home to the most successful and longstanding predominately black ballet company in North America, has been awarded a planning grant from NEH's Sustaining Cultural Heritage program.

The grant will help assemble a team to develop a feasibility plan for creating a safer and more accessible environment for the in-house archives and library and allow the organization to address some immediate triage measures to preserve and protect archival materials.

Recent archive projects have been funded by the National Parks Service's Save America's Treasures program and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in collaboration with the Dance Heritage Coalition (DHC). Most recently, DTH Archivist Judy Tyrus and Nichole Arvin launched "Media in Motion," an education program that introduces its archives to students, and presented "Adapting Traditional Processes to Nontraditional Collections: Putting the Dance Theatre of Harlem Archives Back Together" at the Amigos Library Services' "Preservation: Back to the Basics" web conference with DHC staff Imogen S. Smith and Kathleen (Kat) Bell.

For more information about the Dance Theatre of Harlem Archives or the Dance Heritage Coalition, contact Judy Tyrus or Kat Bell at jtyrus@dancetheatreofharlem.org or kbell@danceheritage.org

BOOK REVIEW:

Baroque Sovereignty: Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora and the Creole Archive of Colonial Mexico by Sharlot Hart, University of Arizona, Tucson

In "Baroque Sovereignty" Anna More investigates polity in Mexico City during the late seventeenth century using the writings of priest and scholar Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora. She focuses on the emerging "Creole patria" (28) as a symbol of good governance for the Spanish crown to follow. More insists that Sigüenza's impulse to save pre-colonial documents and his propensity for citations "provided an archive of authority and knowledge at a moment of Spanish imperial crisis" (25). Sigüenza's physical and metaphorical archive reinterprets pre-colonial history and artifacts in order to re-appropriate local legends for the governing purposes of the Creole. More bases her interpretation on Jacques Derrida's definition of the archive as uniting the sequential and the jussive or commanding principles (45-46).

Each of the five chapters deals with one writing by Sigüenza, that writing's historical import, and a short discussion of associated archival properties. In "Chapter 3: Mexican Hieroglyphics" (110-157), More describes Sigüenza's triumphal arch for the arrival of the new viceroy and associated treatise which explains the allegorical imagery used. Only near the chapter's end does More mention that Sigüenza was able to make symbolic connections in his arch between good European governance and Mexican history due to "possession of indigenous codices" (147). "Chapter 4: Counterhistory and Creole Governance in the Riot of 1692" (158-201) likewise focuses on a letter detailing the Mexico City riot. Again, at the end of the chapter More returns to the idea of archives with passages from Sigüenza's letter indicating his role during the riot in saving records stored at the palace.

Although More tries to link a physical archive to the Creole desire for good governance, she spends more ink linking Sigüenza's works to contemporary aesthetics of the Baroque. She hits on the "awry angle" that the Creole uses to "see 'evidence' hidden to peninsular [Spanish] governors" (162). This evidence touches on legend. That legends can be as powerful as truth is the crux of More's argument; by reinterpreting pre-colonial history Sigüenza created a new legend upon which to base his political truths. Unfortunately, More's writing is dense and uses high diction to the point of distraction. Ironically, her account of the explanations that went with the triumphal arches makes the same accusation saying "the accounts continued to imbue emblems with mystery even as they exposed their hidden allegorical meanings" (112).

More does this with Sigüenza, using the term archive in both a physical and allegorical sense. Further, she extrapolates from him to the entire Creole polity, when her tome has truly been an examination of colonial history through his writings and beliefs. She admits that "his works tell us more about the possibilities and limits of political ideals among the Novohispanic elite at the end of the seventeenth century than about their actual accomplishments" (261).

(Sigüenza continued on p. 13)

More has proven that Sigüenza's use of information is intended to create a strong Creole authority within the Monarchy. One which supplements "traditional forms of authority with an archaic local law" (154) and uses "recovery of a unified past..." (251-252) to provide stability during the fall of the Hapsburgs. That Sigüenza believed his collection of books, manuscripts, and codices should remain in Mexico because "they were only fully intelligible when brought together in their place of origin" (256) just shows how far ahead in thinking he was for both his own polity and also in archival practice. More's book thus explains a re-appropriation of legend through historical information management and may be useful to archival theorists and historians in that vein.

Baroque Sovereignty: Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora and the Creole Archive of Colonial Mexico. Anna More. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012. 350 pp. ISBN 978-0-8122-4469-4. Cloth. \$65.00

The Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable is currently seeking submissions for its quarterly newsletter.

We welcome:

- articles about current news and trends
- institutional profiles and projects
- events and exhibits
- op-ed and perspective pieces on topical issues
- professional updates
- scholarships, grants, and recent acquisitions

Please submit materials to newsletter editor Raegan C. Stearns at rcstearn@netscape.net. Submissions should be 300-600 words and should follow the Chicago Manual of Style. Photographs or artwork included with submissions should have full copyright permission and be a minimum of 300 dpi.