

AACR

Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable Newsletter



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Letter from Senior Co-Chair

Dear AACR Members:

I hope that you are all doing well and that the New Year has started out well for you. It is a good time to review the vision of AACR, which was updated last year. Below are bullet points outlining the vision:

- ◇ Provide a space for discussion on issues affecting archivists and archives of color
- ◇ Provide a platform to advocate for archives and archivists of color
- ◇ Encourage the use of archives of color by various constituents
- ◇ We are a resource for working with donors of color
- ◇ Support the recruitment and retention of archivists of color through the Harold T. Pinkett Minority Student Travel Award
- ◇ Advocate for more representation of archivists of color in all aspects of SAA – awards, publications, decision making

Think about how you can assist AACR in achieving these ideals.

To achieve vision one and two we will host Twitter chats and /or webinars each month to keep informed about issues affecting the roundtable and to advocate for archivist of color. This past Tuesday we had a chat for BHM and hollowed sites of memory. Our hashtag is #AACR and our Twitter handle is @aacr_roundtable. Please see page 7 of this newsletter for upcoming events!

There is a pivotal issue in some states in this country (namely Illinois, Louisiana, and Pennsylvania) that have not passed a state budget for this fiscal year. As you can imagine, this is putting people's livelihoods and families on the chopping block. It appears that these Governors and legislators do not care about the role of cultural institutions or institutions of higher education. Within these institutions, we have preserved the history of underrepresented groups, and how do we as archivists assure our donors that we are the right places for their collections, when their collections could become at risk by no fault of the institution itself, but because of outside influences? This could further impact future donations of these collections to public institutions. If these public/state institutions close, what happens to these collections? What happens to access and the research needs of scholars? The politicians look at the numbers, but do not look at the real cost to the memory and survival of this country. In addition, these budget cuts will have a long-term impact on those who want to become Archivists and Librarians. The number of Archivists of Color is already limited and often we hear that people should follow their passions, but if this passion for academic pursuits will not be valued, people will pursue more lucrative careers in a field that is not their original passion. Thus, we need to preserve these institutions and positions so that in the future there will be career opportunities and collections. Furthermore, the fact that institutions in Illinois are in jeopardy of losing their accreditation will impact the future of those who could not afford to attend a private educational institution.

To learn more and to add your voice to these issues please look here: Pennsylvania <http://pastudents.weebly.com/> and Illinois <https://www.isac.org/newsroom/>

Aaisha Haykal



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Black Student History at UWG & the Black Lives Matter Movement

By Sarah Gourley and Blynne Olivieri

"Black lives matter. Black lives are matter." – Hungry, UWG student, Poetry Jam in Ingram Library, 4 February 2016.

Like many students at college campuses around the U.S., students at the University of West Georgia (UWG) in Carrollton, Georgia participated in racial justice activism in response to police brutality and racial disparities in the criminal justice system which came to national attention in the 2010s. At UWG's Ingram Library, we sought to support these students by bringing a historical context to these topics through an exhibit; by creating a display of materials available for check-out along with posters about the Black Lives Matter movement for students on current issues of identity, racism, and activism; and by creating a poetry jam where students could share their voices in an unmediated environment. These activities were linked together on social media with the hashtag, #uwgBLM.

On December 2, 2014 five UWG students – Deborah Crawford, Kelby Mitchell, Tia Tuggle, Zhanee' Aniece, and Aubrei Savage – spontaneously organized a kNow Justice, kNow Peace march around campus in Carrollton, Georgia as a peaceful protest in response to the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and to systematic racial injustice. Videos and still images of that march were donated to Ingram Library's Special Collections and became central to the idea for an exhibit chronicling the experience of black students at our university. The exhibit, co-sponsored by the Center for Diversity & Inclusion and Alumni Relations, and titled, *African-American/Black Student Experiences at UWG*, documents the time of integration in summer 1963 to present and highlights black student life by decade. Special Collections deliberately gathered materials from student organizations and solicited testimonials from alumni and current students about their experiences at UWG. Both of these aspects were key to the exhibit as they provided a student and alumni voice.



Photo of African-American/Black Student Experiences at UWG exhibit case.

On the main floor of Ingram Library, a very busy social space for students, large colorful posters about identity, privilege, equality, and the history and meaning of the Black Lives Matter movement were placed on piers along the main hallway. In the central gathering point, two book displays held recently published books and videos, such as Ta-Nehisi Coates' book, *Between the World and Me*, were available for browsing and immediate check-out.

(Continued on page 4)

Project Announcement

[Immigrant Stories](#) is a research and archiving project led by the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota, and now funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The project helps immigrants and refugees to the US create digital stories about their personal experiences. These take the form of short videos with images, text, music, and audio. Stories will be submitted and donated to the project and the IHRC Archives of the University of Minnesota Libraries, which is an archives and library for the study of immigration, ethnicity, and race. The IHRC Archives selects sources documenting a broad range of im/migrant and refugee experiences, and strives to connect history to today's experiences, so these digital stories fit very well into our collecting and access goals.

AACR Member Spotlight

Name: Cheylon Woods

Position Title & Institution: Archivist & Head of the Ernest J. Gaines Center at University of Louisiana at Lafayette/Assistant Professor of Library Science

Hometown: Hisperia, CA

Current City: Lafayette, LA

In your own words, describe what you do?

As the head of the Ernest J. Gaines Center it is my job to encourage the continued use of the work of Ernest J. Gaines and the scholarly research of the different tropes exhibited throughout his work and the works of other authors of Color. It is my goal that the Ernest J. Gaines Center will host events and seminars that not only show the complexities of literature by authors of color, but also show the value of their works to American literature as a whole.



How do you work with communities of color?

Currently, the Ernest J. Gaines Center works with creative writing student organizations. We have plans to collaborate with local high schools and libraries to encourage literacy throughout their patron communities.

What are you listening to and/or reading?

I am currently re-reading the works of Gaines and the *Hispanic and Latino New Orleans* by Andrew Sluyter, Case Watkins, James P. Chaney, and Annie M. Gibson

What is something that you are most excited about in the archives profession?

Since I work in a literary center, I am most excited about encouraging the use of the collection outside of the traditional research avenues of English and Creative Writing. Literature provides an interesting cross section into the author's view of the community and environment can offer important information in other social sciences fields, and can provide excellent research opportunities for undergraduates.

What professional organizations, besides SAA are you a member of?

Louisiana Archives and Manuscripts Association

Do you have any hobbies or special talents or skills?

I enjoy crafting, crocheting, beading, attending comic-cons and cosplaying.

Why did you choose to become an archivist?

I chose to become an archivist because I wanted to bring the histories of the marginalized to light in a non-biased way. I wanted to become an archivist to help preserve the records of communities that were often neglected and misrepresented.

Profile of the Ernest J. Gaines Center

The Ernest J. Gaines Center was established by the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in 2008 to honor the great Southern Author and former Writer-in-Residence Emeritus at the university. The purpose of the center is to "foster research and scholarship on the life and works of Dr. Ernest J. Gaines, to archive, house, preserve, protect and utilize the 'Collection of Ernest J. Gaines,' and to make the collection available to scholars in perpetuity."

The Center officially opened its doors to the public in 2010, and since then has actively engaged in public programming and educational institutes that highlight the work of Dr. Gaines and the multiple tropes found in his work. In 2015 the Ernest J. Gaines center was awarded an NEH Grant to host a summer institute to evaluate the works of Ernest J. Gaines and his southern contemporaries.

Black Student History at UWG & the Black Lives Matter Movement

By Sarah Gourley and Blynn Olivieri

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To connect the book display and the exhibit together, and to open student dialogue and artistic expression about identity, racial relations, and the Black Lives Matter movement, we facilitated a student-run poetry jam which was organized by a student volunteer in Special Collections, Jonathan Lee-Coley. The event had over 300 students in attendance and included a speaker on student activism, a performance by a student gospel choir, and the talents of numerous UWG student spoken word and performance artists. Tables staffed by student organizations featured brochures on "how to be an activist" and a welcome table staffed by volunteers had stickers (_____ Lives Matter), Black Lives Matter pins. Paper covered the windows where students responded to the question, "However you define yourself, what has your experience been like at UWG?" Students were encouraged also to share their perspectives on social media using the hashtag. All of the materials generated from the event are being added to Ingram Library's Special Collections.

As a campus library, which also holds the university archives and actively engages students through teaching, we felt it was imperative to link the significance of archival materials to current student experiences. Student voices in university archives, preserved in student newspapers and college yearbooks, are often overshadowed in volume by other university records such as presidential papers and departmental records. In sharing the history of students at UWG, it was critical to give current students and alumni an opportunity to share their personal perspectives and to offer, literally, a stage to speak about their lives in the context of the university and in the world.

Book Announcement

Rebecca Hankins and Miguel Juarez have recently published a book titled "Where are All the Librarians of Color: The Experiences of People of Color in Academia" by Library Juice Press.



This edited volume seeks to address the shared experiences of academic librarians and archivists of color, i.e. Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians. These experiences are very similar and offer a narrative that explains the dearth of librarians and archivists of color in academia. This monograph offers a comprehensive look at the experiences of people of color after the recruitment is over, the diversity box is checked, and the statistics are reported. What is the retention, job satisfaction, and tenure experience of these librarians of color? What makes librarians of color stay in or leave the profession? The authors will look at the history of librarians and archivists of color in academia, provide an overview of the literature, obstacles, roles, leadership, and the tenure process for those that endure. What are the recruitment and retention methods employed to create a diverse workforce, successes and failures? Finally what are some mentoring strategies that work to make the library and archival environment less exploitative and toxic for people of color.

The book is available for order from the publisher [Library Juice Press](https://www.libraryjuicepress.com/) and Amazon.com

Using Wikipedia to Focus on Black History

By Greta Kuriger Suiter and Jessica Venlet from MIT Institute Archives and Special Collections

MIT librarians and archivists got a head start on Black History Month by holding a [Black history themed Wikipedia edit-a-thon](#) on January 29th. As one of a [number of edit-a-thons](#) happening during Black History Month around the world, this event sought to highlight achievements of African-Americans by adding and editing articles on Wikipedia.

It is well reported that Wikipedia lacks a [certain amount of diversity](#), in terms of who is editing and what content is being added. By encouraging underrepresented editors such as women and minorities to edit articles about women and minorities we are hoping to further Wikipedia's mission of representing "[the sum of all human knowledge](#)." Not an easy task but one in which librarians and archivists can play an important part. The combination of the resources of the librarian and the historical lens of the archivist provides editors with a rich set of tools for editing effectively.

The event was a collaborative effort, including two archivists and a librarian, as well as staff from the MIT Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication Program who came together to provide a supportive edit-a-thon experience for editors of every skill level. We provided a short introduction and overview of editing Wikipedia and were available to answer questions throughout the session. Often the hardest part of Wikipedia editing is picking a subject and deciding where to begin. In order to energize brainstorming and enable focused editing we provided an expansive list of people who needed articles as well as existing articles in need of improvement. It can also be a daunting task to start an article from scratch, so our edit-a-thon encouraged a variety of editing activities such as adding citations or subject categories to existing articles. In the end there were five new articles created and four articles expanded or improved.

The MIT Libraries will be hosting another edit-a-thon event on March 5th in coordination with the worldwide [Art+Feminism edit-a-thon](#). This campaign is designed to improve the coverage of women and the arts on Wikipedia and is in its third year.

Project Announcement

The Digital Archive of Native American Petitions in Massachusetts

The Council on Library and Information Resources has awarded a grant to the Radcliffe Institute of Advanced Study at Harvard University and Yale University to create a searchable online database and begin scholarly transcriptions of several thousand petitions at the Massachusetts Archives from dozens of Native American communities that were sent to the colonial and state legislatures from the years 1620 to 1870. Each petition image will be annotated with detailed information, and the dataset will provide web-based browsing, searching, and filtering, along with images of the digitized documents through the Imaging Services Department at the Harvard University Libraries.

This grant will build upon the previous Digital Archive of Massachusetts Anti-Slavery and Anti-Segregation Petitions, which was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and released through the Harvard Dataverse Network last year: <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/antislaverypetitionsma>.

Questions may be directed to the project archivist, Nicole Topich, at ntopich@fas.harvard.edu.

Illuminating the *Umbra* of African American History Online

Embeddable widget enables search from any web page

By Sarah Carlson, *Umbra* Project Manager

The urgency of representing African American history and culture as fully as possible is the driver of *Umbra: Search African American History* (umbrasearch.org), a free online search tool developed by the Givens Collection of African American Literature at the University of Minnesota Libraries, with Penumbra Theatre Company. *Umbra*, now available online in beta, brings together more than 400,000 digitally available items that document African American cultural history from over 500 US archives, libraries, and cultural heritage institutions. It is a launching point for research, putting hundreds of thousands of primary sources at users' fingertips.

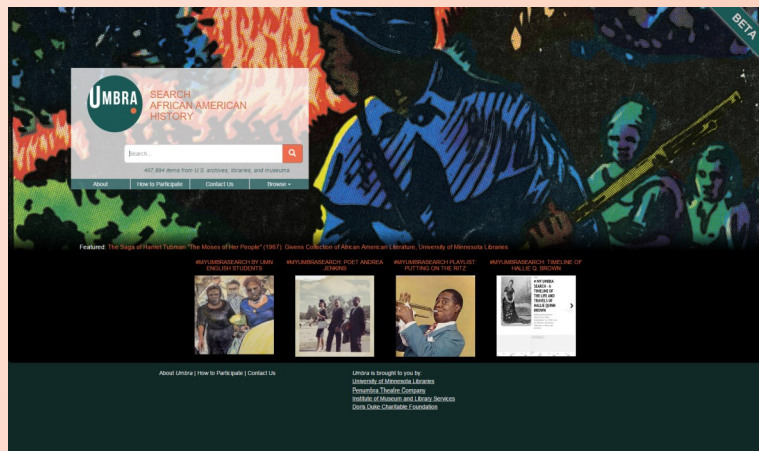
The hundreds of thousands of materials in *Umbra* represent: 1) what of African American cultural history has been collected and preserved by our libraries and archives; and 2) of those materials, what has been digitized and made available online. In aggregating these fragments from the many repositories across the country, *Umbra* leverages partnerships (with Library of Congress, New York Public Library, Howard University, and many others), open data, and technology to make more widely accessible a national digital collection of African American history and culture.

Using existing protocols such as OAI-PMH or Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) to harvest openly available metadata from enabled cultural heritage institutions—including the Smithsonian Institution, Library of Congress, the Digital Public Library of America, HathiTrust, Internet Archive, Google Books, and many others—*Umbra* brings together a digital national corpus of materials documenting African American history and culture. Metadata and preview images of digitized archival materials are discoverable in *Umbra*, and point users back to home institutions' repositories for further use.

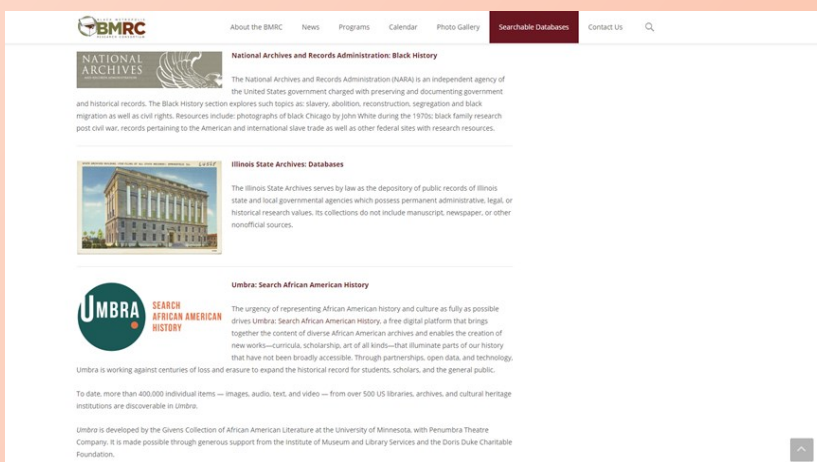
But *Umbra* isn't just a website. It's also a search widget, a small piece of code that can be easily embedded in any online environment—course pages, partners' websites, blogs—so that users don't need to know the full umbrasearch.org address. Instead, they can just click on the *Umbra* icon and be transported to the corpus of *Umbra*, allowing users to search *Umbra* from anywhere online. This means that materials in *Umbra* are discoverable on a course page for African American literature at the University of Minnesota, or at Temple University, or at UCLA. Both the *Umbra* site and widget are currently available to the public in beta phase, undergoing iterative testing and change to meet the needs of core users.

As we continue to seek feedback about how to improve *Umbra*, we are asking our many partners to consider embedding the widget on appropriate pages for their institutions. The widget is already starting to appear on website all over the country! (Thank you!) The widget exposes *Umbra* to a broad audience of users, and demonstrates the vast accessibility of these collections locally and around the country.

You can help us share *Umbra* by embedding the *Umbra* search widget on your page. Just visit umbrasearch.org/widgets, and follow the easy-to-use instructions. And please give us your feedback about *Umbra*, too! Take our brief online survey at z.umn.edu/umbrasurvey. Thank you!



Homepage of *Umbra: Search African American History* (umbrasearch.org).



The *Umbra* search widget on the Searchable Databases for the Black Metropolis Research Consortium.

Accolades



Archivist and historian Professor Ervin L. Jordan, Jr received two significant university honors during 2015. In May 2015, he was one of two faculty given special recognition by the University of Virginia's Office of African-American Affairs for "contributions and dedication to the students of the University community" during the 11th Annual Donning of the Kente Ceremony for graduating fourth year students. Also, Prof. Jordan was named an affiliated faculty member, John L. Nau III Center for Civil War History, University of Virginia College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, in August 2015.

AACR Upcoming Events-Save the Dates

Every Fourth Tuesday

Call for Member Presentations! We want to hear from our members about what you are up to! For each call we are asking for two members to sign up to talk about the work that they are doing related to the pre-selected topics. The presentations will be 15-20 minutes. **The following dates are available: May 24th and July 26th.**

Please e-mail Aaisha Haykal at bookworme7787@yahoo.com to sign up!

March 22nd

Cultural Competency

12PM CT (1PM ET)

Presenter

-Helen Wong Smith, Executive Director, Kaua'i Historical Society and SAA Council Member

April 26th

Social Justice

12PM CT (1PM ET)

Presenters:

-Bergis Jules, University Archivist at UC Riverside

-Stacie Williams, Learning Lab Manager at University of Kentucky Special Collections Research Center

-Jarrett Drake, Digital Archivist at Princeton University

May 24th

Advocacy and Outreach

12PM CT (1PM ET)

Presenter Pending

June 21st

Election Presentations and Funding

12PM CT (1PM ET)

July 26th

A preview of SAA 2016 in Atlanta, GA

12PM CT (1PM ET)

Thanks for reading!

The deadline for the next newsletter is May 13, 2016!