



A More Complete Record: The Case for Archival Partnerships The Radcliffe Workshop on Technology & Archival Processing

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Knafel Center, Radcliffe Institute | *Invitational*

Transcript

10:45-12:30 Black Research Collections: Successes and Challenges | *Panel Presentation*

Moderator: **Kenvi Phillips**, Curator for Race & Ethnicity, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University

- **Mary F. Yearwood**, Director of Collections and Information Services, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library
- **Lopez D. Matthews**, Digital Production Librarian, Howard University Libraries & the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center
- **Randall Burkett**, Curator of African American Collections, Rose Library, Emory University
- **Kara Tucina Olidge**, Executive Director, Amistad Research Center
- **Dino Robinson**, Production Manager, Northwestern University Press, Founder, Shorefront Legacy Center

- Good morning, everyone. I want to thank everyone for coming out, taking time out of your busy schedules to convene with us to have these important discussions about partnership, about collections, and about digitization. I know everyone here has a lot on their plates. And so for you to come out, it means a great deal to us. And we're excited about moving our profession forward with more diverse and inclusive collections.

Our panel this morning-- I'm Kenvi Phillips. I am the Curator for Race and Ethnicity at the Schlesinger Library, and I am joined this morning with some outstanding representatives of some wonderful and major repositories that collect, promote, preserve and promote Africana collections across the United States. And we're just going to have a discussion about the state of-- or continue the discussion about the state of black collections.

We have here represented private collections, community collections, public collections, early 20th century, late 20th century, those affiliated with universities and those not. And there are people amongst us, you all, who represent the government and other very prominent and very important collections. We just couldn't put everybody on the stage, but we do want everyone to join in the conversation in a moment.

So in a moment, I'm going to ask our panelists to introduce themselves, and tell us a little bit about their collections. And then we're going to have a discussion amongst ourselves. And then again, we're going to join everyone-- or ask you all to join us in having this very important conversation about the state of black collections. So we're going to start-- I'm just going to let them introduce themselves. We're going to start with Mary to my left.

- Good morning. My name is Mary Yearwood. I'm a Director of Collections and Services of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the New York Public Library. My title you should think of as the Chief Curator, because that is indeed what I am. The Schomburg Center is one of four research centers of the New York Public Library. Its roots go back to the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library. It started in 1925 in the middle of the Harlem Renaissance New Negro Movement as a small reference collection, known as the division of Negro History, Literature and Prints.

From the very beginning, activism on the part of librarians, directors, archivists marked the beginning of the Schomburg Center. The branch librarian at the time, Ernestine Rose, felt it was necessary to begin to collect materials to supplement-- fulfill the needs and the interests of the upcoming African-American community, which at that time consisted of African-Americans who had migrated from lower Manhattan all the way through the Theater District, the area of Lincoln Center, and finally into Harlem. The organizations, the churches, the individuals migrated. Then there were African-Americans who had come south in search of better lives, primarily people from Georgia and South Carolina, but other parts of the South, as well. And English, and French speaking, and Spanish speaking Caribbeans who had moved to the United States, again, in search of better lives.

Harlem, which prior to that was predominantly white, by then had started to change. So the NYPL, the 135th branch, started to collect materials to supplement these incoming residents. And then in 1926, or prior to '26, the librarian found out that there was this man, one Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, an Afro-Puerto Rican, who had this wonderful collection of material. And she felt it was crucial that this be added to the reference collection, the black history collection that she was building.

She reached out to members of the National Urban League and other interested parties, individuals, and they got together. They approached the Carnegie Corporation, which donated \$10,000 to the New York Public Library. That's how the Arturo Alfonso Schomburg collection was acquired. And that became the heart of today's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

The Schomburg Center today holds in excess of 10 million items in a variety of formats. It is divided into five public service divisions. There is our Research and Reference division, which holds the quote unquote general collection, even though among that collection, there are many items that are rare, and unique, and out of print. And then there are the four special collections divisions that are format driven, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books, Art and Artifacts, Moving Image and Recorded Sound, and Photographs and Prints Division.

Each division is headed by a curator. There are staff who either came with specialties, or over the years, developed specialties. There are librarians, there are archivists, there are catalogers, there are technical assistance. So that basically is the core of the collections.

In order to supplement the collections, there is a very robust series of programs. We do over 300 programs a year. Some of these are live stream. These are everything from book talks to panel discussions. A very important series is Conversation in Black Freedom Studies, which was started by Dr. Khalil Muhammad. This is sort of an adult ed program, if you will. And this introduces the general public to new works on the market dealing with issues of race and social justice, and so forth.

Education, of course, as a librarian, as an archivist, education is automatically built into what you do. But the Schomburg Center has gone beyond that. In the 1990s we started a Junior Scholars Program. The first three years was funded by Bank of New York. And this is a Saturday morning program for youth ages 11 to 17. They get an education in black history. There's a creative component. They do tours of historically-important monuments and sites, and so forth. Its a wonderful program. Its 15-years-plus.

Our newest youth program is for high school students, and they meet two days a week. This is a Teen Curators Program. And this was funded by the Matisse Foundation. And they get a first class-- I am so jealous when I tell you, a first-class education in black art history going all the way back.

As a research library, our main audiences, of course, are ages 18 and above. But the Schomburg Center has always seen the necessity and the importance of catering to and accommodating younger researchers. The only requirement is that they be accompanied by an adult. The youth initiatives was very much boosted by Dr. Muhammad, who had a deep interest in education and bringing in youth of those ages, and also giving them a place creating exhibitions, for example.

We do wonderful exhibitions, but we also wanted to create the types of exhibitions that would engage youth. And we know a lot of that is audio/visual, a lot of that is digital. And so in our last renovation, we built a Youth Media Gallery. And one of the plans for that is that, going forward, it will allow teachers to curate exhibitions based on our content. And then they can bring the class in for a visit, and the space is set up so that the monitors are portable. And they can hold classroom research, and so on and so forth.

And I think I have spoken too long, so I'm going to stop here. Thank you.

- I'm Lopez Matthews. I'm the manager of the Digital Production Center for the Howard University Libraries and the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center. And the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center began with the donation of a collection of items from bibliographer Jesse Moorland. And he was a Howard University Board of Trustees member, donated a large collection to Howard's library. And then in the 1940s Arthur Spingarn donated another large collection of bibliographic material to Howard University. And that became sort of the foundation of the Moorland collection, which became its own center in 1973, the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center.

And in that time, it has become one of the largest repositories of materials on African-Americans in the world. We have about 600 collections, 200 of which are processed-- a little over 200 of which processed. And I say processed in that we have inventories of, all the collections. And a lot of the inventories are item level, so while we say they're not processed, some people might say that they are processed. But they aren't processed to our level of process. And so they aren't considered processed until we decide enough has been done on them.

And so it pretty much spans the black experience in the United States. Our oldest items are from the 1600s, [AUDIO OUT] and items go up through today. Our most recent acquisition or donation was photographs from Amanda Lucidon, who was Michelle Obama's official photographer. She donated all of her photographs and the copyrights, and everything to Moorland-Spingarn just two weeks ago. So--

[APPLAUSE]

So we're still moving. Things are still coming in. We rely on donations and collections. So we're still getting them, so that's good.

For my part, I manage the digital Howard website, which is our institutional repository which we started about four years ago to kind of increase access to our collections. Our finding aids are now online, which means they're now searchable. And so that helps researchers find out what's actually in our collection. And we do have some digital collections. We have about 10,000 photographs online. We're about to put another 5,000 more up in the coming months. We have some of our [AUDIO OUT] skip collections that have been digitized-- portions of the collection. Not the whole collection. You still got to come there for something. But portions of the collection are digitized, and going to be put up online for research purposes. And what else am I going to say? Well, I have 12 seconds, so I will just end with that. And pass it on to Mr. [INAUDIBLE].

- I'll try to use the extra four seconds that you left me.

- I'm Randall Burkett. I'm the Research Curator for African-American Collections at Emory University. Is this too loud, or just-- [INAUDIBLE] OK. I started in life, the same year that the Schlesinger Library started in life, 1943. I still use this kind of a calendar that people were teasing me about last evening. I started collecting for myself in 1969. My first book was the 1927 Who's Who in Colored America that I found in Dawson's Bookshop because I was doing a collective biography of people who were involved in the Garvey movement. And I did research and some writing on that.

But it turns out my real love is books. And so I had the opportunity in 1997 to become the curator of African-American Collections. When I came we had two manuscript collections that were created by people of color. And we had a number of literary texts that you would imagine, Zora Neale Hurston, James Weldon Johnson, who had high spot literary collections that had been gathered by the curator of Literary Collections. But there'd been no attention to African-American collections until I was brought on board.

One of the first things I tried to do was to meet all the people in the Atlanta area who were collecting African-American material. And with Karen Jefferson's help, who Karen was-- many of you were nodding, know Karen. She was at Clark Atlanta University. We organized the Atlanta area African-American Archives Research Group, and met four times a year talking about what each of our institutions collected, where we wanted to focus, how we can find ways not to step on one another's interests-- that we would not be competing for collections with one another. That was very important, and especially because, all of a sudden, there's Emory, this 800-pound gorilla going to get everything. And I wanted to give us some clear focus that would not conflict with what other people were doing.

So one of the areas I focused on was expatriate African-American literary and cultural figures. I had connections through [INAUDIBLE] who founded the Center for African-American Studies at the University of Paris. I asked them if they would help identify people in Europe-- people of African descent in Europe whose papers we might acquire. It forced me to go to Paris, and to London--

- Aww.

- There are all these downsides to this kind of collecting focus. But it worked. And we've gotten some wonderful collections Barbara Chase Riboud, and Cedric Dover, an absolutely fascinating character. We got his library.

So I've always been interested in black print culture, black authored and black published material, whether a broadsheet, broadside, buttons, pins, anything printed-- pamphlets and books. And we have gotten some wonderful collections. We had a grant to catalog 3,000 African-American pamphlets that are part of our collection. We acquired the Carter G. Woodson library. I continue to get criticism from people in Washington DC about why Carter Woodson and the Association for the Study of African-American Life and History library is at Emory University.

But we took very seriously the responsibility that we were given with the opportunity to acquire that collection. We published a catalog-- and I've got a copy of it here, if you'd like to see it-- of every book and pamphlet that is a part of that collection. In connection with an annual meeting of the association that was in Atlanta, we invited all the members over. We had Adelaide Cromwell and John Hope Franklin talking about the association and the importance of the library.

So it's been-- I would say it's been-- I have such a much better budget at Emory than my wife ever allowed me, in terms-- I had to stop. She being a librarian-- everybody should love a librarian. I'm not a librarian. I do love a librarian. I love many librarians, but--

[LAUGHTER]

- [INAUDIBLE]

- Let's see.

- [INAUDIBLE]

- But--

[LAUGHTER]

- Moving right along, I love all librarians, but the one in particular for the last [INAUDIBLE] or so years. She's hasn't gotten tired of me-- well, she hasn't thrown me out yet.

We collect scrapbooks. We got a wonderful grant to preserve, and digitize, and make available online African-American scrapbooks. And I mention that we developed an excellent model for preserving and digitizing these very complicated materials. And it's a way that I would love to be able to share that with people who are interested. So that's what we do.

- Good afternoon. Well, good morning. My name is Kara Oridge. I'm the executive director of the Amistad Research Center. We are currently housed at Tulane University. But a bit about our history. We are rooted and evolved out of the Amistad incident of 1839, where 53 Africans were illegally captured and on their way into slavery. They fought for their freedom with the help of Christian abolitionists and Lewis Tappan, as well as former President John Quincy Adams. In this case, it went all the way up to the Supreme Court, and they were able to win their freedom.

And so when people see our logo, they always see the ship. And they always walk up and say, oh yeah, it's Amistad, the slavery archive. And I'm like, well, actually, it's a different narrative. It's a narrative about freedom. We are a very diverse archive, which is, I think, a bit unknown. We actually have 800 collections. We started out at Fisk through the American Missionary Association.

So we were born out of Fisk. And then we moved to Dillard University. And now we have found a home at Tulane. But we have 800 collections, which house 15 million-plus documents, rare documents. In addition to the collections that we have, we also have 1,100 pieces of fine artwork that we have, that we received initially from the Harman Foundation, a part of their collection. Some of our collections-- Elizabeth Catlett. We have the personal library of Countee Cullen, expatriates, Chester Himes-- we also have Chester Himes' collection. Just a wonderful rare and diverse collections.

We also, through American Missionary Association, have collections related to Asian communities on the west coast, as well as Latin [INAUDIBLE] collections. And they go all the way to the Appalachian Mountains, and the work that they did with poverty stricken folks in those areas, as well.

Currently we are a very intimate and small staff. It's only nine of us, seven archivists, myself, and we've just recently added an education programmer, which we're very excited about. We do do a lot of collaborations, and we have very robust programs.

One of our programs, Conversations in Color, which was largely inspired by the work that was done at the Schomburg Center, and the conversation's based on books, and archivists, and activists in the community that were impacting the community, and using the collections to drive that discourse. And so that that program is really exciting for us. We've had Alicia Garza, Elizabeth Alexander, Charles Blow, we have Kalamu yu Salaam-- just a host of people.

And the way that we've centered it is, the question is-- how do we use our collections to connect to the public discourse? And then how do we bring people into New Orleans who are actually working in those areas to talk about that and the impact and importance of those collections to the discourse? So for example, when we did a-- is it time?

- Go ahead.

- OK I go?

- Give us the example.

- I'll keep it short. But I'll just give the example. But for example, for Black History Month, we invited Janet Mock, transgendered activist, and Alexis De Veaux, who's an phenomenal educator, wrote the book on Audre Lorde, to come and actually talk about the importance of queer people of color, and their impact and involvement in the movements. And how important that is [INAUDIBLE] those narratives. And so that's the work that we do, and I'm very excited to be here. So thank you to all of the organizers.

- Thank you. I'll try and keep it short. My name is Dino Robinson. By trade, I'm unconventional. I am a graphic designer. I work in publishing. I do exhibit design. But in many ways, it encompasses a lot of archivic-type practices, and [INAUDIBLE] digitize, and collect, and store

our creative work on various servers and online repositories. I started Shorefront as a self-interest in 1995 to address the concerns that the African-American community in Chicago suburban North Shore-- that's our territory is about 40 miles that we cover in seven suburban communities, that the history there of the African-American community is disappearing.

The narrative in general in North Shore has always been-- we are a pretty well-off community. And the black population there is served as domestics. That was the storyline. And I walked around like, this is an established community. This is not a community of servants. They're entrepreneurs. And I thought with that whole premise that the community needs to control its own narrative. And the premise of Shorefront addresses that need. So in '95 when I started with the inspiration from our local history center that pulled out three folders labeled colored, I figured that something needed to be done quite quickly.

That involved engaging the community. So we did a lot of door knocking, a lot of handshaking, a lot of interface with groups of people, especially elders who have very strong opinions and are multigenerational in the community. So we grew our collection on my dining room table from three file folders of data to terminology, to now we have over 200 linear feet of archival material, which is about-- I would say four years ago, 80% of it was processed, and we're finding aids online. In the last three years, we've had a upsurge in collections, so now we're about 50% processed-- which I think is a good thing.

We are members of the Black Metropolis Research Consortium, and with that partnership, enabled us-- so Shorefront is a volunteer organization. We have a board of seven, advisory board of 7 and honorary board of 10. And we all commit our time and our busy full-time job day life to commit time to Shorefront. We established as a nonprofit in 2002, and have continued growing since then.

Our first outreach venue was our journal, Shorefront Journal, which we transitioned to an online journal in 2012. In doing that, we expanded our engagement, not just locally, but globally. So now we're posting articles. And with those articles, we get responses from community members who've experienced that, work that, or related to the person we spoke about. So It helped really reignite some new engagement. And changing the narrative of once we were domestics. But we are all entrepreneurs who have contributed to society, not just locally, but also on a national level.

- Thank you for sharing. I should add that at the Schlesinger Libraries, you all know we're 75 years old. And though my job is relatively new in diversifying the collections, the Schlesinger Library has been concerned with giving voice to African-American women in concert or in conversation with the white women that they have been collecting. Particularly, as we met last night at dinner, Ruth Hill who was over at the Black Women Oral History Project of the '70s and '80s, and that has been an anchor part of our collection in making sure that we have the experiences and voices of African-American women. And since I've been here, and even before I came, we've actually collected African-American women who are part of activism, and feminism, and womanism, and also women who are extraordinary like Pauli Murray and Flo

Kennedy, and then some of the lesser-known women within the Boston, Cambridge Martha's Vineyard, Cape Cod kind of community where you don't know. So that we have the community voice, as well as that national voice.

So up here, we've already demonstrated that there's, as I think Beverly said yesterday, that black collections like HBCUs don't happen in a monolith. So there are all types of ways we're collecting all different types of organizations. And there's different resources and places where one could go to place their items to preserve them, to make sure that we have that voice for the next generations.

Our panel comes out of the idea that we possibly could have this workshop as a part two, or an extension of the State of Black Collections Conference that was held at the Schomburg Center four years ago?

- Four years.

- Four years ago. I unfortunately wasn't able to attend, but I wanted Mary and Kara, who was at the Schomburg at the time, to speak to some of the things that-- and I don't know if anyone else was in attendance. And I some of you all were in attendance--

- Yeah.

--to talk about--

- [INAUDIBLE]

- You getting ready? To talk about kind of what you talked about then, and what were some of the results, or outcomes, or ideas that came from that conference.

- So I was not on any of the panels, but I was in the audience. So as Kenvi said, in 2014 for two days, the Schomburg Center convened a gathering to discuss the state of black collections. The participants were polled. The speakers were polled. And out of that were a number of concerns. There were a number of things that people saw as challenges. Principally, dealing with shrinking budgets. People felt that there was a culture of disinvestment in the humanities. There was uncertainty about the role of physical collections in an increasingly digital landscape. Also the need to demonstrate continuing relevance, as far as collections were concerned.

And these were just a few of the issues that were articulated. I know that Kara was on a panel, and so was Randy, so I'm going-- and Dino, I believe. So I will let the three of you dive in deeper into that.

- I guess, well, I think, one of the things we really talked about, too, was capacity, in terms of the expectations of deliverables. I think that we all know that black-- and I think this was discussed yesterday. So some of the challenges with black institutions in a space and place

where they really are competing with PWIs that historically have had at least 150 years of advantage-- of being able to readily kind of make these changes according to any policy changes, or mandates, or changes in guidelines to grants.

So when you think about at the time that the conference was happening, there was a big concern about digitization. Because where PWi institutions had been working-- some of them for 10 years-- are creating digital labs, working to get the latest technology. Many institutions of color were not there. And so when you look at the advantage-- PWIs are situated in an institution of wealth where they have a wealth network. And then also they have like wealth by the funding resources and capacity to do that.

What I mean by wealth network, if you think about the program officers of foundations or granting institutions, if you think about policy, administration, and all of those things, there is a certain connection there that happens lock and step the situates PWIs nicely for these new transitions that happen. And for us, they are almost immediate and swift because we haven't had that time. So a lot of discussion was about capacity, and how to deal with that, and how to collectively make a case statement for institutions of color to address the need, to recognize that disparity.

Because we don't look at it that way. We look at disparities in education. We look at disparities in health care. But we don't look at the disparities around the unevenness of how institutions of color have to compete in this arena where we are disadvantaged in many ways. And those ways and those conditions are not created by us, or just because we are not doing it. There is a systemic system there.

- I would probably even go further to say that the system is not designed to put us in that place in the first place. And there are new emerging organizations, like Shorefront, that were kind of locked out of the whole process from the beginning, since we weren't born from an institution, we weren't born from a scholarly frame a work. So it was deemed unnecessary until one day they found out-- oh, wait. This is necessary. So let's shift our resources. Let's change our mission a little bit, and then extrapolate all that information from that community archive, and take it over, empower, over-empower the local community archive. So with my presentation, I was pushing back on that a bit, about how we can get engulfed with this bureaucracy of bigger institutions.

- And actually, to add to what Kara said, the Schomburg Center is positioned in a major white institution with a large development department, which is designed to support the various libraries' divisions' collections. So one would assume that, that being said, that we're OK. But one of the things we have found out is it is very important to have a dedicated fundraising position within our building itself. People will make a lot of promises-- we're here for you. We will support you. But when you've got your own fundraising person, and when that person does have the ability to reach beyond the mother institution to solicit funds, to find donors-- and I will tell you that sometimes it very often is a conflict-- but when you have that person there

working on your behalf, there is a greater chance that you will be successful because they are focused on what you are doing.

Hopefully it's someone that also comes with a large Rolodex, or at least a few cards in the Rolodex that are substantial, that may know those few development officers of African descent who are at these foundations, or some of the white development officers that look favorably on the kind of work that we're doing and are open to helping us. But being part of a large institution that does have that support system does not guarantee Schomburg Center that everything is going to be OK, and that we're going to get what we want.

- Another thing that came up was just how much rich material is still in private hands. There is so much more material. Every one of you are going to have access to people who have collections that need to be preserved. And there is so much work to be done that I think all of us have a responsibility to support one another. I will recommend this collection really doesn't belong at Emory. It's Spokane, Washington-- there's an institution in the state of Washington that would be much better situated for that particular collection, or Amistad, wherever it is. Collections need to go in relation to other collections that are going to complement the work, the researcher.

So we were talking about Alice Walker. Bro Clegg said, I want my papers where Alice Walker because we're such great friends. Well, that kind of thing happens all across the board. And we really want to-- we have a responsibility to find the right homes. And I certainly see that as a part of my responsibility, and I'm sure my colleagues do, as well.

- So we're here talking about partnerships, and that's a great type of partnership. Because we talk a lot about under-resourced and resource, and we've used some kind of language where there's the haves and have nots, with this idea that partnerships occur only between institutions with money and those that have less money is false. You can have a partnership across the board, or across relationships well-resourced with well-resourced, and under-resourced with under-resourced.

And one of the types of partnerships, I think is what Randall had just mentioned, this idea where you talk about-- and he mentioned it in his introduction-- where there was a group that came together to talk about what they were collecting. And how, I would imagine, you talked about how you could help each other grow your own collections. And then also Mary, and Lopez, Kara, and Dino talked about, even in the founding of your institutions, you all had partners. You had partners that were within the community, that were with organizations, ASALH, the National Urban League, talking within the community.

So can you talk a little bit about your pre-digital partnerships? Well, yeah. If you're talking about ASALH and the National Urban League. Those are pre-digital. The partnerships that you have, and can we talk about maybe an experience you had with an organization or individual where that was a great experience? And could you tell us a little bit about that?

- So in the pre-digital era--

- You don't have to stick to pre-digital, I just--

[LAUGHTER]

- I like that. No, it's true. We had a lot of partnerships with a microfilming concern, that I'm embarrassed to say, I don't remember the name of it.

- You don't.

- And as a result of that, we were able to have a number of our manuscript collections, like the Paul Robeson collection, the Civil Rights Congress collection, the National Negro Congress collection, and some of those older legacy collections-- we were able to have those finding aids microfilmed. And those were very good partnerships. It was also part of a larger group of collaborations that we had across the center. Our extensive vertical file collection, which is not kept in the Manuscripts Division. It's kept in the quote unquote General Collection.

But we had those types of partnerships. A lot of it was done through microfilm, for example. We also had a partnership where several of our early rare books, first edition works by African-American women writers, some of them slave narratives, were republished through Oxford University Press. So those were some of the pre-digital collaborations that we had. And they were successful.

- I can't speak to nothing pre-digital.

- You don't have to speak to pre-digital. Any partnership will do. Any partnership--

- Any partnership will do.

- Any--

- [INAUDIBLE]

- Any partnership will do.

- But we have partnered with-- I think-- hello? Is it on? OK. So we partnered with a few other institutions. Some have worked. Some haven't worked. One of our recent collaborations was with the Penn State Libraries. They supported the digitization of the Anna Julia Cooper collection at Moorland-Spingarn to increase access to that collection. And so we work with them to kind of decide-- what did we want? What did we want out of it? What did they want out of it? And so we worked together and came to an understanding of, OK this is what we want, and this is what you're going to get. And we're all comfortable with what's going to

happen here. And so we did that. The collection is up on our site, and it's getting tremendous attention from people excited about learning about Anna Julie Cooper.

We had another project a few years ago, where another institution, better resourced--

- We're going to do just the good ones right now.

- Oh, we want just the good ones?

- Just the good ones right now.

- I'll save that for later. But--

[LAUGHTER]

- Just the good ones.

- All right, so that was a good one. And it's been working.

- Can I ask, who initiated that partnership between you and Penn?

- So it was actually a professor, Shirley Moody-Turner at Penn State who was interested in helping to increase access to the collection. Because she was saying, this is such a great collection. It has such great material-- black women's material culture. She was a feminist, and her writings are here. And talk about the university that she founded in DC. And she just really said, we really need to make this more accessible to people around the globe. And how can we do that? And can we digitize it? And we said, well, we can. We have the site, and so we can--

- So again, the faculty importance.

- Importance, yeah, the importance of faculty supporting projects.

- Excellent. Randall?

- There is another collaboration in the Atlanta area, the Herndon home, Alonzo Herndon's home had a large number of manuscript materials from the family-- founded the Atlanta Life Insurance Company, very important business in the Atlanta area. And it became clear that the materials could not be preserved, and maintained, and made accessible where they were. And with this Atlanta-area archives group, we just made the decision-- made sense at the time-- to put certain portions of the collection at Emory, and certain portions at Auburn Avenue Research Library. We did both did processing on our portions of the collection. Then in reflection, it just didn't make sense to have scholars having to go to two different places for this collection. So we gave our collection to Auburn Avenue Research Library. And that's another example of collaboration and mutual support, I think.

So initially it may be that-- basically one doesn't want collections divided. There may be times when it makes sense for a period of time to do that. I don't think we went into that division with the idea that it would eventually go back together. But that's, in retrospect, that's what we decided made sense for the materials and for the researchers.

- I think the most recent example I use is kind of like a multi-partnership project in New Orleans. Right now we're celebrating our tricentennial, 300 years. And we have a lot of program going on. But within that, there are institutions that definitely felt that they weren't a part of the program offerings from the city. And so several of our institutions got together and created a partnership. It's called the New Orleans Arts and Cultural Coalition. And we're one of the founding members.

And the idea was that we wanted to make sure that a family in any neighborhood could go into their neighborhood and find something about their history. And that if they couldn't get to the New Orleans Museum of Art, or the Ogden Museum, or go downtown into the French Quarters, there was something in each area of the city, that they could learn in relationship to that particular part of the city, and how it's evolved and contributed to New Orleans history.

And so that partnership is between the Historic New Orleans Collection, Amistad Research Center, The New Orleans Public Library, and several of our universities, Dillard, Xavier, and Tulane, and a host of smaller cultural institutions that we wanted to make sure would be involved. And I think what made that partnership really successful was that we spent a year and a half in just planning, making sure that the coalition could meet, have that time to have everybody's voices at the table, and really think through the process.

I think when you start with a situation where everyone could be involved on the ground level, those partnerships are most successful. Sometimes you have to collapse folks in, but we were happy and excited that-- one of the things that you hear from cultural institutions all time is that we're often asked, after the grant's submitted, are we are asked to be a part of the advisory board. Or we are often asked to donate, or can we borrow your works, after the whole discussion, and the planning execution, and the design and delivery have been completed.

And so I think that that is one-- and I think was really a great effort. Because now I think New Orleans has a richer understanding, of not only on a macro level of the bigger institutions, but also on a micro level, the institutions that really have kind of feed into this greater understanding and cultural production of what makes New Orleans the city that we all celebrate-- culturally-rich city.

- I think what helped Shorefront in a big way was what became a partnership with the Black Metropolis Research Consortium. Those who are not familiar with what that organization does, and what they are trying to do in Chicago, was to look for hidden collections within institutions. But that process grew to look for hidden collections in family homes, churches, and community organizations. And with that, with our outreach to the BMRC, they had two representatives that came out. And with the help of a clear grant, started utilizing the [INAUDIBLE] project to help

assess the collections that were these hidden collections. Then really partnered with collectors like Shorefront who want to be open to the public for the public to use. And then catalog, and then create finding aids.

It was an interesting process because it was a learning process for our board at Shorefront. We were able to get up to speed very quickly, understanding what the process is, and how nimble the BMRC was to adapt to our needs when we needed to. Our archives processing need to be open because we were still in discovery phase. We were getting artifacts on a daily basis, on a weekly basis. And not one or two items, or a photograph but--

Evanston's a small community. I'll show up at my home. And there were five boxes stacked up on my front door, saying, we want Shorefront to have this because we don't want the major institutions to have it. And then we'll write them back and say, OK, we're going to process this collection for you. And with the services of what the resources of BMRC was able to provide with training interns, connecting with other universities for interns to continue processing, and connections through resources and networking of grant sources, it built a very interesting and very collaborative partnership that had long-term effects, where the BMRC's teaching organization-- to empower them, to go on their own accord.

- Thank you. That sounds like a really, really great connections and projects. At the Schlesinger, we recently partnered with Spelman College to digitize one of their publications, SAGE. And Holly?

- She's not here.

- She had to step out.

- See, I didn't mean to call her out. But I'll ask later if Amanda or Joanna wants to speak about that experience. I don't want to call you, but I'm going to call you out a little bit later to speak about that experience. But one of the things that was very important in making that partnership work was to make sure that credit was given to Spelman College for ownership of the publication, though the Schlesinger did the digitization.

But even online, before you reach the actual publications, you get to know their Schlesinger is working with Spelman. And these publications are housed at Spelman, but you can see them online here through our service. And so that was something that was very important, I understand, in our relationship. And as Kara said, working from the very beginning, talking about, and as Lopez said, talking about, what do you need? What do we need? And how do we make that work?

And I am going to ask now if you could talk about a partnership that maybe didn't go so well, or it could have gone better, and some of the lessons that you learned. Just now, you gave some great examples and some of the things that made those things successful, but something that maybe didn't go so well. And maybe something that you would have done differently, or the

experience that you had. We are trying to stay positive. But it's important that we talk about-- we can't improve a thing if we're not willing to face it. So if we can talk about that. And anybody could start, yeah.

- So the few partnerships we've had have worked well. We have been very cautious in signing on to partnerships that we feel are not going to serve our best interests. Either we don't have enough to actually contribute to a project where it makes sense to participate. Or it's very last minute, or as Kara and others have articulated, you pretty much set it up and, oh, we should have the Schomburg be a part of this. So we've been good so far in being able to dodge the bullet. So I don't have any--

- You don't have to.

- [INAUDIBLE]

- Well, like I was going to say slightly earlier.

- I wanted you to have the opportunity [INAUDIBLE].

- I won't say-- but I'm not going to name nobody. I'm not going to name no names. I'm going to just say that we had a partnership with a better funded institution, and it was basically useless to us because the end product made it appear that our collections were a part of this institution's archives. And so then all of a sudden, we started getting people calling and emailing, and saying, oh, I'm trying to find this information. I thought it was at this institution. And I called them, and I've been trying to reach them. And I finally got them. They say, oh, no it's not here. It's over at Howard. And we're like, oh, wow, isn't that funny? So that's been something that we've been trying to work through since that project has ended.

And it wasn't necessarily helpful to us in that-- like I mentioned, a lot of our unprocessed collection-- because the goal was, oh, we're going to help you process your collections. And we're going to help you process your collections. And they did this more product, less process thing, where we are-- and I tell you we have an inventory of all of our unprocessed collections. So essentially, you created an inventory in Archivists' Toolkit, and said that you processed the collection. And that's not necessarily helpful for researchers, not necessarily helpful for us because we already had the information. And so was just kind of a huge waste of our time.

But it made the other institution look as if they were really supporting black history because they were claiming ownership of our collections. So it happens. Surprise!

- Any other lessons learned from--

- We had--

- Yeah.

- We had a local collaboration with multiple entities in Evanston working with a project called the Women's History Project of Evanston. And when I finally got the phone call from-- I say finally, this [INAUDIBLE] I'll backtrack it a little bit. The essence of the phone call was, hey, you're the black organization. We need some black people in this women's history project thing, so can you donate some information about it? And my first question was, so when did you guys start meeting? Oh, about a year ago. I said, oh, you're just now calling us? So think about that, and call me back with a different solution.

That process did happen. So we kind of reset the wheel, came to the table, and kind of rearranged the planning. Because the criteria that was set up in the times that it was not helpful to anybody living in that time period for a person of color. You had to deal with certain Jim Crow laws, and access to information, access to career paths. So it kind of limits it. So when you're talking about only women of significance before 1910, well, there's a limit. There are so many more people involved in this.

We worked that solution out, but when it came to publicizing and PR, every single organization was listed as a partner except for Shorefront. Not one time I called them out on it. I said, look, we're not in there. We're partners, aren't we? Next article, again, we're absent from that. So the part of partnering is making sure-- and we talked about a lot of this yesterday in these workshops, about equity, and ownership, and partnerships, and acknowledgment-- the key thing of acknowledgment.

That all that work that we put in is volunteers working with institutions-- they have paid staff that were doing this-- a simple mention in a newspaper of who are the project partners in this can go a long way. Especially with a small organization that's fighting for the same funding. That could show and demonstrate there is partnership, but we were omitted from that dialogue of creating new projects who are supposed to impact and be equitable to everyone. So that was a failed one in our book.

And the after effects of that-- years afterwards, we did a lot of project building together about equity, about communication, about how we generate ideas that involve multiple partners. And I think a subset of that too, there was another initiative that we started to try and create a collective historical overview of the city of Evanston. And we wanted to utilize the Evanston History Center, the Mitchell Museum of Native American Art, the Frances Warde House, and Shorefront to write a collective book together to really show interesting perspectives on the history of Evanston.

We went to every group, and they said no, no, no, we don't want to partner. No, we don't want to partner. No, we're too busy. Within six months, each of those boards said, let's put together a book that talks about collective history, invite all these groups in, and we'll call Shorefront last to see if he can get involved in this. Again, what is this mentality of proprietorship, of-- well, we started using Columbusing everybody else's culture and history to create something because the other entity cannot do that for them. Even though it was generated from the community archive in the first place.

So those are two examples of things that could have gone better. And even today, we're still dealing with this what we are terming managed diversity, managed equity. And it generates from the top down, now from the community level. And that's a big issue. And I'm sure a lot of communities are struggling with this right now. But how do you reshape, and relook, and retool how you engage people in the community for empowerment moves.

- Before we open it up to everyone else, I wanted to ask, since partnerships are relationships, what are you looking for in a partner? When you think about projects-- and I know it will be based largely on the project that you're actually doing-- but some general things when you think of a partner, what are you looking for?

- Certainly transparency. Tell me what you really want, and what you really plan to do. Don't tell me what I want to hear and then surprise me at the end. We want to be in on the ground floor, to be a part of the discussion. Again, don't come to us at the very last minute. So those are certainly two of the things that are important. And then the other thing, of course, is it has to be an equal partnership.

- I think that one of the things that is really important is a mutual level of respect. Because like what you were talking about with Shorefront, that's a clear example of a lack of respect for what you all do, and the collections that you have, and the history that you're preserving. It's a clear lack of respect. Because if you respect [AUDIO OUT] and that's [INAUDIBLE] that [INAUDIBLE]. I think that's the start of any collaboration, particularly between PWIs and a HBCUs, is understanding that while you're at an HBCU, and while we have the idea that we're undersourced and underfunded, and that may be true.

But there are people who are actually professionals, but they're extremely dedicated to these collections. And while we may have these backlogs, and things may not be processed, they're not languishing. We're actually still maintaining the collection of preserving it, it's just not processed. And you can still access it. Because we let people access and process collections [AUDIO OUT]. Just understand that you're still dealing with professionals. Our institutions just don't have the name of your institution. And I think that if you come to them with that level of respect, that's where it will begin, at least that's mine.

- I'd add to mutual respect, mutual benefit. All of the parties involved have to see that there is something of benefit to themselves and to the other institution. That is the kind of collaboration that I think I'm interested in entering into. We have problems we need to solve. And other people have problems they need to solve. And if we can solve them together, that makes the most sense to me for collaboration.

- Well, I think for a successful partnership, one is kind of-- I think the conversation of what Wilder presented yesterday was really important about this idea of looking at a framework, and where we're all operating from, and coming to the table with that understanding. I do want to underscore that because cultural institutions of color may have challenges-- certain conditions

or circumstances because of this long history of advantages and with PWIs-- don't approach these institutions as though they're at a deficit. I think those are two totally different things.

When you come to an institution with the idea that we're already working at a deficit, to me it creates a lot of maybe some of the anxiety that was talked about yesterday, some of the mistrust. But you know you have to look at the intellectual capacity, and also, I want to say innovation. Because when you are working with less of some of the most innovative practices around collecting, or working with communities, building relationships, being resourceful, come out of that space.

So there's a lot of creativity and innovation on how we do what we do, how we document, how do we collect, and how do we build relationships. And I think that's invaluable to the process. And so that is what I would, if I had my pick, that is what I would most want to see happen in a partnership.

- I'm going to echo the last part was part that I was going to bring up. Boundaries and flexibility, I think, are quite essential, especially dealing with the two dynamic organizations-- an institution that's well establishment, and a community organization that's more nimble and flexible. A lot of times institutions start utilizing best practices, where we've develop a procedure for. And my response usually is, well, you're an institution of higher learning and research. This is where you innovate new ideas. So here is a place where we can experiment with that, and that becomes a procedure. And we can be flexible to understand that there's got to be some policy and procedures put in place to help frame everything to be reproducible.

- Does anyone have any questions or comments? Please, please. While they're going up, I want to make sure that-- I was ask if there's something that you all wanted to say. There were a lot of things said yesterday. And a lot of things were [INAUDIBLE]. And we spoke last night, and I don't remember if I missed anything. So if we missed anything--

- Oh, sorry.

- OK.

- [INAUDIBLE] OK, hello. I'm Stacie Williams. I manage the Digital Scholarship Program at Case Western Reserve University. And so my biggest question is-- because I'm hearing the very practical concerns around capacity, and around staffing. I mean, those are really the straight up biggest issues. And I'm wondering if when we are in our institutions, to what extent are we potentially repeating harmful frameworks as we're collecting with regard to capacity, and with regard to staffing. So I'm very curious to know where you all stand on the post-custodial model, that maybe it's not even about all of the collecting, but perhaps simply being there as a guide to help others steward their collections, leaving the door open for the time that when or if they feel that they are ready, that they pass them on. But at that point, they've been guided to doing it in such a way where that you're getting the collections and they're not in terrible shape.

- Anyone?

- Yeah sure. I think-- OK. I think--

- You got distracted by the insect.

[LAUGHTER]

- One, I think you're right. But I think what I'd like to present here is, I think that-- and I can only go by my experience in the organizations that I worked with, namely Schomburg and the Amistad Research Center. I think that black cultural institution's archives have had a history of doing that kind of custodial work. I mean, you must remember that a lot of the collections live in churches. They live in fraternal organizations. They live in the matriarch or the patriarch of the family who keeps all the photographs. And a lot of the conversations that come in, like particularly for Amistad, they always start with genealogy. For example, I'm trying to preserve my records. I found out that my family came out of Assumption Parish next of the Belle Alliance Plantation. Do you have--

And so what we have done is-- that that's exactly what we do, is to work with them. Not in an end game way to say, OK, we want to move this along. What we really dedicate is to really preserving those histories. And wherever those histories need to live, our only concerns are climate control, are you using the right materials?

We are part of a disaster preparedness group that just formed in the region to really teach people how to preserve their materials. We're working on a wonderful project right now that looks at-- we we're thinking through what do people grab when they're in a disaster? And they want to grab their mementos, so we're working with a genealogist and a quilt maker to teach people how to create quilts with all useful information. Because if they grab it, they have their history, and they have all kinds of information in the quilt that serves as their own archival record of their family.

And so I think that, that is the work-- and like I said, I can only speak for the two institutions. But I know firsthand that those are the kinds of conversations, those kinds of relationships that we have. And ultimately, we do want to have that conversation with them. I think one of the things about custodial work is that you also don't want to find yourself in a moment where people are in crisis because that's also problematic. You don't want to go to a family when someone's passed and said, I need to have this-- because that doesn't work, as well.

So the thing is, is that you want to build those moments of those touch points where you can educate about preservation-- the importance of those family records and papers. But also have a conversation that leads to more of, and we were talking about this last night, the cultural health of a community, and the importance of that. And I think that is the work that an institution like an Amistad, Shorefront, Howard, many of the historical black colleges and

universities, and some of the other I'll call allied institutions that work with us. Is that, that is our mission to become stewards of that.

And so we're moving into the space here in this morning's conversation where it's collect all, digitize all, put it all out there. But then you have to understand, how does that serve particular narratives? Making sure that other narratives remain healthy and alive, and they're not undergoing a revisions project, or going on some kind of erasure project. So I think it's twofold. But I do want to say that the position that I feel that these institutions have always been in-- we're part stewards custodial, but also helping other institutions within a community preserve maintain their records.

- Let me add to that in the 1990s, the Schomburg Center applied for and received a grant from the Lilly Foundation. The director at the time had targeted black religious history as an area where we wanted to build our collections, particularly primary source materials. It came with an acquisitions component. At the time I was in the Manuscripts Division. I was also in charge of the sheet music collection.

I spent a week on the south side of Chicago at the Martin and Morris Music Company crawling under things, and climbing on things. It was one of the few remaining black gospel music publishers. And they happened to have had a wonderful inventory of many other black gospel music publishers all over the place, from Brooklyn to Mississippi.

So there was acquisitions component. We contacted photographers who were documenting everything from storefront churches, to spiritual ecstasy, to everything in between, old churches, you name it. But a part of it also was the project archivists traveled to certain historic churches around the country. Naturally you can't do everybody, so we had to target some of the older congregations.

And part of that project was not to go and ask them to give their papers, but to conduct workshops to raise the consciousness of everybody from the pastor to the member of the board of ushers, to the older member who had some of the church records at home under his or her bed-- to raise their consciousness about the importance of preserving these documents, about the fragility of the documents themselves. He taught workshops in how to arrange the collections. He had a portable microfilm reader-- yeah, pre-digital.

And for the churches that were willing to participate. He would microfilm the records. They got a copy of the microfilm. We got a copy. In some instances, it didn't work out, and that was fine. But the purpose was really to hold workshops with those vestry members, as well as members of the congregation. We prepared a little booklet, a handout, on basic preservation measures that could be undertaken by John or Jane Q. Public, and a list of sources that carried conservation supplies, and so on and so forth. And we felt that this was very, very important.

One of the things that we do in collaboration with our Programming Department is something called open archives. And we do that sometimes once a month. It may be based on a specific

theme. The latest one, of course, was focused on the 50th anniversary of the assassination of MLK. When Jeffrey Stewart's biography of Alain Locke came out, he came to the Schomburg to speak. He was one of our former scholars in residence in the early period when he was actually working on that book. He hadn't an NEH Grant at the Schomburg. If you know Jeffrey, tell him he forgot to credit Schomburg and NEH.

But that being said, open archives in the afternoon. And it's designed to engage members of the community in general, but also particularly those who are not comfortable coming to evening programs, or for whatever reason, may not want to come to an evening program. And the archivists and librarians pull from the collections based on whatever that theme is. We do presentations. We engage people around archives, around basic preservation, and so forth.

- Hello. My name's Athena Jackson, and I work at Penn State. And I have sort of a question, maybe advice, and two corollaries. So first I want to I want to start my first corollary. This is the most beautiful panel I've seen in a long time. I just have to say it. It represents the future of power, of composition, of engagement, of solidarity. It's ubuntu in front of me, and I just needed to say that right now. I'm really happy to see this. Thank you so much, Schlesinger for putting this together.

I'm going to think Lopez for his generosity in calling out Penn State. Because in the spirit of what can be said, and what Stacy asked about harmful practices, or historical practices we might have, and you have to air it out for us to talk about it. I'm a member of the Advisory Board for this workshop. I'm very humbled by that. And I was very new to Penn State when I joined the board. And actually, it took other board members to alert me to the fact that Penn State had a relationship with Howard that I knew nothing about as the Head of Special Collections in Penn State libraries.

I'm OK saying that on the record because I don't think there was any malice. I want to assume there was not any malice in all of that. But I do want to say the power of leadership, and the power of having the authority to stop the presses once I heard that, go home, and figure out what is going on-- because how could my wonderful colleagues sitting around a table, like Beverly and other people, say things about something good that's happening between Howard at my institution, how is that not on my radar on day one?

So I immediately reached out to Professor Moody-Turner, who now, I can call a very great friend and colleague. And we found out where that relationship was dormant. We immediately activated, kind of at the maybe 10th-- I'm going to say-- I'm going to give myself some 10th hour. Not 11th hour, but 10th hour. And there was an event that was taking place at Howard that needed some funding. And I went straight to my leadership and said, I'm paying for this. We have to pay for this. It's not a, can I? We need to. Because I don't feel comfortable being called out as a partner when I don't know the history of that because I was so new. But immediately coming on meant that we needed to activate something. So thank you, Lopez. But I want to be upfront and clear about what our role was.

And that says a lot about historical relationships, bad historical disruptions, and what could have potentially have been good things. And I wonder, wherever you are in your career, if you inherited some of those yourselves? And how you navigated those? And what that meant to you? And all of those issues that are conveyed into all that. I can't remember I second corollary, so that's all I have to say. Thank you.

- Do you any bad habits?

[LAUGHTER]

- So I don't know if people are aware about the Amistad Research Center, but we are independent archive housed at Tulane's campus. We are nonprofit with our own board. So we were not a part of the special collections, and most people think that. But I think one of the things I did inherit was when Amistad left Dillard University, and first it moved to the US Mint, and then it went to Tulane, there was an awful lot of bitterness in the community about that move. A lot of bitterness that still existed when I got there.

So imagine that happened in the '80s. And I got there in 2015. And there was still in the community a lot of hesitancy and caution with the community working with Amistad. So this may be the reversal of looking at-- we've been looking at large institutions, but you look at an independent nonprofit and its relationship to the African-American community. And there was a lot of distrust. Like you know, you all kind of left us.

And so it took a lot of work to repair that relationship. And I met with the board, and I met with the staff. And I said, listen. I think we have to look at ourselves, one, as an archive without borders. Let's just look at that. And that archives, they should exist in the community for the community. That's our number one mission. Our hours, reflected academic hours. We were 8:30 to 4:30. We weren't open on weekends. So you could understand why the community looked at it as this really markedly-- you know, the shift that happened.

And we had to change a lot in 2 and 1/2 years. It was quite painful. It was different. But the thing is that I'm really happy that we've restored those relationships with the community. So moving around, doing programs off-campus. Many of the programs would happen on campus. I was like, we could go wherever we want to go. We're a small reading room with like, a shoe-sized exhibition space. We can do exhibitions wherever. So we worked the Jazz Fest, Ashé Cultural Center, Dillard, Xavier, you know it. We're there. We partner. We've done programs in the Lower Ninth Ward. And that makes a real difference.

I think the thing is is that, one, you need to get everyone to agree to make that effort. It can't happen with one person, right? Because people don't see it. Even the board didn't see it. The board was all like, this is all in the best interest of Amistad. And that's an inward look. But outwardly, it doesn't look that way. And so it took a lot of program work. But I think that there is now a great balance between people understanding the transition that Amistad had to make

and our relationship with the community. So I think that's one example where I definitely inherited a challenge.

- What I could say-- and I don't know if this is really answering your question, but being at Harvard Harvard, or being part of Harvard is Harvard. And the assumption that everybody wants their stuff at Harvard is wrong. There are lots of people that are like, no. I don't want to go Harvard. And I'm sure, Randall, you encounter everybody doesn't--

- [INAUDIBLE] want my stuff at Emory University.

- That's it. So you have to develop a relationship like, no, we're serious about you. And we're serious about your community. And we're serious about preserving this history. And it's not simply that we're trying to collect everything because we can pay for it. And by the way, it's expensive to do stuff. And Harvard doesn't want to pay for everybody's-- OK, I'm not going to say that. Stop.

[LAUGHTER]

But no, but that's part of-- I had a conversation last year. I've been here a year and a half. And I had a conversation in my first year where someone from the community said you're going to have a hard time in this community because people have been burned by archives across the board. And they just simply don't trust the institution. And then you're at Harvard.

So you have to go in and build a relationship. And so there's been literally kind of that court process. And when you're talking about the custodial relationship, you can't go in like, we want your stuff. No, I want to know about you first. And then after I know about you, and you understand that we're serious, then maybe along the lines you'll feel comfortable, and you can actually leave your things with us, and know that we will care for them.

- Hi my name is Kari Smith. I really appreciate being a part of this conversation. And I know this is the first conversation thinking about a more complete record of African-American history in the United States, as it's relating to PWIs. But about 20 years ago, I worked I used to work a lot with tribal archives, and Native American communities, and First Nations communities. And this conversation really reminds me of a lot of the conversations we were having at the time with the same types of partnership complications, respect complications. What are we each trying to get out of these partnerships? And things that were going on at the same time with PWIs, and tribal nations, and tribal archives, and First Nations archives, as well.

And one of the lessons that kind of came out of that for me, and also for a lot of the funding agencies and administrations that were helping to support these partnerships that were not working very well at all at the time, between PWIs and tribal nations and tribal archives, was the idea that the money, of course, had to go to the PWI that would then be doled out. Because there were no grants specifically that, in fact, the tribal archives, or the colleges, or things like

that could themselves apply for in a way that were being accepted by a lot of the funding agencies.

And so we had a meeting where we brought the funders in, and we're trying to explain. It's really problematic. They were like, no, no, no. We want these partnerships to happen. We're trying to fund them. And we were like, yeah, but you're requiring the PWI to get the money and partner with, rather than people saying, here's what we want to do. And what we need is our own fund. We need to do it ourselves. And then we want to invite people in to help us as we need it.

And out of that came all these IMLS grants specifically to Native American-- Native Hawaiian and Native American grants, which never existed before. And I just shared that as a corollary of in thinking about these things, we have some examples to sort of post on. And I really encourage us to look at those, as well. Because I think that what you guys have been saying is a lot of what I was hearing at that time, as well.

And I think that there's been a lot of progress with people being able to really get the sort of the funding and support to be able to do things in their own community archives, or at the tribal college archives, or things like this in a way that they just weren't really able to get before because of the whole-- it all went to PWIs-- in partnership with-- for the use of who, right? And so I just wanted to share that as something that might be useful in thinking about the conversations.

- Thank you. We're going to have these last three questions, and then we're going to break for lunch.

- I'm Krystal Appiah. I'm instruction librarian at the University of Virginia. I wanted to talk about born digital materials. I don't know if anyone wanted to share about--

[LAUGHTER]

No one wants to talk about born digital. We wanted to talk about what you're currently doing at your institutions, and also what types of partnerships models you may be envisioning for preserving and providing access to these materials. And how we can educate donors and archival creators about what their options their responsibilities are for those.

- Right now, the most born digital materials we've got are the images that are captured when we do our various programs. You no longer, of course, get contact sheets. Now you get a thumb drive, or something like that, which, of course, you then need to back up on more than one external hard drive.

In terms of actual collections, we're now beginning to court that idea. The NYPL has brought on a digital archivist, and we've begun to have conversations with her. Jointly we are pursuing a

possible acquisition which is fraught with much difficulty in terms of privacy rights and other related issues. So we're now getting our toe in the water, as far as that is concerned.

- We are to Shorefront, just this past year, we've been contemplating digitization for quite some time, but always err on the side of caution of rights. What do we have? What can we put out there for the open? But recently-- and actually, the partnership started here at a previous meeting-- with the Schlesinger Library to digitize 93 letters from Edwin B. Jourdain, Jr, who was Evanston's first black Alderman in Evanston. He was also a student here at Harvard University, June of 19-teens, 1920s.

And it wasn't the first conversation I had about digitizing this collection. I went to a local, in our backyard, PWI and asked the same question, and their comment back was, we don't digitize anything that we don't own. So that right there just shut down the communication of any type of partnership possible. So I find that out. I travel across the country, come to another university. And they said, oh, yeah. We can digitize that. When do you need it? What do you need? And here's how we can guide you with metadata. And what formats do you need these back? To a point that it was such a good feeling to hear this.

I have some board members who are attorneys, and they went straight into legalese. What do they really want out of this? And part of these partnerships, to kind of piggyback on partnerships, is that sometimes you have to do a leap of faith, and see how things may work. Yeah, it may come out wrong. But in this situation, it is one of the best experiences I had, just this ease of working with two entities to come to a final product that can be a model for other small organizations that may be contemplating getting into digitization with no budget, no equipment, no staffing. But is there a way to do that, where it can generate some new searchability.

- I will say, as the digital librarian, we talk about the born digital material, and it's kind of out there, kind of like, oh, there's all this born digital stuff happening. But I think we're trying to get over the hump of digitizing. And then once we get over the hump of digitizing, now, we have to then go into digital preservation. And what does digital preservation look like? And that just because you digitize it doesn't mean you're digitally preserving it. Because we had a whole series of collections, the photographs were digitized about 10 years ago, and we went to access a disk-- oops. Disk was dead. Because it was digitized, put on a CD. And you know CDs are everything. And oops. Oh, they're only really good for about five years. And then after that, it's hit or miss.

And so a lot of that stuff was lost because you can't access the disks anymore. So at this point, we're just trying to get around digitization. And then the digital preservation aspect of, OK, now that we digitized it, how do we preserve those digital files? And once we can get a good grasp on that, then we can get into, OK, now we need to manage this born digital material. Like how are we preserving emails and things like that? And I think that the National Archives is really focusing on that. So just kind to wait for them to figure it out, and then we go, OK, this is what [INAUDIBLE] says to do. So let's just do what they say do, since they have the time and the

money, and billions of dollars to build an archive that isn't linked to any kind of proprietary file type, because that's what their electronic archives does. It converts it into a format that's not tied to any proprietary system, so that you can still be able to access it 30, 40 years from now. If, say, Adobe goes out of business, you can't access all those PDFs. Oh, everything's saved as a PDF. But who knows in 10 years if Adobe will still be around and you'll be able to access it? Or go the way of WordPerfect-- which, I just discovered Microsoft Word has a attachment that now lets you open up WordPerfect documents. As soon as I learned that, I went back, and I went to all our disks. All these three and [AUDIO OUT] And opened all the WordPerfect files that we couldn't open for years. We had to copy them all into Word docs. So now we have access to all those files again. [INAUDIBLE]

- Just real quickly, we have a project that we just recently donated. Filmmaker Louisa Dantas did this project post-Katrina called Land of Opportunity, which documented the roughly eight years of development after Katrina. Everything is digital. It's funded by Ford. It lived on a digital platform. She donated all the materials. Really lovely last series of meetings about Acorn, and documented in the notes in that project. So it's really extraordinary work.

This is where maybe we talk about partnerships. Well, one, we had to get a whole bunch of drives. And I'm not you know very knowledgeable about this. I know we just bought a lot of terabytes of drives to back it up on. But this is where a partnership with the university came in handy. Because we had to work with Tulane with issues of server space, right? Because we're thinking, where will this live? And it's so large that, we as an institution, as an independent nonprofit, could not secure that kind of server space.

So we were able to enter an agreement-- I just want to underscore articulation agreements, MOUs are very, very, very, very important to spell out those kinds of relationships. But it worked to our advantage, because we were able to now utilize or tap into a larger system that we wouldn't be able to afford to do that.

- Virtually all correspondence that we all send to one another is via email. When we talk to prospective donors, or people whose collections we want to get, we talk to them about the importance of bringing our digital specialists to the home, or to bring the computer in so we can emulate it, and make that information available. Obviously, with the consultation case, there are certain things that people don't want available immediately, or perhaps forever. But we have a sheet of guidelines that the curators use when they go to talk to an individual whose collections we want to get who's currently active.

- We have digital archivists in the room that can do much better than I can do. So I'm going to defer to them. And since we are actually over time, if we could ask these last three questions/comments together, and then let the panel address them, because I know everybody wants to eat, right?

- OK Julieanna Richardson. I have two questions of each of the repositories. One is, what are you, if you look at the next three years, what are your processing backlog priorities? If you

could say, these are the things that we really want to process and we're being prevented from doing it because of lack of resources. And then, also, the other question is, who would be your ideal partner? Have you identified them?

- Thank you

- Hi. I'm Andrea Jackson. I'm with the Black Metropolis Research Consortium, but I was previously with the Atlanta University Center Woodruff Library. And I mention that just because I really love this panel. I appreciate that there's a diversity from the different types of institutions. I know that at Schomburg-- which I enjoyed that conversation very much as well, there was not representation from HBCUs. And I did mention that there. So I'm really glad that this has changed here today, and I know we'll hear from some more later.

But I wanted to just share that I think going forward as we continue to plan events like this, that we do bring more to the forefront HBCUs who have been collecting these materials since they began, whether they were framing it as archives or not. It is not something that they were thinking about later on. It is something that they have been committed to. And so I think it's important to shine a spotlight on that.

And I also think having people on these panels and at the forefront of the conversation also enables us to understand what has been done at various HBCUs because I'm not sure that people know. We had a great partnership with Cornell University. And it was a lot about capacity building with the HBCU Library Alliance. And I don't know if people know about the digital library that HBCU Library Alliance hosts. And so as we are talking to potential donors about capacity at HBCUs and other black institutions, I'm not sure we've given enough attention to what has been done there, to really know whether or not some of these institutions can continue to build collections, and properly make them accessible, and care for them. Thanks.

- Thank you

- I'm A'lelia Bundles. I'm on the advisory board. I was on yesterday's panel. And my question really dovetails with theirs. I was asking Monica about the backlog, and how many collections there are that need to be processed. And she said there has been an assessment done at many HBCUs. So I'm just curious, to piggyback off of what Julieanna was saying, in addition to sort of the ones that would be the priority, sort of what is the backlog? And is there a way to assess this is how many hours this would need? This is how many staff people would need to be hired. Even though you know that you cannot hire all those people and do all of it. But what is the assessment of what really does need to be done with the collections that have not been processed?

- Backlog priorities, ideal partners.

- I'll talk about a smaller one. We're kind of interesting. As I mentioned earlier, four years ago we were pretty much 80% processed. Now we're at 50% processed because of the amount of

work that's coming in. So we do have a couple of priorities, but we also do a lot of adjustments depending on what happens at a given time. We don't know when we're going to acquire something. Some things we had built up our relationships over a good 10 years. And then suddenly, it shows up at our doorstep. And out of good faith and goodwill, we want to make that the first priority to process as fast as possible, to showcase that one, we take this seriously. Two, we've been courting you so long, now we're anxious. We want to get this done.

Fortunately, we do have some good partnerships with the BMRC and with two universities, University of Chicago where BMRC is, and also Dominican University, where we get a lot of our processing interns. And what's unique about us is that, these interns will come in, and we'll say, well, pick a project. It's open, like going to a candy store. Pick your favorite flavor or your favorite candy. Oh, and by the way, if you want to meet the people who donated this, I'll bring them in. So that brings a really interesting opportunity for connectivity.

One we're working on right now is on the passing of a young researcher, Doria Johnson, who did some work at the Schomburg just a couple summers ago, working with black suburban neighborhoods. And she showcased [INAUDIBLE] prior to that in Cleveland, as well.

But she suddenly passed. And she was in the middle of working on her dissertation on black maids on Chicago's suburban North Shore. She was in the middle of all that work, and now it's stopped. And so our effort was we need to preserve the work that she's done. The family, fortunately, was attuned to this-- knew what we were trying to do. Within a week, we had her laptop, her tablet, her cell phone. They called me up to ask me to come to their apartment, so I could start gathering information. They had already had a stack of documents, journals, notes-- everything that she was working on to process her paper.

So now we're catalog not all that but also bringing a team-- scholars and other residents-- to make sense of her work, to create some final product to showcase for the community of what she was trying to work on.

- We have a substantial backlog. And one of the issues is what collections do we find that researchers are interested in? And if we get a call, we get four or five queries about a particular collection, that moves that collection up in terms of the priority for processing it. We have a meeting at the beginning of every year looking at all the collections we've had, how long that we've had them, and try to adjudicate. We all have our collections that we want. And it's not only African-American, where I'm competing with the curator of literary collections and the curator of political collections. So a lot of people have a hand in that.

Another thing that we've started to do is to take manuscript processors along with the curators when a collection gets processed, so that we get a much more detailed and ordered packing of the collections that some of us used to do. Because they can make a quick list as the material is going into the boxes.

And that means that we don't have closed collections. When a collection comes in, once it's been accessioned, and we're certain that there are no preservation issues, that collection is available to any researcher who wants to use it, with the understanding that you may not find everything you want easily because it hasn't been processed yet. But it's available to you. And you can spend as much time with it as you want.

So I think that's-- the key that's made a difference, I think, is having the wit to bring the manuscript processors along when we're actually packing a collection. And we get a much clearer sense of what's in boxes 1 through 7, or 17, or 117.

- Similar to what Randy has said, in the Manuscripts Division at the Schomburg Center, and also in the Photos and Prints Division, we've always made a habit of trying to make materials available before they're fully and completely processed. However, we need to open that box and basically see what is in there, make an assessment. Sometimes it may be necessary to separate formats, such as the audio moving image material. So unless there are some restrictions or there is conservation problems, and you know that happens sometimes, we try to make the collections available.

I would say 60%, 65% of our manuscript collections, maybe even more, are fully and completely processed with some sort of finding aid, whether it's available in the NYPL archives portal, or whether it lives as a paper finding aid that can be scanned and sent to someone in a research or in a remote location.

How we prioritize, well, when Baldwin came, we knew we had to have that collection ready. Because they were going to be beating down the door and beating down the door. They did. You would sometimes have six people wanting to use the collection all in the same day. And of course, you couldn't necessarily accommodate all of them. How many people can look at box one on the same day at the same time? The Sonny Rollins jazz legend, his papers, the processing is about finished. I just need to take a trip to the library's processing facility to do a physical look-through. Some of our collections are processed by the Archives Unit, and some are processed in-house.

However, in working with that NYPL collaboration, because of subject matter, issues of racial ethnic sensitivity, we have an understanding that the finding aids come back to us, and we vet, and we question, and they make necessary adjustments so that we're both happy. The papers themselves are going to be available, I would say, within a month.

However, the audio moving image is an entirely different matter. Our Audio Moving Image Division, we have a huge backlog. Years of materials not being accessioned, sometimes caused by staffing issues. But also, as you all know, in order for that material to be served, it has to be reformatted first. Now, we're reformatting digitally. And this is something that the NYPL is working hard to play catch up with.

We've got a number of grants. Some things are sent off to vendors, trusted vendors. Some things are done inside. This was years of fighting with the higher administration to let them know that we had to do something about this material. It couldn't just sit down and continue to rot. So for audio moving image, it's a much bigger backlog. But we're slowly chipping away on that.

In terms of priority, apart from the Baldwin and the Sonny Rollins examples, it also depends on demand, again. If it's heavy demand, then we have to move it up in the line of processing. And I will stop here because I'm now two minutes over. I'm sorry.

- So I'm just going to say one last thing, and then I'll bring this in for a landing, and we can all go to lunch. So basically, it is important-- historical importance of the collection-- what do people want to see? Those kind of move up in the priority list. If when you donate your collection you give some money, that moves it up too/ And I'm just being honest.

- I just really don't like you.

- I'm just being honest. Because [INAUDIBLE] donates money, too. [INAUDIBLE] So all of a sudden, that became top priority. Because he gave some money, so we have to show something for what he gave. So in terms of that, that's what kind of-- the internal politics of the institution moves what gets processed.

And to answer Julieanna's question about a dream partner, I don't think anyone has a dream partner. I think it's just, do you want to partner with us? And what is your end goal? What's the end goal here of what you want to do when you partner with us? And that's it. I mean, it could be just as simple as we digitized our Oliver Otis Howard collection, who's the namesake of Howard University. Kenvi worked with me on that when she was there. We digitized our collection at the same time Bowden, which is his alma mater, digitized their collection of Oliver Otis Howard.

I saw that they put out a press release that they digitized theirs. I wrote them. I said, hey, you digitized yours, we digitized ours. And he said, oh, that's great. We should link to each other's collections to help researchers who are looking at the life of Oliver Otis Howard. And that's what we did. And it was as simple as that. And now on each website, there is a link. If you want more about Oliver Otis Howard, go to Bowden College's online archive. And on their site, it says, oh, if you want to learn more about him outside of what we have, go to Howard University's Oliver Otis Howard collection. It could be just as simple as that.

And so I don't think it's an issue of finding the dream partner. I think it's an issue of what is the end goal? If we want to work together, how can we best work together?

- Well, we have some [INAUDIBLE]. I just want to say, I think the question of backlog is a particularly odd question to ask, only because every institution will always have a backlog. For example, when I get back home, we're getting three collections that the archivists have been

working to get, which means that the ratio is always shifting. It's not a fixed thing, right? It's a moving target. So the idea of backlog-- but I will say solutions to backlogs is a really great question.

So one, I think for everything people said, funding we had a cooperative of the history of the Southern Farmers Cooperative since the '60s, which is a Civil Rights initiative. We were just able to get funding for that. And tried every year to write grants to support that. We just got one this year, which we're very excited about. But I think the other thing is that when you get large-- and that's a very large collection. But when you have these smaller collections, what we've been doing at Amistad is thinking through of a way to use programming as a means to deal with backlog.

So for example, we're all getting ready for 2020. I don't know, I think just about everybody is getting ready for 2020 in this nation. We're looking at the political climate, and what do we want to say, and what statements we want to make. So we came up with a program idea called Fulfilling Democracy in three movements. And we're looking at youth activism, women, and immigrants. And what that allows us to do, though, in that program, was to slide in all the collections, these smaller collections that weren't processed.

So we looked at all of the smaller youth activist collections that we had, all the women's collections, all the immigrant collections, and said we can take this program and look at it from a 360 view of the institution. So in the planning of the project, the first stage of it is processing those collections to prepare those collections for the programming and three years of exhibitions. So we've also-- which is great for us because we're a small institution, we were able to deal with our public programs, say we're going to have three years of exhibitions starting in 2019, 2020, and 2021 on this subject matter.

The way that we're going to do this-- in the proposal, we said this is why these collections are so important. Because this is kind of like vérité, like a fly on a wall. A lot these collections are smaller, are your citizens, everyday activists, community members who may not be the names, but have certainly contributed to this fabric, or the understanding of, or even realizing democracy in a way that we understand it.

And so I think it's ways like that. I think there are very savvy ways-- either through programming or other means-- that you can take small linear feet, group them together under a theme, and then work through that processing. And so that's the kind of way that we've balanced it out. And so the outcomes of that we'll see shortly to see how it works. But that's what we've done.

- It's going to go well.

- Thank you. Thank you.

- It's going to go well. We are well over time, everyone.

- Only seven minutes.

- No, we are a full-- we were supposed to end at 12:15. So we're well over.

- Oh, I thought 12:30, 12:30.

- Oh, for real?

- Yeah, 12:30.

[LAUGHTER]

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

- I have three more things to say.

- Hold on. We are over time. But we are having boxed lunches downstairs in room 112, I believe, where the refreshments are this morning. And we will come back at 1:30. So not quite an hour. I hope you all enjoy it. And we can talk further over food, over vittles.