Proposal to Move the Afro-Americana Library to the History, Philosophy and Newspaper Library

The services and programs of the Afro-Americana Library and the History, Philosophy and Newspaper Library overlap in significant ways, and we believe that our users stand to benefit from closer collaboration and co-location. There are major affinities between the two units in terms of clienteles served, instructional sessions provided, and materials acquired. Many of the faculty in the Department of African American Studies have joint appointments with the Department of History. Also several members of the Department of History are faculty affiliates of the Department of African American Studies. Many of their courses are cross-listed. The History, Philosophy and Newspaper Librarian provides instruction for courses in African American Studies, and the Afro-Americana Librarian provides instruction for history courses. HPNL acquires materials in support of African American studies, and AAL acquires material needed by historians. Key primary source collections in African American history are held on microfilm in the HPNL film stacks. AAL also overlaps with HPNL with its contributions to the programs in religious studies and philosophy on campus.

Because of these connections and shared responsibilities, we propose moving the Afro-Americana Library to the History, Philosophy and Newspaper Library. By relocating the AA reference collection to HPNL, users would have access to these materials in the evenings and on weekends. With the Afro-American Studies librarian located in HPNL, users will also benefit from our combined expertise. In addition, the Afro-American Studies specialist is ABD in philosophy and has an ongoing interest in the field. He would bring vital expertise to services to students and faculty in philosophy and is willing to assume the liaison and selection responsibilities.

A key element of our proposal is retaining the autonomy of the Afro-American bibliographic unit within this new configuration. We request that the Executive Committee approve a name change reflective of the continued autonomy and new configuration, namely the African American Reference Center. The Department of African American Studies, recently reorganized as a department after many years of “program” status, supports this move as long as AAL maintains its autonomy. The Afro-American Studies specialist would continue to report directly to the University Librarian. His division affiliation would be transferred from Area Studies to the Arts & Humanities division.

Specific aspects of this proposal will be worked out in discussions with the African American Studies Department, the African American Cultural Center, student groups and other constituencies, with the Area Studies and Arts & Humanities divisions, and with Library Facilities, if the Executive Committee endorses our request in principle and the University Librarian supports the recommendation.

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