

History, Philosophy, and Newspaper Library

African American Research Center

Unit Annual Report, FY2017

Submitted by Celestina Savonius-Wroth

I. Unit Narrative

Highlights:

In FY2017, the History, Philosophy, and Newspaper Library/African American Research Center made significant progress on goals identified in our previous year's report:

- We completed a major review of the circulating collection and transferred 20% of the collection to Stacks and Oak Street, resulting in a refreshed, newer, higher-use onsite collection with room for growth.
- After volunteering to be early adopters of the Library's new WordPress-based website platform, we completed our site redesign and migration ahead of schedule.
- We raised the profile of the Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections through in-person and social media outreach efforts, including attending a major national genealogy conference as vendors. We also made improvements to the IDNC web interface and the Illinois Newspaper Project database.
- We increased our involvement in orientation and training of new graduate students in History.

In addition, HPNL/AARC initiated, and made significant contributions to, the Library's acquisition of and/or subscription to a number of important resources, including the digitized *Detroit Free Press*, 1923-1999; *Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Reports*, 1941-1974; a collection of digitized agricultural newspapers; *Women and Social Movements in Modern Empires Since 1820*; *Christian-Muslim Relations* reference database; and the *History of Science, Technology and Medicine* online bibliography.

As part of a team including Preservation Department staff, we helped see the 2015-16 National Digital Newspaper Project grant extension to a successful conclusion, and began work on the 2016-2018 grant, awarded to digitize non-English-language immigrant community newspapers published in Chicago.

We also participated in Library Advancement's annual Library Friends event, and interacted with HPNL donors in person and through correspondence. We contributed to the University's public engagement mission through our presence at a national genealogy conference, presentations to local genealogical societies, and frequent interactions with libraries, historical societies, and independent researchers throughout Illinois.

Personnel

The staff of the History, Philosophy, and Newspaper Library (HPNL) and the African American Research Center (AARC) in FY17 consisted of:

Celestina Savonius-Wroth, Head, History, Philosophy, and Newspaper Library; History, Religious Studies, Newspaper, and Jewish Studies Librarian (faculty, 1 FTE)

Thomas Weissinger, African American Studies and Philosophy Librarian (faculty, 1 FTE, *retired December, 2016*)

Geoff Ross, Collections and Services Specialist (Academic Professional, 1 FTE)

Kim Lerch, Senior Library Specialist (civil service, .75 FTE in HPNL)

Glen Martin, Senior Library Specialist (civil service, 1 FTE, *retired June 1, 2017*)

Bonnie Thornton, Graduate Assistant (.5 FTE, funded through state funds, August 15, 2016 –May 15, 2017). Bonnie also worked as graduate hourly (funded by gift funds) during the summer of 2016.

Bonnie's major responsibilities were as follows:

- Answer reference questions and assist library patrons, both at the central Information Desk and at HPNL's service desk
- Create and update library guides
- Participate in training and supervision of undergraduate student assistants
- Assist in migration of unit's websites to WordPress platform
- Contribute content to the unit's social media presence
- Serve on the Social Media Working Group
- Assist with and conduct library instruction sessions
- Assist with collection management and collection development activities

Patrick Harrington (Spring-Summer 2016) and Stephanie Holding (Summer 2016), Graduate Hourly (approximately 10/hours week, funded by gift funds)

Patrick's responsibilities were as follows:

- Manage large scale transfer of microforms from HPNL to Oak Street
- Inventory digitized newspaper collections for UIUC Newspaper Database

- Update and improve the UIUC Newspaper Database and the Illinois Newspaper Project (INP) Database interfaces in preparation for Library's website platform migration
- Answer reference questions at HPNL's service desk and assist library patrons using microfilm

Stephanie's responsibilities were as follows:

- Contribute newspaper-related content to the unit's social media presence
- Inventory newspaper content for the UIUC Newspaper Database and the Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections
- Assist in outreach to Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections and Illinois Newspaper Project user groups

We also employed 6-8 hourly Student Assistants (the equivalent of 1.6 FTE, 64 hours/week, with a budget allocation of \$19,468) who staffed our circulation desk and helped patrons use the print and microform collections.

Challenges

The most significant challenges faced by our unit in FY2017 were the retirement of two members of the unit, Professor Tom Weissinger and Senior Library Specialist Glen Martin. After Tom's retirement at the end of the fall semester, his duties were shared between HPNL and Gender and Multicultural Studies Librarian Cindy Ingold for an interim period lasting until August 15, 2017. At the suggestion of University Librarian John Wilkin, Celestina successfully applied for a two-year Library Resident position to take on Tom's liaison and collection development role. HPNL participated in the recruitment and interview process for Library Residents. When that search yielded an exceptionally qualified candidate for our position, we contributed to the TOP process that allowed the library to hire a new tenure-track African American Studies Librarian, Courtney Becks.

HPNL/AARC faces the ongoing challenge of serving a large population of users with intensive library needs, with a relatively small staff. Our two faculty members are both untenured. As a result, Geoff Ross bears a significant burden of the day-to-day reference work of the unit. This also means that graduate assistants are essential to our staffing plan.

Collection Development

HPNL and AARC were responsible for collection development in the areas of African American Studies, History, Philosophy, historical newspapers, Religious Studies, History of Science, and Jewish Studies. We managed a total collections budget of nearly \$600,000 (in addition to approval plan funds). Because of the interdisciplinary nature of our collecting responsibilities, we worked closely with colleagues in IAS, SSHEL, Literatures and Languages, and (for history of science) the science libraries.

Major acquisitions in FY17 the digitized *Detroit Free Press, 1923-1999*; *Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Reports, 1941-1974*; a collection of digitized agricultural newspapers; *Women and Social Movements in Modern Empires Since 1820*; *Christian-Muslim Relations* reference database; and the *History of Science, Technology and Medicine* online bibliography.

Liaison to academic programs

Celestina Savonius-Wroth and Tom Weissinger served as the library liaisons to the Departments of African American Studies, History, Philosophy, and Religious Studies, and the Program in Jewish Culture and Society. After Tom's retirement in December 2016, Celestina took responsibility for Philosophy, and Cindy Ingold (Gender & Multicultural Services Librarian, SSHEL), served as interim liaison to African American Studies. With the support of HPNL staff, we provided new student orientations, library/research instruction, consultations with individual students and faculty, and tours for prospective students and potential faculty hires. We stayed in regular contact with department and program faculty, keeping them abreast of new collections and services, and soliciting their input on library matters.

Celestina met regularly with the Department of History's active and engaged Library Committee. Among other projects initiated by the History Library Committee, Celestina helped craft a proposal for a library research fellowship to help fund travel for scholars wishing to use the UIUC Library collections, created a collection of library instruction scenarios to be shared with undergraduate history course instructors, and identified ways to promote new library acquisitions and services to faculty and students.

Celestina, Tom, and Geoff Ross met with undergraduate classes in HPNL's subject areas, and introduced new graduate students to the Library during fall orientation. Thanks to successful networking with History Faculty, Celestina and Geoff were invited to meet with new History graduate students several times over the course of their first semester: during Orientation, early in the semester, and towards the end of the semester as the new graduate students began to plan their research projects for the following semester. HPNL made a point of involving Archives and IAS colleagues in instruction and orientation for History students, working towards a long-term goal of creating an integrated library experience for historians-in-training.

Reference, research consultations, web site/discovery tools, and staff training

In addition to the in-person and email reference queries fielded by HPNL staff and librarians in FY17, Celestina, Geoff, and Bonnie contributed to staffing the central Information Desk and Virtual Reference service. Celestina, Tom, Geoff, and Bonnie also provided individual research consultations to faculty and students.

The migration and refresh of the unit's website was a major project for FY2017. We volunteered to early adopters of the Library's new WordPress-based website platform. With expert guidance and assistance from the Web Team, we completed our site redesign and migration ahead of schedule. We also began work on a "sidecar" site, planned as a blog-style portal for the Illinois Newspaper Project.

With assistance from our graduate student assistants, Geoff updated and made significant additions to the UIUC Library Newspaper Database (<http://www.library.illinois.edu/hpnl/newspapers>), a valuable discovery tool used not only on campus but by researchers around the state and beyond.

Geoff offered a session on newspapers in the Information Hub training series, open to graduate assistants and public service staff.

Collection management

Starting in the summer of 2016, we undertook a complete review of HPNL's circulating print collection, the first in many years. Kim Lerch worked with Stacks and Oak Street staff to design a streamlined process to transfer out low use titles selected by Celestina, Tom, and Geoff. By the end of the project, we had transferred nearly 20% of the circulating collection, leaving a much more current, relevant core collection with room for growth. In the process, Kim discovered and corrected numerous cataloging problems, located missing books, oversaw a complete cleaning and shelf-reading of the collection, and added shelf labels to help users find their way quickly to heavily-used areas of the collection. We also created more space to highlight newly-received books. One of our undergraduate student assistants began creating regular, frequently-refreshed book jacket displays in the display case by the entrance to HPNL, further highlighting new books.

HPNL staff and student assistants also made significant progress on two major, ongoing collection management projects: identifying newsprint periodicals in the main stacks and transferring them to Oak Street (overseen by Geoff), and rehousing microfilm from acidic/corrosive materials to acid-free, preservation-quality spools and boxes (overseen by Glen Martin).

We continued our review of the onsite microfilm collection, transferring out selected collections that are now available in digital form, in order to make space for a major transfer of microform collections from International and Areas Studies.

With the help the Preservation Department, we trained our student staff in policies and procedures for providing access to our historical print newspaper collection, and correctly using the necessary supplies (such as oversized foam supports) to allow patrons to consult print newspapers with minimum impact.

Digital content creation and scholarly communications

Celestina and Geoff worked with Preservation Librarian Kyle Rimkus and Digital Reformatting Coordinator Will Schlaack to bring the 2015-16 National Digital Newspaper Project grant extension to a successful conclusion, and began work on the 2016-2018 grant, an award of \$200,000 to digitize non-English-language immigrant community newspapers published in Chicago. Celestina also served as the project's liaison to its Advisory Board, including recruiting new members with appropriate subject expertise. Celestina and Geoff met regularly with Preservation staff and grant-funded staff working on newspaper digitization projects, to advise on questions relating to title selection, user interface, title essay research, and promotion of the newly-created collections.

Diversity and Public Engagement

HPNL/AARC contributed to the University's diversity mission primarily through AARC's support of African American Studies, and through the acquisition of collections that provide greatly enhanced access to the historical record of the minority experience in American history. In addition, we hosted a retirement party for Tom Weissinger that also served as an outreach event to the faculty, students, and staff of the Department of African American Studies.

We contributed to the University's public engagement mission in a number of ways. Celestina gave invited presentations about HPNL's newspaper collections and projects to two Illinois genealogy societies, DeWitt County and Champaign County. Celestina, Geoff, Bonnie, and Stephanie promoted the Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections, staffing a table in the vendor exhibits at the national Federation for Genealogical Societies annual conference, held in Springfield in September 2016. HPNL faculty and staff answered reference questions about Illinois newspapers from libraries, historical societies, and independent researchers throughout Illinois, on a weekly basis.

Unit Annual Goals for FY18 (Numbers in brackets refer to the Library's *Framework for Strategic Action*)

- Design customizable research/information literacy instruction modules for courses required for History majors. (1.5, 2.1, 2.2)
- Work with Preservation and Advancement to create a "menu" approach for donors who wish to contribute to newspaper digitization projects. (2.1, 4.2)
- Continue "refresh" of HPNL's space.(2.1, 2.2,3)
 - Stronger visual identity (posters/art/signs/displays)
 - Create more quiet study space by reducing shelving by one range of book shelving from main area and replacing older microfilm readers with study carrels
 - Explore options for improvements to furniture and equipment
- Make African American Research Center more prominent/visible. (3.3)
 - Stronger visual identity (posters/art/signs/displays)
 - Host an event, possibly relating to African American family history
 - Explore renaming the unit. Our goal is a shorter name that gives more prominence to the importance of African American-related materials and services
- Launch website for Illinois Newspaper Project (2.1)
 - Goal is to create a single portal for users of Illinois newspapers
 - Website will also serve to promote and fundraise for future newspaper digitization

II. Statistical Profile

1. Facilities

- Number of hours open to the public per week:
 - Summer II 2016: 40 hours/week; 52 hours/week during the Summer Research Lab
 - Fall 2016: 56 hours/week
 - Spring 2017: 56 hours/week
 - Summer I 2017: 40 hours/week

2. User Services

- HPNL's FY17 gate count (from daily record): 25,400
- Our circulation figures
 - from Voyager circulation reports:
 - 12,796 charges.
 - 16,433 renewals
 - 13,014 discharges
- Reference questions (from Desk Tracker): 1118
- Presentations (from the Instructional Statistics database)
 - Number of presentations to groups: 22
 - Total number of participants in group presentations: 342

3. Other statistics

- Microfilm reels rehoused (moved from acidic/deteriorating enclosures to acid-free boxes and spools): 5,640
- Libguide usage: during FY17, we created or maintained 133 course and research guides, which were viewed 26,557 times.