

## History, Philosophy, and Newspaper Library

### African American Research Center

#### Unit Annual Report, FY2016

Submitted by Celestina Savonius-Wroth

## I. Unit Narrative

### Highlights:

HPNL and the Preservation Department worked together to submit a successful application for a fourth round of funding from the National Digital Newspaper Project (the Library was awarded \$200,000 to digitize non-English-language newspapers published in Chicago).

HPNL and the African American Research Center initiated, and made significant contributions to, the Library's acquisition of the *Papers of the NAACP* in digital form, as well as other important digitized primary source collections including *African American Newspapers, Series 2* and *North American Immigrant Letters, Diaries and Oral Histories*.

Tom Weissinger helped negotiate the gift of the papers of A.P. Marshall, an important African American figure in librarianship, to the University Archives.

In partnership with the Preservation Department and the Office of Information Literacy, HPNL created brochures and a video tutorial, and developed staff training, on proper techniques for handling fragile print newspapers. We also developed and implemented appropriate policies and procedures for providing access to our historical print newspaper collection, and acquired the necessary supplies (such as oversized foam supports) to allow patrons to consult print newspapers with minimum impact.

We carried out the first phase of a "makeover" of the HPNL space, including creating new signage, giving more prominence to new books, reviewing circulating collections, and relocating some microfilm collections that are now available in digital formats.

We 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 a presentation for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, a session in a workshop for K-12 teachers, an interview on a local radio station, 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 FY16 consisted of:

Celestina Savonius-Wroth, Head, History, Philosophy, and Newspaper Library; History, Religious Studies, Newspaper, and Jewish Studies Librarian (faculty, 1 FTE, started August 1, 2015)

Thomas Weissinger, African American Studies and Philosophy Librarian (faculty, 1 FTE)

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

Marie Till, Senior Library Specialist (civil service, 1 FTE, July 1, 2015-May 1, 2016. Marie's position was vacant from May 1 to July 31, 2016)

Glen Martin, Senior Library Specialist (civil service, 1 FTE)

Emily Ewers, Graduate Assistant (.5 FTE, funded through state funds, August 15, 2015 –May 15, 2016)

Emily's major responsibilities were as follows:

- Answer reference questions, both at the central Information Desk and at HPNL's service desk
- Create and update library guides
- Update the unit's website
- Contribute content to the unit's social media presence
- Serve on the Social Media Working Group
- Assist with and conduct library instruction sessions
- Work with the Office of Information Literacy and Preservation and Conservation staff, as well as with HPNL staff, to create brochures and video tutorials on proper techniques for handling historical newspapers
- Assist with collection management and collection development activities

Outstanding examples of Emily's completed work can be seen here:

- Video tutorial on handling print newspapers:  
<http://www.library.illinois.edu/hpnl/guides/handling.html>
- Research guide for the Department of History's Global Utopias project:  
<http://guides.library.illinois.edu/GlobalUtopias>

We also employed 6-8 hourly Student Assistants (the equivalent of 1.6 FTE, 64 hours/week, with a budget allocation of \$19,468).

### **Challenges and significant changes**

2015-2016 was a year of transition for the History, Philosophy, and Newspaper Library and the African American Research Center. After a period of interim management, the unit gained a new head in August, 2015. Although the unit head is an experienced academic librarian with appropriate subject expertise and research strengths, she is untenured and is new to a management position. To address this second point, she participated in a very informative Supervisory Training Institute offered by the Library in Spring 2016. The unit also agreed to have bi-weekly staff meetings.

We reviewed and re-assessed all staff job duties in preparation for the retirement, in May 2016, of senior library specialists, Marie Till. Starting August 1, 2016, Marie's 1FTE position was replaced with Kim Lerch, at .75 FTE.

HPNL requested and was granted one state-funded .5 FTE graduate assistant for FY17. Thanks to a gift from a major donor, we planned to hire two .25 FTE graduate assistants and offer them additional graduate hourly work. The positions were posted and offers were made to two very promising candidates.

Clarifying the unit's role in ongoing and future newspaper digitization projects was a priority at the beginning of FY16. Through discussions with Preservation and the Associate University Librarians, we agreed on an appropriate division of labor and responsibilities: HPNL is responsible for content selection, donor relations, outreach, and promotion of the digitized newspaper collections, while Preservation is responsible for the digitization process and for technical support of digital collections. We share responsibilities for improving discoverability of the digitized newspaper collections and supervising graduate assistants working on newspaper digitization projects.

HPNL was also involved in discussions about the closure of the Classics Library and future plans for humanities-focused spaces on the second floor of the Main Library.

### **Collection Development**

HPNL and AARC were responsible for collection development in the areas of African American Studies, History, Philosophy, 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 FY16 included the following collections of digitized primary source materials: *African American Newspapers Series 2* (Readex), *Codices Vossiani Latini* (Brill), *Ethnic American Newspapers* (Readex), *North American Immigrant Letters, Diaries, and Oral Histories* (Alexander Street Press), *Papers of the NAACP* (ProQuest), *World Council of Churches Online: World War II Era Records* (Brill).

We also built the Library's collections through gifts, including a run of a World War II-era military newspaper called the *Skyrider*. The newspaper was published by an airborne unit, and its editor, David Burlison, was an Illinois alumnus, who wrote for the *Daily Illini* in the early 1940s. UIUC appears to be the only library that holds this publication.

Thanks to Tom Weissinger's sustained contact with Ms. Satia Marshall Orange, she deposited the papers of her father, A.P. Marshall, an important African American figure in librarianship, with the University Archives. Marshall was the author of the first black periodical index (*Guide to Negro Periodical Literature* or the *Marshall Index*). He was also an alumnus of the University of Illinois Department of History.

### **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. 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.

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. 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.

Tom taught a credit-bearing course in African American Studies, AFRO 102: Researching the African American Experience. Going forward, he will be teaching it as a first 8 weeks course in the spring semester, meeting twice a week. He has also been asked to open the course to graduate students by listing it simultaneously as an upper level independent study course.

Tom produced an updated flyer (4" x 9," printed in color) describing pertinent digital sources for African American Studies. Printing was paid for by the Department of African American Studies, and the flyers are intended for distribution in African American Studies classes, at departmental events, and within the Library.

Celestina, Geoff, and Emily Ewers worked with the History Department's Center for Historical Interpretation on their multi-year Global Utopias project. Emily created a Utopia research Libguide, and Celestina gave a presentation on library resources as part of a professional development workshop for Illinois K-12 teachers, "Utopia in the Classroom."

### **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 FY16, Celestina and Emily contributed 6 hours per week to staffing the central Information Desk and Virtual

Reference service. Celestina, Tom, Geoff, and Emily also provided individual research consultations to faculty and students.

Geoff, Celestina, and Emily planned a staff training session on tools and strategies for answering history-related reference questions. Emily presented the session twice as part of Reference and Information Service's Information Hub training series, open to graduate assistants and public service staff.

The extra-large format of print newspapers, combined with the extremely brittle condition of the paper they are printed on, present special challenges to maintaining the balance between preservation and access. In partnership with the Preservation Department and the Office of Information Literacy, Geoff and Emily created brochures and a video tutorial, and developed staff training, on proper techniques for handling fragile print newspapers. The printing of the brochures was funded by a grant from the Strategic Communications and Marketing committee.

During the Library's migration to Libguides v2, we took the opportunity to review and update the majority of the 100+ Libguides created and maintained by HPNL and AARC. Geoff transformed an older static web page into a well-designed and comprehensive guide to digital collections in our subject areas (see <http://guides.library.illinois.edu/collections>). We also made some design improvements to the HPNL website, ahead of the upcoming major redesign of the Library's website as a whole. Tom updated and maintained AARC web pages. In preparation for the Library's cancellation of its RefWorks subscription, Tom worked with Library IT to migrate his *Bibliographic Guide to Black Caribbean Literature* from RefWorks to BibLeaves, an inhouse database developed by IT. The *Bibliographic Guide* now contains 11,114 entries.

Geoff maintained 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. He added 2,376 new bibliographic records and 2,782 new holding records, as well as editing and/or enhancing existing records. He also experimented with various approaches to providing a map-based view of available Illinois newspapers.

### **Collection management**

HPNL staff and student assistants 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 also began a complete review of the onsite microfilm collection. Since the Library has recently acquired a number of large digital collections that duplicate microfilm collections, we began transferring those microfilm collections to Oak Street. The shift allowed HPNL to offer to house microfilm collections transferred from Government Documents. It also freed space for extensive Area Studies microfilm collections acquired over the last few years, which we began receiving and processing in FY16. In addition, the shift of microfilm is the first step towards creating more reader space in HPNL's main area. Towards that end, we began reviewing the circulating monograph collection as well.

With the help and guidance of the Preservation Department's Collections Care Coordinator, Miriam Centeno, we developed and implemented appropriate policies and procedures for providing access to our historical print newspaper collection, and acquired the necessary supplies (such as oversized foam supports) to allow patrons to consult print newspapers with minimum impact.

HPNL participated in the review of the print reference collections in Room 200 in preparation for the merger of Classics into Literatures and Languages. We identified reference works suitable for transfer to HPNL and created space for them in HPNL's reference area.

Thanks to Geoff's efforts in bringing together staff from Preservation and CAM, cataloging of digitized newspapers got back on track, after a long hiatus.

### **Digital content creation and scholarly communications**

Celestina and Geoff worked with Preservation Librarian Kyle Rimkus and Erika Parker, project coordinator for the National Digital Newspaper Project grant, to craft a successful application for a fourth round of funding from the National Digital Newspaper Project (NDNP). The Library was awarded \$200,000 to digitize non-English-language newspapers published in Chicago. Celestina attended the NDNP Partners meeting in Washington, DC in September 2015, and a meeting at the Center for Research Libraries to discuss collaboration with CRL on the next phase of the project. 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, including, in FY16, a donor-funded project, the NDNP project, and a project funded by the Illinois State Library. We advised on questions relating to title selection and user interface. Celestina initiated a teleconference with newspaper digitization staff and Veridian, the vendor that hosts the Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections web interface, to discuss improvements to the site.

HPNL participated in discussions with History faculty member John Randolph, who is developing an innovative model for digital editions of primary source materials. In John's project, SourceLab, history students use the digital publishing platform Scalar to produce annotated and contextualized digital editions of materials that originated in various analogue media, from ballads to books to film clips. The digital editions will be also cataloged as individual titles in a monographic series.

### **Diversity and Public Engagement**

HPNL and 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.

We contributed to the University's public engagement mission in a number of ways. Geoff gave a presentation on newspaper research to participants in the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, and Celestina taught a session on library resources as part of a workshop for K-12 teachers. Celestina was also interviewed by local radio station WDWS and took that opportunity to invite community members

to use the Library's resources. We answered reference questions about Illinois newspapers from libraries, historical societies, and independent researchers throughout Illinois, on a weekly basis.

**Unit Annual Goals for FY17** (Numbers in brackets refer to the Library's *Framework for Strategic Action*)

- Raise the profile of the Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections through in-person and social media outreach efforts, and make improvements to the IDNC web interface (<http://idnc.library.illinois.edu/>). (2a, 4b)
- Update the HPNL and AARC websites to conform as much as possible to the new usability style guide, either within the existing CMS or on the Library's new WordPress-based site. (2a)
- Design customizable research/information literacy instruction modules for courses required for History majors. (1e, 2a, 2b)
- Work with the Department of History Library Committee to enhance research training resources for new graduate students in History. (1e, 2a, 2b)
- Work with Preservation and Advancement to create a "menu" approach for donors who wish to contribute to newspaper digitization projects. (2a, 4b)
- Explore the feasibility of switching HPNL and AARC from Dewey to Library of Congress classification. (2a)
- Continue "refresh" of HPNL's space.(2a, 2b,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
  - Move more low-circulating monographs in HPNL to Oak Street to revitalize the circulating collection
  - Explore options for improvements to furniture and equipment
- Make African American Research Center more prominent/visible. (3c)
  - Stronger visual identity (posters/art/signs/displays)
  - Host an event, possibly relating to African American family history
- Explore possibility of making HPNL the default location for "library-use only" materials in the stacks and delivered from ILL. (4b)

## II. Statistical Profile

### 1. Facilities

- Number of hours open to the public per week:
  - Summer II 2015: 40 hours/week; 52 hours/week during the Summer Research Lab
  - Fall 2015: 56 hours/week
  - Spring 2016: 56 hours/week
  - Summer I 2016: 40 hours/week

### 2. User Services

- HPNL's FY16 gate count (from daily record): 34,320
- Our circulation figures
  - from Voyager circulation reports:
    - 13,391 charges.
    - 16,895 renewals
    - 13,471 discharges
  - Reels of microfilm re-shelved after patron use in-house: 2,804
- Reference interactions (from continuous reference statistics): 1,996
- Presentations (from the Instructional Statistics database)
  - Number of presentations to groups: 19
  - Total number of participants in group presentations: 233

### 3. Other statistics

- Cataloging data
  - Bib records created by HPNL staff: 78
  - Item records created: 3,175
  - Item records modified: 10,968
- Microfilm reels rehoused (moved from acidic/deteriorating enclosures to acid-free boxes and spools): 4,658

- Libguide usage: during FY16, we created or maintained 108 guides, which were used 13,362 times
- Records added to Newspaper Database: 2,376 new bibliographic records and 2,782 new holdings records