Howard University

From the SelectedWorks of Andrew T. Sulavik

2013

IMLS, National Leadership Grant for Libraries for project entitled, "Portal to the Black Experience"

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/andrew_sulavik/21/
Portal to the Black Experience Project

National Leadership Grant for Libraries: Demonstration/Project Grant

Narrative
Librarians, faculty, and staff from Howard University and the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center (MSRC) propose an eighteen month collaborative project with the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (SCR), a research unit of the New York Public Library, OCLC Research, and the Washington Research Library Consortium (WRLC), and in cooperation with the Social Networks and Archival Context Project (SNAC)¹ to create an open source, integrated search portal designed to identify creators of published and archival materials based on a filtered search of their attributes [see Supplement 1]. This portal will serve a two-fold purpose: first, it will combine descriptive metadata elements from bibliographic (Name Authority Records = NARs) and archival (Encoded Archival Context-Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families = EAC-CPFs) authority records to create a web-based, discovery/access portal; second, it will provide researchers with an easy to use tool to identify racial, ethnic, and other creator attributes, and to discover and access all publications, documents, and objects related to its creator. This project is aligned with IMLS’s goal to enhance library and archive services and promote library and archival collections through the use of technology to facilitate discovery of knowledge and cultural heritage. The core of this project demonstrates that such a portal will support scholarly and recreational searches for persons of African descent, and provide linked access to primary and secondary resources by and about them in libraries and archives. The goals that we will accomplish through the creation of this portal are:

- Increase research and interest in the Black Experience and Africana studies among faculty, student, and outside scholars;
- Improve the ability of libraries and archives to expose their special collections through a new means of discovery;
- Broaden discoverability of and access to library and archival collections; and
- Create a premier search portal for the Black Experience through partnerships with institutions devoted to Africana.

1. Statement of Need
There exists in the scholarly community and public libraries a segment of users whose primary objective is to identify creators by ethnicity or race, and to retrieve materials by or about them.

Africana Studies² curricula in the United States has grown in prominence since the 1960's and is now an established academic discipline not only at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) but also in our nation’s oldest and most prestigious universities. The Africana scholarly community, which is devoted to the exploration and analysis of the social, cultural, and political experiences of people of African descent worldwide, employs theories and practices that identify the socio-historical context of the creators of bibliographic and archival materials. Current research practices of Africana scholars rely upon a vast array of

¹ To access SNAC, go to: http://socialarchive.iath.virginia.edu/
² The term "Africana Studies" is being used in its widest sense as a field of study concerned with people of African descent worldwide, which embraces "Black Studies", "African American Studies", "Black Diaspora Studies", "Afro American studies", "Pan African Studies", and "Africology".
specialized and balkanized reference works that identify prominent authors and artists of African descent and, in the case of the MSRC and SCR, the local practice of identifying the author’s race/ethnicity printed on author cards [see Supplement 2]. This project enhances the discovery process by integrating their combined data into a search portal that grants users access to filtered search capabilities that will meet these research needs by identifying the creators of the Black experience and locating their creations – personal papers, publications, music, art, etc. – held in libraries and archives.

In public libraries with a substantial African-American population, patrons are often interested in finding novels, movies, genealogical records, created by or about African Americans, and to a lesser extent finding rarified artifacts about their Black cultural heritage preserved in their local special collections. Public awareness of such materials is often little known by the non-specialist. An online discovery tool designed to expose the artifacts produced by people of African descent in these specials collections will make their materials more widely accessible.

Present Online Public Access Catalogs (OPAC) often fail to meet specific research and general public needs. Principally conventional search portals index data contained in bibliographic records. Searchers are limited to creator, established headings, and phrase headings (e.g., novels by African-American women writers; slave narratives). A search for manifestations by African-Americans typically results in the retrieval of anthologies/collections. "Ideally," as the American Library Association’s Cataloging and Metadata Management Section (CaMMS), Subject Analysis Committee (SAC) points out in its recent Discussion Paper, "search systems will be able to search characteristics recorded in authority records in conjunction with searches run against data in bibliographic records." Until this happens, users must look outside of OPACs, often to obscure print sources or locally enhanced author cards, in order to search for persons of African descent. This means juggling a vast array of specialized reference works devised for this purpose, or, in the case of archival materials, using locally prepared finding aids. Our completed search portal will demonstrate how specific metadata, informed by user needs, can be used to create a search portal that responds to specific inquiries. It will also demonstrate the advantage of providing one portal to both find and retrieve bibliographic and archival materials.

2. National Impact and Intended Results

SNAC is the only search portal that we are aware of comparable to the one we propose. SNAC’s prototype focuses on searching, browsing, and displaying archival description (EAC-CPF) records as formatted webpages. It is a resource discovery tool for researchers to obtain access to cultural resources in archives, libraries, and museums. The results list provides links to digital repositories of archival materials. Still in early development phases, the prototype access system and searchable database created by the SNAC project appears to be a true success and harbinger of things to come.

Our portal will differ significantly from that of the SNAC project. Simplicity is its strength: it is an index, not a database. It will provide filtered search features based on creator attributes derived from enhanced NARs

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3 See for example the seventy-one reference works in the African American Catalog Reference Sources compiled by Betty M. Culpepper and Ardie Myers, Library of Congress; Updated: December 2003: http://www.loc.gov/aba/pc/saco/afraamerbibl.html#A.

4 SAC Genre/Form on Implementation advises the Library of Congress on matters related to creating Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms for Library and Archival Materials.

A user of our portal will be able to perform filtered searches for creator names based on at least eight different creator attributes. The most significant attribute will be race/ethnicity, but other new “direct search” facets based on Resource Description & Access (RDA) standards in Name Authority records would include: gender, place of association, time period, genre, geography, profession, and bibliographical details. The name authority data in our portal will be derived from enhanced NARs. All searching will offer keyword, phrase, proximity searching, and full Boolean operations. It will also include filtered display functions on the portal’s interface much like that of the Getty Research Portal. The results list of names generated by our index will link users to landing pages (webpages). Users will have the option of selecting one of two links: either OCLC’s Identities Page, which links the name to bibliographic and archival materials by or about the creator, (e.g., Carter G. Woodson); or, SNAC, which links the name to archival materials pertaining to the creator, (e.g., Thurgood Marshall).

This grant will be a national model for special collections in university and public libraries and will have an impact in the following ways:

- While the bibliographic materials selected for this portal come from the Moorland-Spingarn catalog, many of the materials are available in libraries across the United States. Through our partnership with OCLC, the portal will provide results to users based on their proximity to libraries that hold those materials, thus making this portal a relevant discovery tool to researchers and the general public throughout the United States.
- The portal will provide an alternative method for private and public libraries to expose their special collections. Although our portal emphasizes the “Black Experience” and creators of African descent, it is adaptable and therefore can act as a model for special collections that emphasize other ethnic groups of creators, such as those comprised principally of creators of Latino or Native American descent. Likewise, such a portal could be used to expose collections centered on religious groups, e.g., Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant.
- This project will act as a catalyst for future discussions by the library community and institutional stakeholders about the practical effect of enhanced RDA elements in Name Authority records. It may also stimulate discussion concerning the merits of identifying creators by race/ethnicity.
- Howard University will contribute 15,000 enhanced NARs to the cooperative pool of public records maintained by the Library of Congress and the Virtual International Authority File (VIAF).
- Finally, it will encourage OPAC vendors to consider the potential value of indexing enhanced NARs.

3. Project Design

The following table provides a summary of the project work plan and greater detail on each phase is provided below the table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Elements</th>
<th>Benchmarks</th>
<th>Responsible Parties</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start-Up</td>
<td>Send Bibliographic accession #’s to OCLC</td>
<td>OCLC, SNAC, SCR,</td>
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6 RDA standards will become standard use within all name authority records beginning March 31, 2013 (PCC Day One for RDA Authority Records), thus replacing the more limited ACCR2 standards.

7 To access the Getty Research Portal, go to: http://portal.getty.edu/

8 See: http://www.worldcat.org/wcidentities/lccn-n50-48494

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Responsible Parties</th>
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| Dec. 1, 2013 – Feb. 15 2014 | • Send 150 EAD Finding Aids to SNAC  
• Advertise for the Project Metadata Librarian  
• Convene focus groups | Andrew Sulavik, Seth Kronemer |
• Metadata Element defined  
• Controlled vocabulary established  
• Reference Resources selected for enhancement of records | SCR, Andrew Sulavik, Sean Varner, Larisa Walsh |
| Enhancement of Authority Records | April 1, 2014-March 31, 2015  
• Project Metadata Librarian hired  
• 150 EAC-CPF’s enhanced  
• 15,000 NARs enhanced  
• NARs accession numbers received from OCLC  
• SNAC will send EAC-CPFs based on submitted EAD finding aids | OCLC, SNAC, Project Metadata Librarian, Andrew Sulavik, Sean Varner, Seth Kronemer |
• Requirements & Analysis  
• Design/Proof of Concept  
• Design website (interface)  
• Development & Testing  
• Pilot launched | SCR, Vendor, Leah Prescott, Sean Varner, Seth Kronemer, Andrew Sulavik |
| Index Management         | Nov. 1, 2014 – May 31, 2015  
• Disseminate information about the collection to targeted and general audiences  
• OCLC will create “Identities Pages” for indexed records  
• SNAC will create webpages for each EAC-CPF created | Vendor, OCLC, SNAC, Leah Prescott, Sean Varner |
| Analysis                 | March 1, 2015 – May 31, 2015  
• Reconvene focus groups  
• Invite additional public and academic institutions to evaluate the portal  
• Evaluate use of portal via GOOGLE Analytics | SCR, Andrew Sulavik, Seth Kronemer |
| Post-Grant               | May 31, 2015 -  
• Continue dissemination activities  
• Investigate additional funding opportunities to expand the scope of the index and the functionality of the portal  
• Invite other institutions to populate the index | Andrew Sulavik, Seth Kronemer |

These outcomes will be met by monitoring progress toward the benchmarks set for each stage of project implementation (see Schedule of Completion).

**Startup—December 1 2013-February 15, 2014**

From the moment Howard University receives notification of the award of the grant, Howard University staff will begin preparing for this project. Startup activities will include:
• Project directors advertise the position of Project Metadata Librarian.
• Project directors will send OCLC accession numbers from all of MSCR’s bibliographic records to OCLC Research. OCLC Research will then match all author names to linked name authority records and send back to Howard University a file of all matched NARs by OCLC accession number. The enhancement of NARs will take place on OCLC’s Connexion Client interface.
• Project directors will send 150 EAD finding aids to SNAC for processing. SNAC will send Howard University at least 150 EAC-CPFs created from the EAD finding aids.
• Project directors and SCR staff will convene at least 6 focus groups, each consisting of no more than six participants, who will be drawn from faculty, students, library staff, and public library patrons. The purpose of the groups will be to discern search habits (queries), interface expectations, and research and recreational interests in the Black experience.

Data Dictionary—February 15, 2014-April 15, 2014
Information gathered from the focus groups will inform the creation of a data dictionary. Two guiding principles are assumed:

• The expectations, skills, and subject expertise of the user and research community, should drive the creation of the discovery platform’s descriptive metadata.
• There should be an enduring value to descriptive metadata.

The Data Dictionary identifies the core set of elements and fields that will be populated in every record. This reference guide ensures consistent practice. It will be based on RDA, and place emphasis on using controlled vocabularies, provide instructions on best practices, offer reference resources, and contain definitions for terminology. This living document will be maintained by the Metadata Librarian through frequent wiki updates. Our schema will be built upon OCLC’s "MARC 21 encoding to accommodate new RDA elements in NARs".

Portal Design and Implementation—August 1, 2014-October 31, 2014 [see Supplement 4]
The project timeline for portal design and implementation is ten weeks. During this period the project managers, MSR staff, and Leah Prescott will meet with Optimos’s Project Manager, Senior Solutions Engineer/Architect, and Consultant/Web Developer to work through the following four phases of development: requirements and analysis, design/proof of concept, development and testing, and the creation of the pilot. By October 31, 2014, we estimate that at least 5,000 NARs and 150 EAC-CPFs should be ready to be exported from their Voyager environment and indexed in the new system. (For a full description of the portal design, see Optimos’s implementation plan on pages 9-11).

Index Management—March 1, 2015-May 31, 2015
• During this period Andrew Sulavik, Seth Kronemer, and Sean Varner will disseminate information about the collection to targeted and general audiences. The portal Website will support documentation about the project and a means by which other interested institutions may supply feedback or express interest in becoming a participant.
• As each NAR is indexed, OCLC Research will prioritize the creation of an Indentities Page if one does not already exist and the Identities Page URLs will be indexed.

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• SNAC will produce webpages for each EAC-CPF and the SNAC URLs will be indexed. A daily count of the NARs entered into the system will be monitored by the system.

Analysis—March 1, 2015-May 31, 2015
The evaluation of the portal will be measured by data received through GOOGLE Analytics, which generates usage statistics. Focus groups at Howard University and SCR will be convened to gather narrative accounts about user experiences with the portal. Invitations will be sent to other academic institutions (e.g., Emory University and Morehouse College) and local public library systems (e.g., Washington, DC and Alexandria, VA) to request participation in evaluating the portal among users.

Post-Grant—May 31, 2015 -
Based on the data gathered from the focus groups and GOOGLE Analytics, recommendations to improve the portal will be reported. The results of this phase of the project and projected future plans for its continuance and enhancement will be disseminated through our communications plan. This phase of development will coincide with an investigation into additional funding opportunities and by sending invitations to other institutions to participate in this project by populating the index. Possible goals of this phase would include the expansion of the number of records indexed, and perhaps the development of new interface functionalities, and a wider internet presence (e.g. mobile apps, widgets, etc.).

Deliverables
This project will result in the following deliverables, all of which will be made available to the public on the Howard University webpage:
• A detailed report documenting the results of the focus groups.
• A metadata dictionary that other institutions could follow should they decide to participate in this portal
• The creation of a maintenance-free, sustainable, web-based search portal.
• 15,000 enhanced NARs$^{12}$ and 150 EAC-CPFs, which will all conform to national standards and will reside within the public domain (and will be available to the public at viaf.org).
• A final report analyzing portal usage garnered from focus groups and GOOGLE Analytics.
• An Association of Research Libraries (ARL) SPEC Kit$^{13}$ that guides libraries through the process of creating their own search portal by implementing new metadata practices and technologies.

4. Project Resources: Budget, Personnel and Management

Budget
The institutional responsibilities for project management and implementation will fall to Howard University. We request funding to demonstrate that the use of enhanced metadata in NARs and EAC-CPF to create a search portal that offers users filtered and faceted access to personal name searches will offer an innovative and practical approach to finding library and archival sources. This demonstration requires us to both enhance NARs and EAC-CPFs and to create an index and portal that utilizes these enhanced records. We intend to hire a Project Metadata Librarian whose sole responsibility will be to enhance NARs and we will contract with Optimos Solutions to use open source

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$^{12}$ See: http://www.arl.org/resources/pubs/spec/index.shtml
$^{13}$ See: http://www.arl.org/resources/pubs/spec/index.shtml
technologies to create an index and portal (interface). Howard University, the WRLC, and OCLC will all offer staff time as in-kind contributions towards meeting the recommended cost-share component. The WRLC will also offer the use of its information technology platform for both the development and hosting of the interface as an additional in-kind contribution.

**Personnel and Management**

**Project Directors**
- Andrew Sulavik is the Head of Metadata and Description Resource Services for the University Libraries, a post he has held since August of 2012. He holds a Bachelor of Arts, magna cum laude, from the University of Connecticut, and a Master of Library and Information Science from the University of Tennessee. Dr. Sulavik has had a broad career which included working as an indexer, an editor, a library manager, an educator and a translator. He is a participant in the Name Authority Cooperative Program (NACO) of the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC). Dr. Sulavik will be the lead project manager, and will oversee all aspects of the project. He will work on the project for 30% of his time, throughout its duration. Additionally, he will be overseeing all of the metadata creation for the project, and will enhance at least 2,000 NARs.
- Seth Kronemer is the Howard University School of Law Archivist, a post he has held for the past decade. Mr. Kronemer holds a Bachelor of Arts in History from DePaul University in Chicago, a Master of Science in Library Science from Simmons College in Boston, and is a member of the Academy of Certified Archivists. In addition Mr. Kronemer is a freelance Journalist, and writes a regular column in the New York Jewish Week under the pen name Gamliel Kronemer. Mr. Kronemer will work on the project for 10% of his time throughout its duration. In addition to assisting Dr. Sulavik in directing the project, he will also be charged with overseeing the creation and enhancement of the EAC-CPFs.

**Other Howard University Staff** (Resumes or position descriptions can be found in the appendices of this application.)
- Sean Varner is Metadata Librarian for the University Libraries. He holds a Bachelor of Arts and Masters of Information Library Studies from the University of Michigan. Mr. Varner has worked as a metadata catalog librarian in Washington, DC for seven federal library contracts. He will work on the project for 40% of his time supervising the Project Metadata Librarian, and providing quality control for all metadata created. He will work as the day-to-day liaison with both the Metadata Consultant and (Optimos vendor rep). Mr. Varner will also enhance at least 3,000 NARs.

**Project Staff to be hired**
- Project Metadata Librarian: The Project Metadata Librarian shall have advanced knowledge of and experience with creating and editing Name Authority records, RDA standards, and shall hold PCC affiliation. He shall hold a Master’s degree in Library Science, with a concentration in cataloging, from an American Library Association accredited institution; one years experience with NACO training; or a combination of the above. The Project Metadata Librarian will be responsible for enhancing at least 10,000 NARs during the course of the project. (Description for this position is appended to this application.)

**WRLC Staff**
- Leah Prescott, Digital Projects Coordinator for the WRLC, holds a Bachelor of Arts in History from the University of Connecticut and a Masters of Library Science from Syracuse University. Leah has broad experience working with digital collections in libraries and archives, and was involved in the
development of the Getty Research Portal. During this project she will spend approximately 5% of her time as a project manager working with both Howard University staff on metadata issues and with Optimos staff developing the portal and index.

Consultants
- Larisa Walsh, Metadata Consultant, has been the Monographic Cataloger at the University of Chicago since 2007, before which time she worked as a Metadata Specialist for OCLC in Dublin, Ohio. She is a participant and reviewer in PCC's NACO. Ms. Walsh has committed herself to serve as a consultant for a period of forty days, throughout the project, reviewing the Data Dictionary and NARs.

Advisory Board
The Advisory Board will consist of Daniel Pitti (Co-Director of Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities at the University of Virginia and Project Director of the SNAC Project), who will advise us on this project’s integration into SNAC [see Supplement 5.1]; Khalil Gibran Muhammad (Director of The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture), who will advise us on how to ensure that the portal will meet the research needs of the general public [see Supplement 5.2]; David Reser and Ana Lupe Cristán (cataloging policy specialists in the Policy & Standards Division (PSD) of the Library of Congress), who will advise us on the standards which we use in our enhancement of NARs [see Supplement 5.3], Beacher Wiggins, Director, Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access, Library of Congress]; and Maurice Jackson (Associate Professor of History and African American Studies at Georgetown University), who will advise us on how to ensure that the portal will meet the needs of academic Africana research [see Supplement 5.4]. In addition to advising us remotely via various media, the Board will convene one meeting in person on the Howard University campus in October of 2014 in order to assess work to date and advise on any changes that ought to be implemented before the project timeline has been completed.

5. Communications Plan
Howard University Central Libraries Group will post bi-monthly project milestones on MSCR’s Webpage. As a member of the WRLC, it will also post updates in the WRLC Newsletter, which reaches eight additional member institutions – American University, The Catholic University of America, Gallaudet University, George Mason University, The George Washington University, Georgetown University, Marymount University, and The University of the District of Columbia, or approximately 110,000 students and 9,000 faculty within the Washington DC greater metropolitan area. Press releases announcing the project will be sent to suitable local and national professional publications, such as: Howard University’s alumni magazine, Howard Magazine; The Association of College and Research Libraries’ College & Research Libraries News and College and Research Libraries; the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section’s A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage; and the Black Caucus American Library Association’s BCALA Newsletter. Dr. Sulavik, Mr. Kronemer, and Mr. Varner will submit session proposals to the annual meetings of the American Library Association, Society of American Archivists, and the Association of College Research Libraries. These activities will disseminate awareness of the project.

6. Sustainability
Howard University's full member status at the WRLC will ensure a maintenance-free, securely hosted system on WRLC’s server in Greenbelt, Maryland. Staff at the WRLC will be responsible for maintaining the server. MSCR authority file maintenance will continue after the completed grant period. The Howard University administration supports the educational mission of this project [See letter of support from the
Office of the Provost, [see Supplement 6]. The University's 2009 Presidential Commission on Academic Renewal expressed a commitment to graduate education and research for the purpose of making a unique research, teaching and service contribution to the nation. The Moorland-Spingarn Research Center exists to meet the growing needs of the University's instructional curriculum and developing research programs. The growth of distance education, collaborative scholarship, and user expectations to relevant online finding aids make it essential to create and sustain this portal if MSRC is to achieve its goal of becoming the premier national center for advanced research and instruction in African-American life and culture in the United States.

Dr. Howard Dodson, former Director of The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, was appointed Director of the Howard University Central Libraries Group and MSRC in 2012. In his capacity as director, the library budget has increased substantially, a long-term strategy has been implemented, and a major 30 million dollar capital campaign aimed at modernizing Howard's central group libraries initiated. His leadership and initiatives, as well as his support for this project, give it strong administrative support. Critical to its sustainability, will be the faculty and student buy-in to the project and current and future partnerships with other institutions that we hope to forge in the second phase of this project. Outside of Howard University, early initial support for this project suggests that the project, if successful, will gain momentum from outside the institution. Letters of support from Jerome Offord, Dean of Library Services and University Archives at Lincoln University and President of ALA's Black Caucus [Supplement 7], and Ralph Eubanks, Director of Publishing at the Library of Congress [Supplement 8], suggest that it is reasonable to expect sustained support for this project to come from outside Howard University.

7. About the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center

Since its founding as the Moorland Foundation in 1914, the MSRC has been fulfilling its mandate to document, develop, preserve, and share the Black experience on a global level through a variety of mediums. Today, it is one of the world’s largest and arguably the most valuable research repository for the study of the history and culture of peoples of African descent in Africa, the Americas, and other parts of the world.

At the center of the MSRC's Library Division collection and pointing to its genesis are some 12,000 monographic works, representing two personal library collections, namely that of Dr. Jesse E. Moorland and Arthur Barnette Spingarn. The personal library collection donated by Dr. Moorland in 1914 to Howard University is comprised of some 3,000 monographs, which at that time was considered to be one of the most significant collections of African and African-American related materials in existence. The Spingarn Collection, purchased by the Moorland Foundation in 1946, contains over 8,500 volumes. It is the product of a global search lasting more than 35 years, which in the end gathered together authors of African descent in more than 20 languages, including Arabic, Latin, Greek, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Finnish, Russian, Hausa, Swahili, Vai, Xhosa, Yoruba, and Zulu, most of which remain largely unknown to American scholars. Together, the two collections present evidence that should have made notions of African and African-American intellectual inferiority and of pseudoscientific racism clearly unfounded.

The Library Division's vast collection of primary and secondary materials has been a unique resource to scholars studying the Black experience for more than one hundred years. Access to these rich and rare resources, which chronicle and give voice to the Black experience as lived, interpreted, and documented by African-American scholars, ordinary citizens, statesmen, poets and novelists, provide scholars with the contextual framework for reading American history through a distinctive, national, racial, and personal perspective. Just as the French historian, Alexis de Tocqueville, introduced unique observations and reflections

about early American life in *Democracy in America* that reflect a distinctly French perspective, so the works of early African-American writers such as Benjamin Banneker, Richard Allen, David Ruggles, Absalom Jones, and David Walker offer scholars a more expansive view of the often overlooked, unique African-American perspective on, interpretation of, and insight into American history and society.

Researchers and students visiting the Library Division have access to a vast reservoir of materials covering half a millennium of African-American history -- dating from the time of the transatlantic slave trade and African Diaspora (1450-1860's) to the present challenges of African and African-American leadership in the 21st century. Within this treasure trove are over 200,000 rare and non-rare monographs; 1,900 serials; 14,000 microfilm reels of journals, periodicals and newspapers; 6,500 master's theses; and 2,400 Ph.D. dissertations.

Among the many valuable sources housed in the Library Division are works that chronicle the lives of African people worldwide, with particularly strong coverage of rare Afro-Cuban, Afro-Brazilian, and Haitian writers; extensive autobiographical and biographical writings of the great and well-known as well as the obscure; numerous reports and publications of African-American organizations founded in the late 18th and early 19th centuries; the Anti-slavery Collection of noted abolitionist Lewis Tappan; and a wide assortment of thematic works documenting the underground railroad, the African-American press in Antebellum America, African-American abolitionists, African-American participation in the Civil War, writers of the Harlem Renaissance, and the Civil rights era, to mention but a few of the more salient themes.

The MSC Manuscript Collections comprise some 650 individual collections – of which approximately one-third are fully processed and available to the public – and comprising more than 8,000 linear feet. The collections document a broad array of the African/African American experience. A significant portion of the collections focus on the experience of African Americans in the Washington, DC area. The Howard University archives comprise more than 10,000 linear feet, including more than 50,000 photographs, all of which document the rich history of Howard University.

Conclusions

The Portal to the Black Experience Project will significantly change the way scholars and the general public access works created by authors of African descent. Through it, researchers, non-specialists, students, and recreational readers will be able to search for published library and processed archival materials based on creator attributes – making it an innovative search portal without peer. Through the use of open source technologies, and innovative use of newly implemented RDA descriptive metadata standards, and through the use of EAC-CPF metadata, this portal will facilitate discovery of the cultural heritage of African-Americans.

Additionally, the portal that will result from the project will serve as a practical demonstration of how to apply new metadata schemata in order to expose lesser known library and archival collections. Although the metadata we have chosen to highlight in The Portal to the Black Experience Project reflects the Africana-focused nature of the Moorland-Spingarn collection, this approach to utilizing metadata can readily be applied to exposing unique creator attributes found in other special collections. For example, the Notre Dame University might very well want to apply a similar metadata schema to highlight Catholic contributions to American culture as expressed through materials created by Catholics and housed in their libraries and archives.

If funded, this project will advance IMLS's goal to enhance library and archive services and promote library and archival collections through the use of technology to facilitate discovery of knowledge and cultural heritage.