Brown University Library

Advancing HBCU Scholarship, Diversifying Digital Publishing:
A Cross-Organizational Training & Support Program for Library Professionals

The proposed project aligns with goal 3, objective 3.5 of the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program. Brown University Library, with support from the HBCU Library Alliance, requests a three-year, $249,999 Implementation Grant to establish a cross-organizational training program for HBCU library professionals seeking to gain or expand expertise in developing born-digital scholarship. The program will grow and diversify the digital scholarly publishing landscape, build capacity at HBCU libraries, and increase the visibility of HBCU faculty-authored scholarship. Upon completion, four librarians will have obtained a highly specialized skill set fully realized through the development of a born-digital publication authored by a member of their faculty. The partnership between a predominantly white R1 university library, a consortium of historically Black institution libraries, and a leading university press will elevate and increase the reach of HBCU-generated scholarship. It will provide a replicable model for similar mutually beneficial collaborations in the service of diversifying scholarly publishing.

Project Justification: Born-digital publications create exciting new conditions for the production and sharing of knowledge by advancing scholarly arguments in ways not achievable in a conventional print format, whether through multimedia enhancements or interactive engagement with research materials. Combined with open access publishing models, these new scholarly forms are increasing the visibility and reach of humanities scholarship to audiences both within and beyond the academy in unprecedented ways. Yet the majority of this innovative work is being generated at well-resourced, predominantly white institutions (digital content development generally falls to the author or their institution rather than to the publisher).

In an effort to help bridge this divide – to advance scholarly excellence and expand access to chronically underrepresented voices – Brown University Library organized Born-Digital Scholarly Publishing: Resources and Roadmaps, an NEH Institute on Advanced Topics in the Digital Humanities. The three-week national training program, which took place in July 2022, equipped 15 scholars from less-resourced institutions – 60% from HBCUs – with in-depth knowledge of the digital publishing process. Such training can play a critical role in advancing authors' plans, but significant challenges remain for faculty with heavy teaching loads and other institutional circumstances that might impede progress.

As a critical next step, Brown University Library proposes a multi-year training and support program that focuses on library professionals and develops expertise in born-digital content development. This expansive approach will build capacity at HBCU libraries while providing extended author support over the full lifecycle of their digital project.

Brown University Library is uniquely positioned to implement this program. Launched with generous support from the Mellon Foundation, with additional funding from the NEH, Brown University Digital Publications – widely recognized as accessible, intentional, and inclusive – is helping to set the standards for the future of scholarship in the digital age via its novel, university-based approach to digital content development. Further, the HBCU Library Alliance has established a formal partnership with Brown University Library, welcoming Brown into its community of practice as its first invited, non-HBCU affiliate member. For the last three years, Brown has served as a host site for the HBCU Library Alliance Conservation / Preservation Internship Program, and with the support of an LB21 planning grant, the partnership is currently in the midst of running the joint Stronger Together, Excellence in Library Leadership Program. The proposed collaboration supports training the library and archival workforce in born-digital content development in the service of diversifying digital publishing and advancing HBCU scholarship. This multi-pronged intervention addresses equity issues endemic to the academic publishing ecosystem by establishing models for enhanced support for HBCU faculty to enrich and expand scholarly discourse through their contributions.

Project Work Plan: The following structure has been guided by in-depth, on-going consultation with HBCU Library Alliance Executive Director Sandra Phoenix and Board Chair Tiwanna Nevels:
– A 5-person steering committee will advise on all aspects of implementation over the three-year grant period (August 2023-July 2026). Formation of the committee is underway and will include Sylvia Carey-Butler, Vice President for Institutional Equity and Diversity at Brown; Kenvi Phillips, Director of Library Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Brown; 2 HBCU Library Alliance leaders (to be named); 1 library-based scholarly communications expert with a demonstrated commitment to equitable access (expert/institution to be named). Allison Levy, Director of Brown University Digital Publications and PI, will serve as an ex-officio member. The committee will meet virtually twice a year.
– Four HBCUs will participate in the program, involving 1 library professional + 1 faculty author per institution. Invited institutions will have sufficient capacity to allow one staff member to take on a three-year training program; institutional technology investment via digitization programs such as CLIR/Digitizing Hidden Collections: Amplifying Unheard Voices, LYRASIS/HBCU Preservation Project, or NEH/Humanities Initiatives at Historically Black Colleges and Universities; faculty with an expressed interest in pursuing a born-digital publication, preferably with significant planning already underway. Assessment of eligible institutions/faculty, informed by the makeup of the NEH Institute 2022 cohort, has begun.

– A leading university press with a demonstrated commitment to issues of equity, diversity, and social justice will collaborate with Brown to mentor the cohort, and will commit to publishing the HBCU-generated scholarship developed as part of the program. The press (to be named) will publish in a wide range of humanities and social science disciplines and will boast a global distribution program. It will have demonstrated capabilities for supporting born-digital works. The selection process will draw on Brown University Digital Publishing's past experiences and ongoing conversations with presses to develop new collaborative models for publishing born-digital, enhanced open access scholarship in ways both scalable and sustainable.

Training will take place virtually via highly structured monthly modules and in-person via multi-directional annual site visits. The modules, building on Brown's NEH Institute experience, will cover genre, scope, audience, workflow, documentation, multimedia assets, integrated narrative, reader agency, metadata, alt text, copyright/fair use, and contracts, among other topics. In addition to developing project planning and management skills, the modules will address ways to keep authors on track, opportunities to train and mentor students, and the importance of collaboration and community-building. The modules will be taught by PI Levy with support from a senior acquiring editor at the selected university press. As Director of Brown University Digital Publications, Levy has over five years' experience working with faculty authors – including, as Project Director of the NEH Institute, HBCU faculty – to develop born-digital publications. At the industry level, she has advanced conversations around the development, evaluation, and dissemination of born-digital scholarship as well as the necessity of extended author support and inclusivity. In addition to monthly training modules, communication channels via email, Slack, and Google Drive will be established for frequent, direct guidance. Conference presentations by the cohort, at Library Publishing Forum and Association of University Presses, for example, as well as a designated website will facilitate discoverability of the work of the cross-organizational partnership by the broader library and publishing communities.

Implementation: <u>Year 1</u>: convene steering committee; confirm participating institutions; commence training/project development; cohort travels to Brown. <u>Year 2</u>: mid-program evaluation and consult; continue training/project development; PI and AE travel to HBCUs; LPF conference presentation. <u>Year 3</u>: final-year program evaluation and consult; continue training/project development; cohort travels to press; AUPresses conference presentation.

Diversity Plan: A commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion undergirds every aspect of "Advancing HBCU Scholarship, Diversifying Digital Publishing," which has been designed to provide robust training and support to HBCU library professionals, faculty, and students in order to increase the visibility and reach of HBCU-generated scholarship. This commitment is underscored by the makeup of the steering committee, which will include diverse voices from the HBCU Library Alliance and Brown's Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity to advise at all stages of implementation. The press partner will share this commitment as demonstrated by its backlist and forthcoming titles, strategies for equitable access, and ongoing evaluation of its practices. It will develop an innovative and robust marketing and publicity campaign for the HBCU series.

Project Results: At the close of the three-year program, four HBCU library professionals will have gained expertise in born-digital content development via rigorous training tied directly to publication projects authored by a member of their faculty. Projects will be published or advanced to publication-readiness over the course of the grant cycle. Via an open access publishing model, excellent scholarship by HBCU faculty will be disseminated to the broadest possible audience for the greatest possible impact.

Equipped with an expanded network of library digital experts and university press editors developed via conference attendance and participation, cohort members, as newly trained library-based digital scholarship editors, will be prepared to grow a portfolio of born-digital publications at their own institutions as well as at regional HBCUs. HBCU students involved in the work will gain experiences and training relevant for a wide range of careers where knowledge and skills with digital media are central.

"Advancing HBCU Scholarship, Diversifying Digital Publishing" will have a broad impact beyond these four institutions. The proposed partnership between a predominantly white R1 university library, a consortium of HBCU libraries, and a leading university press will nucleate networks of HBCU content generators/facilitators and publishers; produce outstanding scholarship that, without the developmental investment and enhanced visibility, might not have had the same kind of impact on the academy; and promote a broader array of scholarly thinkers and research programs to help shape scholarly discourse going forward.

Budget Summary: The $249,999 budget will support 1) <u>Stipends</u> for librarians: $80,000 ($20,000 x 4); authors: $40,000 ($10,000 x 4); students: $40,000 ($10,000 x 4 institutions); steering committee members: $6750 ($750 per person per year x 3); and one acquiring editor/AE: $3000 ($1,000 per year); 2) <u>Travel for Site Visits</u> for librarians, PI, and AE ($36,000); 3) <u>Conference Registration and Travel</u> for librarians and AE ($12,500); 4) <u>Publishing Costs</u> ($20,800.39). Total direct costs: $239,050.39; indirect costs: $10,948.61). PI Levy's conference registration and travel will be covered by Brown. Steering committee members from Brown are not eligible to receive a stipend.