**Focus Group Discussion Guide**

***CREATING ACCESS TO HBCU LIBRARY ALLIANCE ARCHIVES:***

***NEEDS, CAPACITY, AND TECHNICAL PLANNING***

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Prepared on behalf of the partnership between the HBCU Library Alliance and the Council on Library and Information Resources

by Sharon Ferguson Freeman



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**Overview:** This focus group discussion guide is designed specifically to elicit responses from HBCU Library Association deans and directors regarding their archives and special collections. The intent of the focus group sessions is to build consensus around and articulate common values, priorities, and needs for describing and managing special and archival collections for the HBCU Library community. It is anticipated that these discussions will provide a better understanding of the significance of institutional archives and related needs and aspirations at HBCU libraries.

**Participants:** The participants in this focus group will be deans and directors of libraries in the HBCU Library community.

**Pre-Focus Group Work:**

Participant Identification: The Executive Director of the HBCU Library Alliance will contact deans and directors from HBCU libraries to identify individuals interested in participating in the focus group sessions.

Scheduling of Focus Group Sessions: The Focus Group Facilitator has compiled a list of dates below from which participants can choose. Sessions are available on Wednesdays and Thursdays during the months of May and June 2021 with options for morning and afternoon sessions.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **May 2021 Dates** | **Days** | **Times** |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| 5-May-21 | Wednesday | 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. CST |  |
| 6-May-21 | Thursday | 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. CST |  |
| 12-May-21 | Wednesday | 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. CST |  |
| 13-May-21 | Thursday | 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. CST |  |
| 19-May-21 | Wednesday | 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. CST |  |
| 20-May-21 | Thursday | 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. CST |  |
| 26-May-21 | Wednesday | 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. CST |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **June 2021 Dates** | **Days** | **Times** |
| 9-Jun-21 | Wednesday | 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. CST |
| 10-Jun-21 | Thursday | 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. CST |
| 16-Jun-21 | Wednesday | 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. CST |
| 17-Jun-21 | Thursday | 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. CST |
| 30-Jun-21 | Wednesday | 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. CST |

Formal Invitations to Participate: Formal invitations to participate in focus group sessions will be emailed to each participant. The invitation will include a welcome message, the agreed upon date of the focus group session, a statement regarding electronic consent forms, and a hyperlink to the assigned Zoom meeting. Consent forms (Appendix A) will be emailed to each participant individually and should be signed electronically. As each session approaches, a reminder will be sent via email one week prior and one day prior to the session date. The reminder will include additional details and directions for accessing the meeting using a Zoom hyperlink.

**Welcome:**

*Good morning/afternoon and welcome to this focus group session. My name is <Dr. Sharon Freeman>. I am the Focus Group Facilitator, and I will be conducting today’s session. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this very important and timely discussion.*

*Please oblige me for a few moments while I cover some information that will be important for today’s session. I apologize in advance for reading this prepared material, but I did want to make sure that every group receives the same information and is operating from the same level of understanding.*

*The whole reason why we’re here today is because the HBCU Library Alliance, in partnership with the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), is steering this initiative in order to gain a better understanding of issues that are common, and perhaps even different, about your values, priorities, and needs for managing special collections and archives.*

*The HBCU Library Alliance and CLIR understand that HBCUs are the primary stewards of many cultural and historical records from the African American experience. Your libraries have a long-standing tradition of developing these collections and they are undoubtedly instrumental to research, teaching, and creative works that document the African American experience. Keeping that in mind, today we will allow you to share your thoughts and ideas about the significance of your archives and special collections and your related needs and aspirations.*

**Consent Process:**

*Prior to today’s session, each of you should have received and signed a consent form (Appendix A). If you have not signed a consent form you may quickly do so by clicking on the link* [*https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/N32BL2K*](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/N32BL2K) *in the Chat Box.*

*The consent form outlines the purpose, procedures, risks, use of information, confidentiality, and your rights as a participant in this focus group. Because you have already read and consented to participating in this focus group, today I will only review major components of the consent form as a reminder, and as an opportunity for you to opt out of this process if you choose to do so. With that said, the signed consent form indicates the following:*

* *There are no risks involved in participating in this study.*
* *There are no costs, benefits, nor compensation for your participation in this study.*
* *The information you provide will be kept securely and confidentially and will only be reported in aggregate or in coded form.*
* *You do not waive any of your legal rights by choosing to be in this study.*
* *You are participating as a volunteer and you can stop participating at any time.*

*If you have any questions about the consent process, I can be reached outside this session at <**dr.sharonfreeman@gmail.com* *or 662-299-7825.>*

**About this Focus Group:**

*Next, I would like to share with you a little information about this focus group. Your group is one out of approximately 10 focus groups who will be participating in this process. All focus groups consist of deans and directors, and perhaps other library professionals from HBCU libraries. Our aim is to have enough representation across these focus groups to gain a comprehensive understanding about your values, priorities, and needs for describing and managing special and archival collections.*

*This focus group session will last approximately 90 minutes.*

**Ground Rules:**

*In terms of ground rules, I ask you to remember the following guidelines as I pose questions to the group.*

* *You are the experts, so we want to hear from you.*
* *We would like for everyone to participate.*
* *It is okay to abstain from discussing topics if you are uncomfortable.*
* *There are no right or wrong answers.*
* *It is okay to have different viewpoints and opinions. We are not trying to achieve consensus. We are trying to gain a better understanding of your viewpoints.*
* *What we say in this focus group is confidential so help us protect everyone’s privacy. We want everyone to feel comfortable when speaking about sensitive topics.*
* *Again, participation is voluntary and you may choose to stop at any time.*

**Session Logistics:**

*Next, I have a few logistics to discuss before we get started.*

* *If you prefer not to be video-recorded, please disable your web cameras now. You will continue to be audio recorded for transcription and reporting purposes.*
* *Make sure your microphones are unmuted before speaking. If you anticipate outside noise or conversations that would distract other participants, please keep your microphone muted until you would like to speak.*
* *When I ask a question anyone who would like to respond can start by unmuting their microphone and speaking. To keep the process smooth and orderly, subsequent responders can join in like a natural conversation or you can click the “raise hand” option under the “reactions” icon to be recognized. Otherwise, I will ask for responses in the order I see participants on the screen.*
* *Please speak up and speak clearly so that your responses can be fully understood and recorded accurately. I may ask you to repeat your response if it is unclear.*

*At this time, do you have any questions for me?*

<Answer any questions>

*Okay, great let’s get started!*

**Introductions and Ice Breaker:**

*First, let’s start with a combined introduction and ice breaker. You may tell us as much or as little as you feel comfortable telling us. After you provide your name, tell us …*

*I’ll go first. My name is <Sharon Freeman>. I have over 20 years of experience working in higher education, mostly in institutional research and the area of data collection and analysis. Interestingly enough, I started out in higher education working in the library as a systems analyst, then went on to work in computer support, and finally in Institutional Research. <Ice breaker response>*

*Who would like to go next?*

<Allow participant introductions and ice breaker responses>

*<The facilitator will select one of the following>*

* *If you could have any new skill instantly what would you choose?*
* *Tell me, what do you think is your “superpower” and why? Then, tell me what you think is your kryptonite?*
* *If money were no object, where would be the first place you would travel?*
* *If money were no object, what would be the first thing you would buy?*
* *If you could have any one fictional person as your best friend, who would it be?*
* *If you could have any one famous person as your best friend, who would it be?*

<Allow participant responses>

*Great! Nice to meet everyone and again welcome to the focus group on creating access to HBCU library archives. Those were really interesting responses! Thank you for sharing that with us. Now, I hope we all feel a little more relaxed and open to sharing our thoughts and experiences.*

**Focus Group Questions:**

*Let’s get started with our first question.*

<It is anticipated that the responses to many questions will tend to overlap with responses of prior questions. In cases where the topic has already been discussed, a question does not need to be repeated unless it contains an aspect not covered in a previous question. Probing questions may be asked if it is determined that the primary questions have not elicited enough information.>

Description and Significance of Archives and Special Collections

**Primary question 1:** *Considering the content of your archives and special collections, what do you think is their significance for your institution?*

**Probing question 1a:** *What is their significance outside of your institution?*

Management and Capacity

**Primary question 2:** *Are there enough institutional resources to effectively maintain and manage your archives and special collections?*

**Probing question 3:**  *What are the strongest and weakest aspects of your archives and special collections?*

Values

**Primary Question 3:** *\*Do you and the administration at your institution share the same values related to archives and special collections?*

**Probing Question 3a:** *Does your library have a mission statement, goals and/or objectives that include expectations for archives and special collections?*

Priorities, Needs, and Aspirations

**Primary Question 4:** *If funding were available, what would be your highest priority as it relates to your archives and special collections?*

**Probing Question 4a:** *What would you say are the greatest aspirations, beyond basic needs, for your archives and special collections?*

**Probing Question 4b:** *\*Do you anticipate your institution will invest more, or less, in digitizing archives and special collections over the coming years?*

COVID-19 Impact

**Primary Question 5:** What do you anticipate will be the greatest impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on archives and special collections at your institution?

***Probing Question 5a:*** *What would you say is the general outlook for archives and special collections over the coming years?*

\*Comparative information is available from the ITHAKA Library Survey.

Additional Questions

**Primary Question 6:** Is there anything about archives and special collections that you think administrators, the HBCU Library Alliance and CLIR (as representative and support groups) should know that we have not discussed today?

**Primary Question 7:** What are the most important things that can be taken away from this focus group as it relates to your discussion?

**Session Closure:**

*This concludes our focus group session. I sincerely appreciate each and every one of you for participating today. We recognize the experience and insight you have brought into this conversation, and we know it will help us gain a better understanding of your needs, values, and priorities as they relate to archives and special collections. I look forward to compiling all the information from this group and other groups into a report that can be used to inform decisions about library archives and special collections. It was very nice meeting all of you. Again, thank you, and enjoy the rest of your day.*