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

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

#

#

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

by

Dr. Portia D. Hopkins

CLIR/DLF Postdoctoral Research Associate in Data Curation for African American Studies

Rice University

Houston, Texas

Dr. Synatra A. Smith

CLIR/DLF Postdoctoral Fellow in Data Curation for African American Studies

Philadelphia Museum of Art Library and Archives

Temple University Libraries Loretta C. Duckworth Scholars Studio

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

​​

Each interview session will be unique. The following is an outline (not a script) to help guide you through the conversation. Tailor the questions as you and the participant see fit.

Ideally, four contacts per institution will be interviewed in the following capacities:

1. One person responsible for archival collections (e.g. institutional archivist)
2. One person responsible for the technical infrastructure that supports discovery (e.g. systems librarian)
3. One person responsible for IT support and training (e.g. IT support specialist)
4. One faculty member or graduate student who is using the archive for teaching and/or research

**Pre-Interview Information for Zoom Recordings**

* Reach out to the participant before the interview to go over technology requirements for the interview. Participants will need a computer or smartphone to participate in the interview. If these options are not available, participants can use a landline or cell phone to dial into the zoom interview.
* Once technology requirements are established, inform the participant that a quiet location with minimal background noises and possible distractions will optimize the recording.
* Remind the participant that they want to choose a well-lit area for their session. A floor or table lamp will work well so long as it does not create split lighting on the face. Overhead lighting by itself can look bad, like an interrogation room. If the narrator’s camera is facing a window, close the blinds or find another spot if the narrator is too much in silhouette. The best rule of thumb is to make sure the light source is in front of you, not behind you.
* While ringing phones or chirps from app notifications can be edited out, advise the participant to silence their phones during the interview.

**Participant Questions**

* [**Ice Breaker**](https://museumhack.com/list-icebreakers-questions/) **(all, pre-recording) + Permission**
	+ Select an ice breaker from the list linked in the header.
	+ Address any questions regarding informed consent.
	+ Do I have permission to record this interview?
* **Introduction (all, begin recording)**
	+ Begin the recording by stating the participant’s name and organizational affiliation, the interviewer’s full name, the date and the general location in which the interview is being conducted (i.e. which platform).
	+ What is your title at your institution? How long have you been in this position? What are your general duties in this position? What training have you completed?
	+ Where is your position housed? Are you in a specific department within the library or another division altogether?
	+ Do you directly work with any other staff in your role at the library? What is their training?
* **Rare and Unique Materials Held at the Institution (institutional archivist)**
	+ Is there a collections policy for rare and unique material managed in the library?
		- If so, what does this policy or other documentation say about the scope (topic and material type) of the rare and unique content managed by the library?
		- Describe the types of records, topics, and areas of interest your library collects. Include information surrounding people, subjects, timeframes, and geographic areas.
	+ Who are your user communities and how do they access your archive?
	+ What are the earliest and latest creation dates (roughly) of the records in your archive?
	+ How are the records in your library’s archive acquired? How do you all decide which records to acquire?
	+ Do you accept born digital content? How do you ingest it, store it, and expose users to it?
	+ Are you solely responsible for the preservation, processing, and/or management of your records?
		- If not, who else is involved and what are their roles?
		- What are your specific responsibilities?
	+ What percentage of your budget is allocated for acquisition? Digitization? Preservation of rare materials?
	+ What is your library’s accessioning workflow?
	+ What are the procedures to deaccession materials from your library’s archive?
	+ What are the procedures surrounding protecting archival records in the case of natural disasters?
		- How do you dispose of records that have been ruined as a result of a natural disaster?
	+ What are your loan procedures?
	+ How often does the library advertise/highlight new acquisitions or what efforts are made to renew interest in current collections (or maybe collections that reflect the current socio-historical moment?)
	+ Does your institution offer travel grants for researchers to access non-digitized archival materials?
	+ Do you track researchers who have published reports using records from your institution? If so, how often is it updated?
	+ What is the turnaround time for the digitization of non-digitized archival materials when requested by a researcher?
	+ How does the library’s mission/vision align with the university’s strategic plan, ideologically, operatively, or both?
		- Beyond financial resources, in what ways could the university advance the library’s mission/vision?
		- Are there obstacles, bureaucratic or otherwise, that impact your library’s initiatives?
* **Technical Systems and Standards Used to Provide Access (systems librarian)**
	+ What challenges does your library have regarding maintaining a reliable and trustworthy repository with long-term access?
	+ Does digitization happen within the institution or do you use a vendor to provide that service?
		- To date, what percentage of your collections are digitized?
		- How do you manage/store your digitized assets? How do you make them available/expose them to users?
		- Do you use a digital asset management system like CONTENTdm, Preservica, Archivematica, Samvera, or any other local or regional system to store/manage your digitized assets?
		- Do you have dedicated staff to work with digitized collections or are projects grant funded?
	+ What are your institution’s preservation and access procedures according to the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) process?
		- Ingest/transfer with Submission Information Packet (SIP)
			* What is included in your SIP?
		- Archival Information Packet (AIP) and packaging procedures and tools
			* Content information
			* Preservation description information (PDI; preservation metadata)
		- Descriptive information (stored separately from AIP)
			* Do you use the Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS) manual, Dublin Core, METS, PREMIS, or some other standard to guide your metadata collection procedures?
		- Dissemination Information Packet (DIP)
			* What is included in your DIP?
	+ How do you store processing/preservation and appraisal notes?
* **IT Support and Technical Capacity Among Library Staff (systems librarian; IT support specialist)**
	+ What hardware and software do you use to support digitization of your collections (scanning, reformatting, etc.)?
	+ What software or systems do you use for:
		- Organizing and managing digitized content
		- Describing digital content
		- Making digital content available to users for searching and access
		- Performing digital preservation activities (fixity checks, file storage, etc.)
	+ What software or systems do you use for:
		- Accessioning and arranging physical collections
		- Describing physical collections
		- Making information about physical collections searchable for end users
		- Managing requests for physical materials
	+ What staffing do you have for:
		- Performing the above activities
		- Hardware/software maintenance and technical support for the above systems
	+ What funding do you have to:
		- Support subscription and/or purchase costs for the above systems and related equipment
		- Support hardware/software maintenance & upgrades for above systems
	+ Are you a member of a group or consortium that provides access to or support for any of the above systems?
	+ How do you evaluate user experience?
		- User research: focus groups, stakeholder interviews, task analysis, persona
		- Design: content inventory, card sort, use case, wireframes, prototypes
		- Usability inspection/testing: cognitive walkthrough, think aloud session, analytics, satisfaction survey, feedback collected via form or ticketing system
	+ In what ways has the user experience evaluation data impacted changes to improve UX?
* **Researcher Needs and Support (researcher/grad student)**
	+ What are the primary research questions you are seeking to explore using your library’s archive?
		- Have you been able to have any major successes and/or challenges discovering data to answer those research questions?
	+ What type of data do you need to access in order to conduct your research and how do you access it?
	+ What resources are available to you as a researcher at the library (travel grants, special hours accommodations etc.)?
	+ When requesting the digitization of non-digitized sources, what is the estimated turnaround time for delivery?
	+ On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being excellent, what would you rate the usability of the catalog’s metadata/discovery portal, finding aids, LibGuides at the library?
	+ What challenges do you face in conducting your research at the library?
	+ What advantages do you perceive in conducting your research at the library?
	+ Do you plan to or have you already published using the data collected from the library? Are you aware of the institution tracking those who have published using their archival records?
* **Wrap-Up (all)**
	+ If funding were available, what would be your highest priority as it relates to your archives and special collections?
		- What would you say are the greatest aspirations, beyond basic needs, for your archives and special collections?
		- Do you anticipate your institution will invest more or less in digitizing archives and special collections over the coming years?
	+ (FOR RESEARCHERS) What can the library implement to improve its visibility to other researchers and/or improve access to archival records?
	+ (FOR RESEARCHERS) What types of records would you like to see the library acquire that would be beneficial to your research and that of your colleagues?
	+ Is there anything else you’d like to add that we haven’t already covered?
	+ Inform participants that they will receive the transcript and will have two weeks to review and suggest any edits.
	+ Confidentiality reminder.