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Against the Grain

"Linking Publishers, Vendors and Librarians"

Preserving History and Demonstrating Library Excellence at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

by **Shanesha R. F. Brooks-Tatum** (Project Coordinator/Writer, HBCU Library Alliance, 1438 West Peachtree Street NW, Suite 200, Atlanta, GA 30309) <sbrooks-tatum@hbculibraries.org>

The success stories of the more than 100 participating Historically Black Colleges and Universities' libraries involving nearly 300,000 students in 22 states are being captured through the Atlanta-based **Historically Black Colleges and University (HBCU) Library Alliance's** "Preserving Our History" project. The two-year effort is funded by a $70,000 grant from the **Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**, the first grant awarded directly to **Alliance** in January 2011. The goal is to document and disseminate the **Alliance's** history, highlight member success stories, contribute to the literature about libraries and **HBCUs**, and provide a model of collaboration for other libraries, particularly in Africa and the Caribbean.

The **HBCU Library Alliance**, the center for academic library growth and reflection, was established in 2002 with support from **LYRASIS**, then **SOLINET**, and has continued to provide an array of training and development opportunities for member institutions, including photographic preservation, reports, assessments, and leadership workshops.

The project involves nine success stories. We will focus in detail on seven: **Claflin University** (Orangeburg, SC); **Delaware State University** (Dover); **Fayetteville State University** (NC); **Savannah State University** (GA); **Southern University and A&M College** (Baton Rouge, LA); **University of Maryland Eastern Shore** (Princess Anne); and **Virginia State University** (Petersburg). The other two stories feature the **Atlanta University Center** and the **University of the Virgin Islands**, and are printed in the January/February 2012 edition of *American Libraries*.

For more information, visit *hbculibraries. org*. 🐟

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Claflin University Implements Successful Information Literacy Program

by **Shanesha R. F. Brooks-Tatum** (Project Coordinator/Writer, HBCU Library Alliance) <sbrooks-tatum@hbculibraries.org>

Claflin University serves 1,900 students in Orangeburg, South Carolina. Founded in 1869, the University is affiliated with the **United Methodist Church** and is the oldest Historically Black College or University in South Carolina. Named after the university's sixth president, the **H.V. Manning Library** officially opened on December 3, 1967, and it was fully renovated in 2001-2002. It attends to the educational, occupational, and research needs of a small but diverse student and faculty population. The Library's mission is to support and supplement teaching and learning throughout the University.

Claflin University's archives have doubled in size since it opened, and the Library now houses smart technology, including an interactive projection display with a white board, podium, and wireless technology. In 2010, through the **HBCU Library Alliance/ASERL** Librarian Exchange Program, the Library implemented an information literacy program. As an exchange librarian at **East Carolina University** in Greenville, North Carolina, **Claflin University** Librarian **Morgan Montgomery** gained the skills and knowledge to design the Library's Information Literary Program, a series of standard informa-

how to create subject guides using LibGuides and how to use Skype when delivering virtual reference services.

According to **Montgomery**, it was imperative that she take a multifaceted approach and be informed about various teaching methodologies because students learn in different ways. She recommends conducting a literature review to find out what components of information literacy to teach and how to construct proper student learning outcomes when designing an information literacy lesson plan.

Outreach has been the key to the successful implementation of the **H.V. Manning Library** information literacy program. A handout and information sessions at faculty meetings highlight the resources available in the **H.V. Manning Library**. Faculty members collaborate with the Library and create subject-specific assignments for students to better utilize the Library's resources. For example, **Montgomery** was a guest lecturer on the issue of "Banned Books and Freedom of Speech" for an Introduction to Mass Communications class.

"Teamwork is the key to ensuring the **H.V. Manning Library's** continued success in working with students, staff, and faculty," **Montgomery** explained. "The Library staff is what makes our library a success. The cross-training project that the staff participated in through the **HBCU Library Alliance** has ensured that staff members are prepared to respond to the needs of our patrons," added **Marilyn Y. Gibbs**, Library Director.

Because of the successful implementation of this information literacy program, a campus plan was approved and implemented in 2010, which aims to improve information literacy and increase knowledge of research methods. The campus plan, titled "Enhancing Quality Reference, Research and Services: The Evolution of the Reference and Research Center of Excellence in the H.V. Manning Library," will create a new information literacy librarian position and research, resources, and services to maintain and enhance the reference department.

University president, **Dr. Henry N. Tisdale** and Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs, **Dr. Vermelle Johnson** have been supportive of library innovation and programming. The success of this project is reflected not only by the University's willingness to provide additional personnel and resources, but also by the increased number of information literacy

Ms. Morgan Montgomery, Reference Librarian, Claflin University, and Mrs. Amy Gustavson, Instructional Services Coordinator, Joyner Library East Carolina University, discussing information literacy issues. Photo © Ms. Morgan Montgomery.

classes that were scheduled this academic year as compared to previous years.

The campus plan has been in effect only a year, but the results to date are positive and promising. Information literacy sessions have increased from 21 sessions serving 300 students and faculty in 2009 to 66 sessions serving 1,605 participants from January 2010 to August 2011. Feedback from students has been positive. In anonymous surveys, students reported that they felt comfortable navigating the databases. One participant stated, "I have taken this 'research presentation' before, but I still learned something new today." Another stated, "Learning how to use the Library's Website to look up information about my essay was most useful." Several faculty members have written letters thanking the **H.V. Manning Library** for providing this service.

Montgomery suggests the following methods for library improvements:

1. Reach out. Contact local **HBCUs**, colleges, or universities in your area to gain insight on how they made their programs work.

2. Write the vision. Create a vision statement to summarize the aim of your information literacy program.

Ms. Marilyn Y. Gibbs, Library Director, Claflin University, and Ms. Sandra Phoenix, Executive Director, HBCU Library Alliance, on the steps of the Claflin University's H.V. Manning Library from the December 2009 site visit. Photo © The HBCU Library Alliance.

tion literacy classes for freshman, upper-level, and thesis-level research. **Montgomery** learned lesson planning, assessment, effective presentation skills, and teaching methodologies that address various learning styles. She learned

3. Define your student learning outcomes. What is the focus of your lesson? What key points do you want your students to take away? Incorporate an activity that summarizes what you have taught.

4. Network. Partner with faculty and staff members on your campus. Having people onboard makes it easier to get the message out. This semester faculty members specifically asked their students to stop by the library if they have questions. This has helped students become more comfortable asking for help.

Montgomery shared that she has been affected by the information literacy program personally and professionally: "My definition of information literacy has been enhanced," she reflects. "I believe, aside from teaching students how to locate, evaluate, and utilize information, you must make the entire process relevant. By engaging students in discussions, various instruction methods, utilizing assessment tools, and connecting the process to real life experiences, the students will be able to see the big picture."

For more information about the **H.V. Manning Library**, visit *http://www.claflin.edu/library/index.asp*. 🏃

Mrs. Bernestine Haynes, Library Assistant (Serials Department), and Mrs. Mamie Huggins, Library Assistant (Technical Services), engaging in cross-training. Photo © Ms. Marilyn Y. Gibbs.

Delaware State University Guides Patrons into More Effective Research with Standardized LibGuides

by **Shanesha R. F. Brooks-Tatum** (Project Coordinator/Writer, HBCU Library Alliance) <sbrooks-tatum@hbculibraries.org>

Delaware State University serves nearly 4,000 students on its 400-acre campus. The oldest building on campus is Loockerman Hall, a restored national historic landmark from the 1700s that once served as the center of campus. In 1971, the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places by the **National Park Service**. Loockerman Hall functioned as the center of resources for the then "Delaware College for Colored Students" and as a guide and a haven to slaves traveling the Underground Railroad. Today at **Delaware State University's William C. Jason Library**, innovative LibGuides, or library guides, are the central resources for student and faculty research.

LibGuides are electronic guides for subject-specific resources. **Mr. Jéan M. Charlot**, Systems/Library Technology Officer, explained that prior to developing LibGuides, the library used subject guides, which were separate Web pages linked to the library's Website. The subject guides provided limited information and were not easy to update and expand, since not all librarians had access to the Web design software. Librarians at the reference desk were inundated with questions and inquiries from students and faculty. "Since we have a small staff, it was challenging for us to quickly and effectively address all of the questions that we were getting," **Charlot** reflected. The library staff set about securing Title III funding to create LibGuides.

Beverly Charlot, Coordinator of Technical Services, created a "one-stop-shop" LibGuide for students to use. With very specific subject headings, searchable eBooks, and a new database tab, students who do not have specific questions or who are trying to figure out the direction of their research projects can browse and get a sense of what is available.

A Meebo chat system and an interlibrary loan form are embedded into several of the LibGuides, so that students have even more immediate access to librarians and the ability to quickly request items not offered by Delaware State. The

Shown above: Librarian Beverly Charlot leads an instruction session. Below: Students use computers at terminal near the library front entrance.

The front entrance to the William C. Jason Library. All photos included with this article are courtesy of Delaware State University.

library's interlibrary loan statistics show that in 2010, there were 759 requests. As of October 2011, there have been 870 requests, a nearly 15 percent increase, not including the remainder of the year.

"LibGuides must be in line with course curricula," **Charlot** explained. **Gretchen Starling** explained that many courses are taught from LibGuides: "No matter what course it is, LibGuides make it easy to show students what resources are available, and it is something that they can easily come back to on their own time." Some LibGuide material is specific to certain audiences, such as the New Student Orientation pages, whereas other guides (such as **Ronald Davis's** "Going Green" LibGuide) are used by individuals all over the world. "It's something that offers a different and contemporary perspective on world issues," stated **Davis**.

Library staff keeps statistics on which LibGuides are used most. The top ten LibGuides are advertised on the main library Website. LibGuides direct students to general areas while staff members search for specialized information to address their queries. "Often, students will find the answers that they are looking for in the LibGuides, which enables us to move on and help other patrons," **Mr. Charlot** explained.

Librarian Ronald Davis assists a student.

LibGuides are not only a way to address short staffing, but also a way to standardize messaging to patrons. "Through LibGuides, we are able to be consistent with our communications," explained **Dr. Rebecca Batson**, Library Dean. Recently, the library staff has been focused on streamlining pages and standardizing them to make sure that they fit the library's mission. "Our mission is to increase student access, and one way to increase student access is through standardization," said **Charlot**. Library staff engage in LibGuide quality control not only by standardizing the information offered in each guide, but also by unpublishing LibGuides that do not get many hits and by addressing data from feedback forms and surveys.

How does **Jason Library** ensure consistent and accurate messaging? LibGuides are reviewed every semester by librarians to ensure accuracy. Librarians continue to revise them to ensure that the most up-to-date information is publicized. Every semester, the staff runs an in-depth report on the LibGuides that assesses their needs for new ones.

Additionally, new librarians are trained in using and creating LibGuides. "We want to make sure that there is consistency across the LibGuides, even though they refer students to different resources. We also refer to other institutions' LibGuides as we market and create our unique LibGuide branding," explained **Mr. Charlot**.

LibGuides have been especially useful for the satellite campuses (in Wilmington and Georgetown), online students residing in other countries, and students working late at night from their dorm rooms. "We include interactive videos on most of our LibGuides, which explain how to use a database. Students can have private tutorials even at 2:00 a.m.," **Rosamond Panda**, Reference and Public Services Librarian, explained.

What librarians like about LibGuides is the flexibility. The system allows them to update guides on their own time. Variations within standardizations reflect the different personalities of instructors. Some librarians create and upload humorous tutorial videos with skits and jokes that entertain while instructing viewers. **Sarah Katz**, a new librarian, is focused on making her LibGuides user-friendly by including an overview on the first page and linking to LibGuides in other subject areas.

"LibGuides do not take the place of person-to-person contact," **Charlot** noted. The system acts as a funnel to bring students into the library. Students are often asked to come into the library to address questions that are more detailed. LibGuides enable librarians to dedicate more time to answering higher-level, more rigorous questions. They assist students and faculty in obtaining gateway information more quickly so that they have more time and resources to produce quality work.

LibGuides not only assist in instruction but also provide an outreach tool to help publicize each subject area with which librarians can assist. **Mr. Charlot** explained: "LibGuides also help bring patrons into the library for print resources that they see on the LibGuides. They bring a whole new group of library users."

To learn more, visit *http://www.desu.edu/library*.

Fayetteville State University Preserves History While Collaborating With Faculty and Students

by **Shanesha R. F. Brooks-Tatum** (Project Coordinator/Writer, HBCU Library Alliance) <sbrooks-tatum@hbculibraries.org>

Fayetteville State University is the second-oldest bachelor's and master's degree-granting institution in the **University of North Carolina System**. It was founded in 1867 as the **Howard School** for the education of African Americans, the forerunner institution of **Fayetteville State University**. Now serving over 6,000 students, this North Carolina campus is undergoing a $38-million campus construction campaign to meet the growing demands of southeastern North Carolina.

The University's library bears the name of **Charles W. Chesnutt** (1858-1932), successful African American novelist and the second principal of the **Howard School**. The Library's archives and special collections department recently took on the challenge of preserving the history of its **Chesnutt** papers and other valuable collections.

Library staff identified several needs, which included preserving rapidly-deteriorating antique documents (some more than 120 years old) and making the collections more accessible. "It is one thing to preserve and quite another to make collections accessible," **Bobby Wynn**, Director of Library Services stated.

With initial funding from the **HBCU Library Alliance Mellon Foundation** grant, the Library began its archival preservation efforts in 2008. Projects needing immediate attention were identified through a **Lyrasis**

Photo of E. E. Smith.

needs assessment survey. These included preserving scrapbooks in the **Rudolph Jones Collection**, historical photographs from the **Charles W. Chesnutt** family collection, and key documents of institutional history.

The needs assessment survey also confirmed the staff's concerns about environmental conditions within the department, which posed an ongoing threat to the integrity and endurance of materials housed within the department. Despite the high demand, library visitors and researchers could not access the materials until the necessary preservation work had been completed.

The environmental monitoring project was successfully completed through cooperation with the **Image Permanence Institute (IPI)**. Campus facilities personnel used **IPI** data to target the climate-related problems in the archives and ensure their conformity to the accepted archival standards.

Also, library staff developed a system of prioritizing which documents would be digitized. "It is extremely important that libraries evaluate the collections they have based on a set of criteria. Our criteria included historical importance, level of usage, physical condition, level of arrangement, and size. We gave each of these criteria a numerical value," remarked **Craig Tuttle**, University Archivist.

Evaluation criteria enabled the Library not only to prioritize, but also to adjust the preservation and digitization schedule to fit changes at the Library. Before **Craig Tuttle** was hired as university archivist, the Library did not have an archivist on staff, since the position was vacant for almost a year. **University of Delaware** professionals and other consultants trained staff in preservation and digitization. Students were trained to assist with the project and consequently, exposed to the library science profession and archiving practices.

Along with **Tuttle**, **Diana Amerson**, Government Documents Librarian (previously the archival assistant) and **Jan Whitfield**, Head of Public Services, played a key role in the Library's preservation efforts. "We had to consider the entire budget while taking stock of what supplies were available. In considering how to allocate the budget, we, of course, had to follow university policy," added **Amerson**.

Pictured above is a page from Rudolph Jones' Scrapbook. All photos on this page are courtesy of Fayetteville State University Library.

Scrapbooks were processed by **Backstage Library Works** and microfilmed. The digitized images of the pages were placed on DVDs and are currently being transferred to the Website. Eighteen photographs were sent to the **Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts** for repair.

Library staff engaged faculty members in a project centering on the archives. Each year the **Chesnutt Fellows Program** pays ten Faculty Fellows stipends to participate in a yearlong program that assists them in incorporating **ACRL** standards for information literacy into their syllabi. "Collaboration is key," shared **Wynn**. "We also evaluate how faculty are teaching with and without **ACRL** standards to gauge outcomes," he added.

"Through this program we are able to make faculty and students aware of the rich archival materials housed at the Library, and the diverse ways that the materials can be used in teaching and research," **Tuttle** remarked. Library staff encourage faculty fellows to assign activities that teach students to use the archives. "Since collections are digitized, students do not have to visit the Library to use the materials, but we do want to ensure that they are aware of what we have as well as the history of the institution that they are now part of," **Amerson** shared.

This collaborative effort between faculty members and librarians is part of the **University's SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools)** Quality Enhancement Project. Additionally, librarians began a multimedia oral history project called the Broadell Project, in which they collected oral histories and subsequently cataloged presentations. "This garnered even more attention for the archival collections. Ultimately, the project not only improved archives but also served as training for faculty and staff," **Wynn** stated.

"The Library is growing and expanding. Our focus is on working closely with faculty members so that through every point of contact, awareness of the Library's diverse and valuable collections reaches even more faculty members and students," added **Wynn**. The digitization efforts increase national and worldwide awareness of the unique collections at **Fayetteville State University**.

To learn more about **Fayetteville State University's Library**, visit *http://library. uncfsu.edu*. 🐾

Savannah State University Innovates to Ensure Excellent Customer Service

by **Shanesha R. F. Brooks-Tatum** (Project Coordinator/Writer, HBCU Library Alliance) <sbrooks-tatum@hbculibraries.org>

Savannah State University is the oldest public **HBCU** in the state of Georgia and the oldest institution of higher education in the city of Savannah. Founded in 1890, the campus serves 4,300 students and an increasingly diverse population.

The **Asa H. Gordon Library** is the main library on campus, where **Mary Jo Fayoyin** has been the Library Director for ten years. In 2007, **Fayoyin** and her staff implemented an enhanced strategic plan that positioned the library to spearhead innovations that have garnered institutional, local, and national press coverage. Transformations in these areas were prompted by the library staff's self-assessment, which made clear their need to holistically examine and rethink their approach to customer service.

"The questions that we reflected on were 'Why we do what we do?' and 'How can we improve what we do?'" stated **Fayoyin**. Following the initial assessment, the library implemented a strategic plan addressing key areas that surfaced from patrons' feedback. **Asa H. Gordon Library's** innovations are primarily in three areas: cutting-edge technology, information literacy and assessment, and library accessibility.

Although technological advances were made, assessment tools were strengthened, and library accessibility was substantially improved, the library's core strategy continues to be improved customer service. "Our library is innovative *for the sake of* customer service. We are forward-thinking and customer-oriented because we value our patrons," **Fayoyin** added.

The **HBCU Library Alliance** was especially helpful in providing the leadership training **Savannah State** library staff and faculty needed to create a strong and clearly-defined strategic plan. While the **HBCU Library Alliance** identified the library's strengths and weaknesses, implementing the enhanced strategic plan required the commitment and efforts of the entire library staff.

James Stevens, Systems, Databases, and Periodicals Librarian and **COST (College of Science and Technology)** Liaison, wrote script for most of the programs and helped lead technological advancements at the library. He spearheaded the development of the library's text messaging reference service, which received "trend setter status" recognition in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and the *HBCU Digest*. However, technology is useless without training for the end-user, so **Stevens** developed programming to train students. He developed a strong relationship with the Student Body President and Cabinet through giveaways and other incentives for students.

Louise Wyche, a librarian at the **Gordon Library** for over ten years, focused on improving customer service. **Wyche** and Librarian, **Ivy Brannen** developed a training program for library assistants and student assistants. **Brannen**, who earned her Master's degree in Library Science while working as a Library Assistant at **Savannah State**, now heads the Circulation Department, which helps students have easy access to resources. "We received funding to hire additional librarians, and we were happy to support **Ms. Brannen** as she earned her library degree," **Fayoyin** remarked.

Caren Agata heads the library's Information Literacy Program, which was implemented with grant funding in 2008. The information literacy program ensures that students leave

Pictured above is the Asa H. Gordon Library. Photo is courtesy of Asa H. Gordon Library, Savannah State University.

Savannah State as information literate and civically engaged citizens of the world. Librarians are recognized as fellow teachers on campus, assigned to colleges, academic departments, and/or programs on campus through the Library Liaison Program.

Savannah State faculty members were paid a stipend with an understanding that they would incorporate information literacy into their courses. **Lauren MacMillan**, Collection Development Librarian and Liaison for the Social Sciences, particularly helped spearhead this effort through the assessment of programs. As illustrated in Table 1, the Information Literacy Program has grown tremendously.

Table 1		
Academic Year	**Classes**	**Students**
2008-2009	47	852
2010-2011	165	3410

The **Asa H. Gordon Library** applied for a two-year grant as a part of the university's Title III award to implement the program. But first, library staff had to secure university support to apply for the grant. "Think outside of the box when it comes to funding programs," **Fayoyin** suggests. "Everyone is asking for funds. Find seed money to prove that your program is important and needed, and to ensure that it will be successful," she adds. Because of its success, the Information Literacy Program has become institutionalized and is funded out of the university's state budget allocation.

In order to determine the degree of success achieved, library staff engage in continuous multilevel assessment of all programming, initiatives, and special activities at the library. Student learning outcomes are assessed using the Project SAILS (Standard Assessment of Information Literacy Skills) exam. Pre- and post-testing documents students' information literacy skills and proficiency levels and pinpoints areas needing improvement.

Data on user satisfaction are collected through the suggestion board, the comment section of the library Website, surveys, and LibQual, a survey tool created for academic libraries. User satisfaction surveys run continuously, not just at set times during the semester or academic year, and replies are posted to the suggestion board and library Website. "When patrons know that you are honestly interested in what they think and how they feel, and that you are open to receiving their feedback at any time, this builds open, genuine relationships that lead to more innovative transformations," **Fayoyin** remarked.

Some of these transformations include building a café in the library, designing a presentation/collaboration area, providing space for the ReWrite Center, creating a Gallery to celebrate African art, and maintaining up-to-date technology in the library's computer lab, which is open longer than any other lab on campus. To ensure that the technology remains in working order, three staff members — **James Scott**, **James Stephens**, and **Hunt Luker** — agreed to take on the added responsibility of maintaining lab computers. While the library is not able to meet every single need, library staff do their best to compromise by understanding the circumstances informing each request and deciding on what will benefit the most patrons. This helps ensure the delivery of excellent customer service.

Now, librarians at **Savannah State** sit on several campus committees, and **Fayoyin** sits on the Deans' Council. "We have a say in the University's strategic planning and budgeting committees. We're able to affect change in a greater way," said **Fayoyin**.

In this age of swift technological changes and austere economic cuts, libraries cannot continue to do things "the same old way," **Fayoyin** further explained. "We need to continuously critically examine what we are doing and change the ways that we practice librarianship in order to meet the needs of our patrons."

To learn more, visit *http://library.savannahstate.edu*. 🐾

Shown below is Ms. Mary Jo Fayoyin as she leads a library instruction session. Photo courtesy of Asa H. Gordon Library, Savannah State University.

Southern University and A & M College in Baton Rouge Streamlines Library Service Points

by **Shanesha R. F. Brooks-Tatum** (Project Coordinator/Writer, HBCU Library Alliance) <sbrooks-tatum@hbculibraries.org>

Established in 1881, the **Southern University** and **A & M College** in Baton Rouge, Louisiana became a land grant institution in 1890. Students, faculty, staff, and alumni often refer to the campus simply as "**Southern**." **Southern's John B. Cade Library** is named after **John Brother Cade**, a former dean and archivist at **Southern** for 23 years. With approximately 7,500 students, **Southern** boasts an increasingly diverse population.

The Library's staff was faced with the challenge of streamlining service points as well as renovating the Library when survey data revealed inefficiencies in service. Thus, in 2008 the University implemented the **John B. Cade Library** Enhancement Project, a U.S. Department of Education Title III initiative that funds relevant changes to the Library and updates to the Library's online presence. Library staff decided not only to prioritize the renovation of physical spaces in the Library, but also to transform the ways that they provide services to library patrons. Student feedback, the innovative ideas of **Emma Bradford Perry**, Dean of Libraries, and the results of **Dawn Kight's** participation in the **HBCU** Librarian Exchange Program together changed the way that service is delivered at the **John B. Cade Library**.

"A reduction in library positions necessitated a serious look into combining departments and job duties," **Perry** explained. Therefore, a plan was created to design the "Ask Here" Desk, which blends information and reference services into a single service point. "This way, patrons' questions are addressed in one location rather than in multiple locations as was the case previously," added **Kight**, Head of Library Systems and Technology.

The Library renovated its first floor, where the main attraction is the beautifully designed "Ask Here" Desk. This custom-built desk is equipped with specially designed shelf space, storage cabinets, colorful signage, and computers that allow staff to meet information needs of more patrons. Accessible features like multiple height counters allow library staff to service users of various abilities.

In the past, there were separate service desks located throughout the Library's four floors for reference, periodicals, government documents, and library information. Combining these service points increases convenience and productivity. Library faculty and staff can now concentrate on meaningful projects rather than on staffing four different desks.

Library users pursue the entire research process from beginning to end in one supportive environment with walk-up computer kiosk

The new Ask Here desk serves as a one-stop information center. Photo © John B. Cade Library.

stations, comfortable seating, an updated reading room, a central copy center, and a student center with a coffee shop.

Using social media and new technologies, the library staff also intended to accommodate the unconventional learning styles and technologies of "Generation X" students. "We sought the input of Southern students about what they needed and wanted. We considered different styles of learning as well," shared **Perry**. The first-floor renovation spaces accommodate diverse learning styles, small group interaction, and individual research consultation.

To begin such a project, library staff took a team approach. "We each bring different values to the project, so involving staff from other library departments including the reference, periodicals, and government documents departments ensured that we would harness everyone's expertise to maximize this project," explained **Kight**. As a result, the "Ask Here" Desk has enabled library staff to provide services that are more efficient.

Library staff also ensured that the designer, **Matthew Edmonds** of **Commercial Design Interiors**, received the support he needed throughout the process of making the Ask Here desk a physical reality. Yet even with excellent, cross-departmental staff support, **Southern University** and **A&M College** faced challenges in implementing the project.

"The natural disasters that Louisiana faced throughout the process posed a considerable challenge to completing the four-year enhancement project, as hurricanes and storms continued to threaten not only the state, but also the Library and the larger campus," **Perry** remarked. Just recently, in 2008, the Library was damaged by water from Hurricane Gustav. "We are still waiting to renovate those damaged areas with money from **FEMA**," **Perry** added.

However, with first-floor renovations receiving such an overwhelming response, library staff is dedicated to keeping the momentum going. "90 to 95% of students had positive comments to say about the renovations," **Perry** shared. The University uses the Library for recruitment and retention events, and many faculty visit the coffee shop and use the lounge and other spaces in the Library. "This provides an additional access point, as well as increased faculty-student interaction. This lets us know that we are on the right track, and we are excited about moving forward," **Kight** added.

To learn more, visit *http://www.lib.subr.edu*. 🐾

The Computer Information Kiosks are located in the newly renovated lobby. Photo © John B. Cade Library.

University of Maryland Eastern Shore Creates Collaborative Spaces for Student Study Groups

by **Shanesha R. F. Brooks-Tatum** (Project Coordinator/Writer, HBCU Library Alliance) <sbrooks-tatum@hbculibraries.org>

In 2011, the **University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES)** celebrated its 125th anniversary. The land grant, historically black college is part of the University System of Maryland. Like many **HBCUs**, **UMES** began as a secondary institution for African Americans after the Civil War. Today, the campus serves 4500 students. The **Frederick Douglass Library** is centralized on the 745-acre campus.

Dr. Ellis Beteck, Dean of the **Frederick Douglass Library**, came to the campus in January 2011 from **Howard University**, where he was Interim Director of the Health Sciences Library. He believes that libraries should ensure that students are well-versed in ways to identify and verify information. He said, "It is a lifelong learning process, even after students graduate from the University." Starting in the 2000-2001 academic year, all freshmen students at **UMES** were required to take a one-credit course at the library as part of the information literacy requirement. "The library's goal is to provide a quality learning experience, which will upon completion have prepared **UMES** students with the skills they need to acquire, evaluate, and use information effectively," he added.

"Librarians are even more important today than they used to be," **Beteck** stated. Still, lack of funding and limited staff force many librarians, especially those in smaller libraries, to justify their libraries' continual operation. **Beteck** stressed that libraries should draw attention to the continuous instruction in information literacy that library staff provide to staff and students as well as to faculty.

"Encourage faculty to accompany students to the classes that are held at the library. This is what we do at **UMES**," **Beteck** explained. "Faculty call back and say that they have learned something even while they were accompanying the students." In this way, librarians at **UMES** enhance and foster collaboration between the library and other units. "We want to be out there. Liaisons should go out, and find the needs, and meet the needs of the faculty. Librarians can do their teaching everywhere. Collaboration is something that we believe in and encourage very strongly."

After he arrived, **Beteck** discovered that library staff were receiving numerous complaints about noise levels in the library. When **Beteck** investigated the underlying problem, he realized that the noise came from students crowding around a laptop working on a project. "Students didn't have a space in the library to do their group work," **Beteck** explained. Therefore, **Beteck** and his staff set about creating collaborative and flexible meeting spaces in the library.

Beteck sold the creation of these rooms

to the faculty through the University Deans' Council as a sure way to bring patrons to the library. However, before faculty were sold on collaborative spaces, the idea was proposed to the library staff. **Beteck** reflected: "My vision was to seek ways for bringing in patrons. The library still remains a place, and this is the place where students of different disciplines can gather." For **Beteck**, the library is the primary place where students depart from their disciplines while remaining engaged academically.

The idea for collaborative spaces came from **Beteck's** initial exposure to them at the **University of Maryland** Health Sciences and Human Services Library, which he became familiar with while he was Interim Director

of the Health Sciences Library at **Howard University**. However, at the time, there was no funding at **Howard** to create collaborative study spaces. At **UMES**, library staff began converting existing rooms into collaborative study spaces in Spring 2011.

The rooms are in high demand, especially during midterm and final exam periods. Each of the five collaborative study spaces is equipped with a 42-inch flat-screen TV, computer, dry-erase board, and table with several chairs. Students must sign up to use them.

Part of the success in publicizing the collaborative spaces came from creating a Library Facebook page. "Students pay attention to information on Facebook more than their campus email inboxes, so this was the ideal way for us to get the word out, and we've seen a wonderful response," said **Beteck**.

Students continue to express their appreciation for the collaborative study rooms to Library staff and have suggested other enhancements, such as a kiosk in the library that sells USB drives and other materials. Library staff submitted a proposal for this project, and it has been approved. "Since the campus bookstore closes at 4:30 p.m., and we stay open until past midnight, this is an additional way that we can ensure students have the tools that they need to work and collaborate effectively," **Beteck** explained.

Beteck reflects on the larger mission of libraries: "We are here for the users and we need to pay attention to their needs. There is no library that gets everything, but [libraries should] listen to patrons and meet them halfway."

To learn more about the **UMES Library**, visit *http://www.umes.edu/fdl*. 🐾

All photos included with this article are courtesy of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.

Virginia State University Preserves Black History with Digital Collections

by **Shanesha R. F. Brooks-Tatum** (Project Coordinator/Writer, HBCU Library Alliance) <sbrooks-tatum@hbculibraries.org>

Founded on March 6, 1882, **Virginia State University (VSU)** is a land-grant university serving over 5,300 students. Its 236-acre, suburban campus was the first state-supported, four-year institution of higher learning for Blacks. The **James Hugo Johnston Memorial Library**, also known as the University Library, was constructed in 1960 and fully renovated in 2004. With state-of-the-art technology and insightful design, it offers a café, collaborative study rooms, smart boards, and interactive whiteboards.

In its history, **VSU** was a technical college and university for Black students, who in earlier times had no other avenue for higher education. The Special Collections and Archives Department has acquired a very rich collection of manuscripts, photographs, artifacts, and sculptures documenting this history.

In the recent past, researchers used materials from the library's special collections and archives when conducting research on segregation, Blacks in higher education, and other related areas of study. Staff had little training in digitization, which impeded easy access to these materials. However, through training and resources provided by the **HBCU Library Alliance's** (HBCULA) Digital Collection Project, an initiative to preserve the history of **HBCUs**, **Virginia State** was able to digitally preserve key documents of its founding and early history.

The **HBCU Library Alliance** Digital Collection Website had nearly 130,000 unique visits to the database in 2010. "Approximately 14% of visitors to the Alliance's Digital Collection Website visited **Virginia State's** Website. The **HBCU Library Alliance** made it possible for us to highlight and make accessible the rich collections at **VSU**," explained **Dr. Elsie Stephens Weatherington**, Dean of the University Library. Now researchers and the wider University community can visit the archives and conduct research online.

Until three years ago, the Special Collections and Archives Department only had one staff member, **Lucious Edwards**, the University Archivist. The Library's very small staff needed specialized training to complete processing and digitization in-house. Through grant funding by the **Mellon Foundation**, students were trained to digitize materials. Student workers scanned and encoded archival description work.

The digital collections' finding aids were constructed with help from the Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA), a consortium of the nonprofit academic libraries within the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Library also utilized the expertise of the lead cataloger. "Through this training program, we were able to impact students' career choices," shared **Edwards**. Four student workers went on to study history at the graduate level at **Howard University**, the **University of Pittsburgh**, and **Virginia Commonwealth University**.

The staff also used **Library of Congress** metadata to ensure that document terms were consistent. "This experience has provided national and international exposure to **Virginia State** while also creating a transformative experience for the staff," added **Weatherington**. With its increased online presence, **Virginia State** hopes to increase the number of in-house and online visitors to the library's Special Collections and Archives Department.

The training provided by the **HBCULA** has significantly improved the technological skills of staff, which include the full range of processes involved in creating digital images with full metadata. Moreover, recently acquired collections

The Class of 1886 was the first graduating class of VSU. Photo courtesy of Virginia State University.

can now be processed and made available to the public more quickly. The **Lyrasis** and **Mellon Foundation** funded the Photographic Preservation Project, which provided staff with additional experience in the preservation and conservation of photographs. Because of this training, approximately 3,000 negatives and 2,000 photographs were scanned for further identification and re-housed in new containers.

The Special Collections and Archives Department has always been a valuable resource for history in the region. Adding online access to traditional services transformed the Archives from a repository of the University's history to an easily accessible resource and valuable research tool for the history of Blacks in Virginia.

This accessibility has led to the inclusion of **VSU** archival materials in publications, such as **Robert M. Mills'** self-published book *History of Promise Land Elementary School* (2007) and **Julius Gaines, Jr.'s** *Old Uniontown – Glances Backwards* (Staunton, VA: African-American Heritage Festival Foundation, 2007).

"We are acquiring collections that have major research importance," **Weatherington** added. The University Archivist is a well-known and respected oral historian who persistently relays the value of historical records to local history. The archivist was instrumental in bringing the Research Papers of **Oliver W. Hill, Sr.**, a civil rights leader and attorney who worked with **Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall**, to the University. The staff believes that exposure received through digitization has helped keep the public aware of their collections.

*The stately James Hugo Johnston Memorial Library at Virginia State University.*

Other collections include the papers of **Billy Taylor**, an international jazz artist, and **Yale Lewis**, a local DJ who interviewed renowned musicians. The Library owns the Prince Edward County Virginia Desegregation Case Materials and the Virginia Teachers Association Papers.

The Library uses Twitter, a Special Collections and Archives blog, and a Facebook page to market its collections. "Utilizing social media outlets is very important in letting the world know about the valuable materials we have at **VSU**," **Weatherington** stated. Through rigorous and innovative digitization efforts, **Virginia State University** ensures the preservation of not only its institutional history, but also the achievements of African Americans in education, the arts, public policy, and other arenas.

For more information about the **VSU** Special Collections and Archives Department, visit *http://library.vsu.edu/special_collections.html*. 🐾
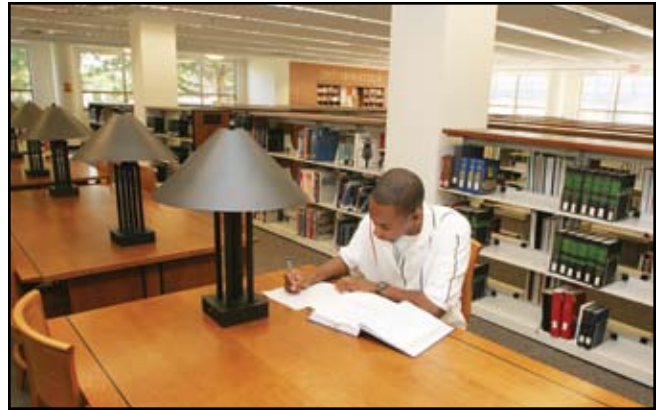
A student studies in the library. Photo courtesy of Virginia State University.