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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: Claffin 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.

Shanesha R. F. Brooks-Tatum is project coordinator/writer for the HBCU Library Alliance in Atlanta, GA. She holds a doctorate from the University of Michigan and is a former postdoctoral fellow at Atlanta University Center Woodruff Library, where she taught research methods and writing. She is the author of several scholarly articles and co-editor of a collection of scholarly essays, Reading African American Experiences in the Obama Era: Theory, Advocacy, Activism (Peter Lang Press, 2011). She is currently a visiting scholar at the Interdenominational Theological Center (Atlanta, GA) where she is working on a book on Christian hip-hop music and will teach a graduate course on gender, race, and religion in hip-hop.