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# Fayetteville State University Preserves History While Collaborating with Faculty and Students

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# Fayetteville State University Preserves History While Collaborating With Faculty and Students

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

**F**ayetteville 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 **Lyrisis**



*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**.

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*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 **Chesnut 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>. 🌱

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## Savannah State University Innovates to Ensure Excellent Customer Service

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

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**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.*