ACRL/AASLIG Liaison Report

on the

Association for the Study of African American Life and Culture

Annual Conference

September 29-October 1, 2022

The Association for the Study of African American Life and History convened in Montgomery, AL, and the conference theme, which is the 2022 Black History Month theme, was “Black Health and Wellness.” Many of the sessions featured programs that focused on this theme, but others turned their attention to other important issues in African American Studies. Digital Humanities has a track in the conference that features workshops and panels. Some of the presenters are librarians or archivists.

The first program I attended was very impactful because it sparked my interest in starting a Black Digital Humanities program at my library. It is an urban historically black university (HBCU), with several courses in African American Studies, and will be offering an undergraduate degree in Africana Studies in the next school year. “Digital Humanities: Digital Technology for Digital Projects: A Primer” had four panelists who discussed various computer programs such as Omeka, AdobeSpark, AgiSoft, Metascape, Screenotate, and ArcGis. I was especially interested in Story Js, which can be used by TSU’s library to tell the story of our Olympic champions. Another benefit of attending the program was learning about the website, [Black Crafts People Digital Archive](https://blackcraftspeople.org/), and the African American Publishing Without Wall program (Afro PWW2), which is funded by the Mellon Foundation.

The Information Professional Group, consisting of the librarians, archivists, and curators, had low attendance at its annual meeting for several reasons, the major one being it was scheduled 10:00 am -11:40 am on Thursday, in competition with two programs of interest to librarians and archivists: “Traces of Black Health and Wellness in Archives of Enslavement” and “Finding Black Voices in Archives and Shaping the Intellectual Legacy of African American Studies” plus a Digital Humanities Session: “Podcasting and Digital Storytelling-How to.” Some of the former attendees have retired, changed jobs, and/or could not travel to the conference. We decided to try to schedule next year’s meeting in a less competitive time slot, probably late afternoon, and try to have a reception of some sort.

The Information Professionals Group organized two Poster Sessions that contained a total of seventeen presentations. The sessions are open to members of ASALH local chapters as well as academicians and cover a wide range of topics. “A Community Based Approach to Deter Childhood Obesity in Title 1 Schools, by faculty at Florida A&M University and “The Black Hospital Movement in Greater Kansas City,” by a member of the Greater Kansas City Black History Study Group Branch are examples.

There was also a very interesting program sponsored by the National Parks Conservation Association that focused on the preservation of neglected areas and buildings in Alabama that are vital to the state’s history and the Civil Rights Movement. Philip Howard, of the Conservation Fund, presented stories and photographs of people who had risked their lives and sacrificed much for the Movement, as well as historic places that had been neglected and deserved recognition and rehabilitation.

Since 2018, the Informational Professional Group has presented the Dorothy Porter Wesley Award, which recognizes an outstanding librarian, archivist, curator, bibliophile and collector of African American history and culture. Ms. Porter was a much-admired Howard University librarian who curated the Moore-Spingarn Collection into a major research collection that is internationally regarded as one of the best in the nation. The winner must have the following qualifications:

* Actively participated in preserving resources on African American History and Culture;
* Promoted instruction, research, and scholarship of African American Studies, African Diaspora Studies, and the community story;
* Collaborated with others to promote research and study of African Americans and the diaspora, and
* Developed and created collections that support the research in African American Studies

This year’s winner is Ms. Frazine K. Taylor, a librarian who was co-Head of Reference at the Alabama Department of Archives and History, as well as the part-time archivist at Tuskegee University. She is currently President of the Alabama Historical Association and holds workshops around the state about African American archival and genealogical research.

During the afternoon I attended “Trauma, Tresses, & Truth: Untangling Our Hair Through Personal Narratives” a panel discussion that was led by the author of the book with the same title (Chicago Review Press, Nov. 2022), which had a very lively discussion. ASALH usually has a book signing reception for authors as an evening activity and this year provided feature films from the Black Hollywood Education and Resource Center.

I attended an afternoon social justice workshop, based on the book, **Justice Deferred: Race and** **the Supreme Court** by Orville Vernon Burton and Armand Derfner. A panel featuring the famous civil rights attorney Fred Gray, who won several landmark civil rights cases and defended both Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. discussed the segregation era and legal cases that led to its demise. There was a very interesting discussion about how laws were passed in the South to prevent African Americans from attending graduate and professional schools, forcing them to leave their home state to be educated as lawyers and attained doctorate degrees. A program with just the authors was also streamed on YouTube as a part of ASALH’s “Social Justice Reading Room” series. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjJpRBV8wSM>)

**Relationship to ACRL Strategic Goals:**

Research and Scholarly Environment:Many of the sessions at the ASALH conference dealt with the digitization and preservation of African American history and culture for access by researchers. Scholars presented various methods and projects for capturing and storing oral history as well as printed matter and artifacts. Faculty discussed their published research or works in progress. The Information Professionals Group participated with the scholars on the programs, demonstrating their ability to be collaborators in the development and practical applications of digital scholarship, particularly in the humanities, for African American Studies.

Respectfully Submitted,

Glenda Alvin

ACRL/AASLIG Liaison