



# Common Mission, Common Ground

a report from the

***HBCU LIBRARY ALLIANCE +  
DIGITAL LIBRARY FEDERATION***

**PITTSBURGH, PA**  
22 October 2017



# Common Mission, Common Ground

at the  
2017 DLF Forum  
HBCUs/Liberal Arts Colleges Pre-Conference

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from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (grant #RE-87-17-0079-17).

## A Message from the Partners

Last August, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) generously awarded our organizations \$49,950 in Laura Bush 21<sup>st</sup> Century Librarian Program planning grant funds. This grant was to support a first collaboration between the HBCU Library Alliance, representing 75 US-based historically black colleges and universities, and the Digital Library Federation, an international membership organization of comprised of 164 institutions dedicated to the creative design and wise application of digital library technologies.

IMLS support helped us to connect our communities and test the waters for future work together.


We ultimately used the funds to offer **two dozen HBCU Fellowships** at the Digital Library Federation's annual conference, and to host a **networking and learning event** for 110 participants, which we co-organized as a DLF Forum Pre-Conference on **digital libraries as common ground** and **digital library-based pedagogy as common mission**, together with members of DLF's Liberal Arts Colleges cohort.

We knew we had a worthwhile plan to explore, and that we represented two communities and membership organizations with much to learn from one another. And from our very first conversations, we felt we had found kindred spirits in each other and were forging an **authentic partnership** that could lead to good things for the institutions and individuals we serve. What we didn't anticipate is how much "authenticity" would become a watchword for our participants—not just of the HBCUs/Liberal Arts Colleges Pre-Conference, but of the whole DLF Forum event—and a guiding principle for the conversations about future collaborative work that have followed.

*"What we didn't anticipate is how much 'authenticity' would become a watchword..."*

This report will share details and outcomes from the Pre-Conference and our 2017 DLF HBCU fellowship program. We'll also share some lessons learned and suggest possible ways forward for authentic collaboration between our organizations and the broader Alliance and DLF membership communities.

Thank you for reading. We welcome your feedback and engagement!



Sandra Phoenix  
*Executive Director,*  
*HBCU Library Alliance*



Bethany Nowviskie  
*Executive Director,*  
*Digital Library Federation*

# What is the HBCU Library Alliance?

**T**he HBCU Library Alliance is a consortium that supports the collaboration of information professionals dedicated to providing an array of resources to strengthen Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and their constituents. HBCUs are institutions established as early as 1837, some during the period of slavery, for the direct purpose of educating Black Americans. The HBCU Library Alliance was created in 2002 by an historic meeting of 103 deans and directors of HBCU libraries. Members of the HBCU Library Alliance are those HBCU institutions so designated by the White House Initiative on HBCUs.

As the **voice of advocacy** for member institutions, the HBCU Library Alliance is uniquely designed to transform and strengthen its membership by developing library leaders, helping to curate, preserve and disseminate relevant digital collections, and engaging in strategic planning for the future.

*“The HBCU Library Alliance is grounded in the richness of experience and contributions of African Americans to history and culture. In the spirit of community, an authentic partnership initiated by the DLF is evolving, guided by mutual respect, mutual benefit and common ground.”*

*—Executive Director,  
Sandra Phoenix*

<b>303,167</b>	Students
<b>14,007</b>	Faculty
<b>105</b>	Schools
<b>102</b>	Libraries
<b>21</b>	States



The HBCU Library Alliance continues to enhance the voice and value of its 75 member institutions, while impacting the communities they serve: approximately 320,000 predominantly Black students, faculty members, and staff living and working in 21 states.

**Learn more about the HBCU Library Alliance** at our website:  
<http://hbculibraries.org/>

# What is Digital Library Federation?

Membership in DLF is open to any organization engaged in building or using digital libraries. We especially welcome members who believe in our community's [mission](#) of **advancing research, learning, social justice, and the public good** through the creative design and wise application of digital library technologies.

DLF's 160+ [members](#) include archives, libraries and library service organizations, publishers, labs, museums, professional organizations, and like-minded vendors, all of whom are invited to contribute to community efforts through a variety of research and development, information sharing, and catalytic initiatives. That said, we work hard to make sure that grassroots participation in our [working groups](#), events, and other initiatives is as open to individuals as possible, regardless of their institutions' membership status.



**DLF is built for grassroots action.** A committed community gravitates to us, to work across boundaries, year-round. Many groups gather at our annual DLF Forum conference. Currently active DLF working groups, initiatives, and affiliate organizations we host (such as the

National Digital Stewardship Alliance, IIF, and Code4Lib) focus on:

- ❖ Open digital library standards, software, interfaces, and infrastructure
- ❖ Authentic assessment, project management, and related best practices
- ❖ Digital stewardship and curation of digital collections
- ❖ Research data management (including through the *DLF eResearch Network*)
- ❖ Digital humanities support and new opportunities for research, teaching, and learning
- ❖ Strengthening connections to allied professions, sectors, and areas of research
- ❖ The social contexts and impact of digital library work, including issues of surveillance and government records transparency and accountability
- ❖ Professional development, digital library pedagogy (#DLFteach), and lifelong learning
- ❖ Community-driven frameworks for policy advocacy, professional standards, ethics, issues of representation and diversity, labor practices, inclusion, and other matters of concern to digital library practitioners and the people and publics we serve

DLF is part of the nonprofit Council on Library and Information Resources. Through CLIR, we connect our community with important initiatives and opportunities, like *Digitizing Hidden Collections* and *Recordings at Risk* grants, CLIR/DLF postdoctoral fellowship programs in data curation across disciplines, and the Digital Library of the Middle East.

**Learn more about the Digital Library Federation** at our website:  
<https://www.diglib.org/>

## What was our project, in a nutshell?

**W**ith generous IMLS support administered by CLIR, we hosted a one-day DLF-HBCU Library Alliance Pre-Conference, along with a DLF Forum fellowship opportunity for digital library practitioners working in HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) or with HBCU backgrounds and professional interests.

The Pre-Conference event, which we organized as a participant-driven un-conference, was meant to explore the potential of **digital libraries as common ground and digital library-based pedagogy as common mission** among our memberships, and to position our organizations for future work in partnership. We chose the highly participatory un-conference format rather than a meeting dominated by peer-reviewed panels and talks so that we could foster true dialogue and more equitable relationships among participants and draw most fully on the expertise and energy of attendees in collaboratively shaping the day's agenda.

We held a successful and well-attended event in Pittsburgh, PA, on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, and welcomed 24 DLF HBCU fellows to it and to the DLF Forum that followed, where their perspectives and contributions greatly enriched conversations on crucial topics and have sparked ideas for continued collaboration between the Alliance and Digital Library Federation.

### *Welcome to an Un-Conference!*

Many of our participants told us that the HBCU-DLF Pre-Conference was their first experience with an “unconference” format.

**Unconferences** are highly informal events. Topics for each session are decided by vote on the day of the meeting. (In this case, by dot-voting over breakfast!) At an unconference, there are no prepared presentations; all participants are invited to talk and work with fellow participants in every session.

Learn more at [thatcamp.org/about/](http://thatcamp.org/about/).

## What motivated us?

**A**mong the most troubling findings of a demographic survey conducted by the American Library Association in 2006 was the overwhelming whiteness of our field, with 89% of credentialed librarians identifying as white.<sup>1</sup> Hui-Fen Chang's 2013 research, looking back to the early 1980s, confirms the longevity of the issue (“ethnic and racial makeup in the academic library workforce remains relatively unchanged”) and concludes simply that “it

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<sup>1</sup> See: *ALA Diversity Counts*, rev. January 2007. <http://www.ala.org/offices/diversity/diversitycounts/divcounts>



is a reality that the library workforce does not reflect the communities we serve.”<sup>2</sup> ALA membership survey results from 2017 indicate that this pervasive and deep-seated problem continues, with 86.7% of library professionals identifying as white.<sup>3</sup>



*Attendees created the Pre-Conference Program using a dot-voting system to indicate which sessions were of greatest interest.*

While Boyd, Blue, and Im, in their recent “Evaluation of Academic Library Residency Programs in the United States for Librarians of Color,” center on one specific aspect of diversity initiatives in the LIS profession—the efficacy of the residency program—they offer a broad history of our field’s efforts to recruit and retain librarians of color.<sup>4</sup> Their findings demonstrate common threads in the larger research on programs focusing on recruitment and retention. These include issues and debates in the development of formal and informal mentorships for librarians of color (P. Johnson); in the

hiring process and in the racial makeup of librarians’ colleges of origin (K. Johnson); in the collection and analysis of program data (Vinopal); in the duties involved in professional development, leading to promotion and tenure outcomes (Damasco and Hodges); and in the institutionalization of inequities and the widespread failures of diversity initiatives to impact overall day-to-day working life, work satisfaction, and organizational culture (Alabi).<sup>5</sup>

Current diversity initiatives in professional LIS organizations range from graduate scholarship and early-career programs (the ARL/SAA Mosaic Program, ARL Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce, and ALA’s Spectrum Scholarship Program) to mid-career professional development programs (ARL Leadership & Career Development Program) to mentorship networks and

<sup>2</sup> **Chang**, Hui-Fen. “Ethnic and Racial Diversity in Academic and Research Libraries: Past, Present, and Future.” *ARL* 2013, April 10-13, 2013, 182-93.

<sup>3</sup> See: *2017 Member Demographics Survey*, ALA. <http://www.ala.org/research/initiatives/membershipsurveys>

<sup>4</sup> **Boyd**, Angela, Yolanda Blue, and Suzanne Im. “Evaluation of Academic Library Residency Programs in the United States for Librarians of Color.” *College & Research Libraries*, May 2017, 472-511.

<sup>5</sup> **Johnson**, Peggy. “Retaining and Advancing Librarians of Color.” *College & Research Libraries*, September 2007, 405-417; **Johnson**, Kelli. *Minority Librarians in Higher Education: A Critical Race Theory Analysis*. 2016. Dissertation. Marshall University, 2016; **Vinopal**, Jennifer. “The Quest for Diversity in Library Staffing: From Awareness to Action.” *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*. 13 January 2016.

<http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2016/quest-for-diversity/>; **Damasco**, Ione T. and Dracine Hodges. “Tenure and Promotion Experiences of Academic Librarians of Color.” *College & Research Libraries*, v. 73, n. 3, 2012, 279-301; and **Alabi**, Jaena. “Racial Microaggressions in Academic Libraries: Results of a Survey of Minority and Non-minority Librarians.” *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 41, 2015, 47-53.

caucuses or interest groups.<sup>6</sup> A promising new IMLS grant-funded ARL Fellowship for Digital and Inclusive Excellence beginning in the 2017-18 academic year is providing another opportunity, closely aligned with our own unconference theme, to work on problems of diversity and consider the state of the profession through a digital stewardship and undergraduate student lens. IMLS-supported “Design for Diversity” events at Northeastern University are also providing an excellent venue for sharing and learning around digital library infrastructure issues.<sup>7</sup> But April Hathcock gets to the heart of the issue in her important essay “White Librarianship in Blackface: Diversity Initiatives in LIS,” when she asks, “with minority librarians leaving the profession as soon as they are recruited, what can be done to render our abundance of diversity initiatives truly effective? Why are these ambitious and numerous initiatives failing to have the desired effect?”<sup>8</sup>

We saw the HBCU Library Alliance and Digital Library Federation, in partnership (and only in partnership) as being in a unique position to address a **trifold issue of inclusion in the digital library sphere**. This trio of challenges and opportunities is described below. It is important to clarify that we had no illusions of *solving* problems in a one-day event.

Instead, our goal with a modest first collaborative program was primarily to establish a strong working relationship between our organizations and create an environment that could foster positive personal and working relationships among individuals in our memberships. Together, our organizations represent two groups of library and information professionals crucial to the development of digital library platforms, content, and environments (both digital and social) that can become more welcoming, respectful, and inspiring to a broader array of learners and researchers. It is our hope that these learners, researchers, and information professionals may then use library technology and collections to create the independent



*Shatiqua Mosby-Wilson (right) speaks during the Pre-Conference closing session while Jean Greene (center) and Chelcie Rowell (left) listen.*

<sup>6</sup> See: ARL/SAA Mosaic Program: <http://www.arl.org/leadership-recruitment/diversity-recruitment/arl-saa-mosaic-scholarship-program>; ARL Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce: <http://www.arl.org/leadership-recruitment/diversity-recruitment/initiative-to-recruit-a-diverse-workforce-irdw>; ALA Spectrum Scholarship Program: <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/spectrum>; ARL Leadership & Career Development Program: <http://www.arl.org/leadership-recruitment/diversity-recruitment/leadership-career-development-program>.

<sup>7</sup> ARL Fellowship for Digital and Inclusive Excellence: <http://www.arl.org/leadership-recruitment/diversity-recruitment/fellowship-digital-inclusive-excellence>

<sup>8</sup> Hathcock, April. “White Librarianship in Blackface: Diversity Initiatives in LIS.” *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, 7 Oct 2015. <http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2015/lis-diversity/>



philosophical infrastructure that Afrofuturist thinkers describe as an essential expression of any community's true agency and power.<sup>9</sup>

We therefore designed our program to spark conversations and future partnerships among attendees on the following issues:

- ❖ the **recruitment of a more diverse array of students** into information careers;
- ❖ the conditions that would lead to greater job satisfaction and **retention of librarians from under-represented groups**;
- ❖ and all the **rich possibilities for curating more inclusive and inspiring digital library collections** that would attend a library-centered liberal arts pedagogy that more clearly asserts the value of Black and other minoritized lives.

We felt that the final bullet point is of perhaps greatest importance, has been sadly under-addressed in past conversations and initiatives, and underlies the other two to an oft-unacknowledged degree.

This partnership opportunity posed, for us, a special chance for our communities to work together at the spot where **social justice-minded digital library pedagogy and collections development, curation, and use** intersects with questions of **diversity, equity, inclusion, and the future of the profession**.

## Who helped to plan?

Planning committee volunteers shaped the Pre-Conference, from choosing a keynote speaker, to seeding discussion topics, to hosting the lightning talks, and drafting pre- and post-event surveys. We would like to thank the people listed below, including volunteers from HBCUs and with HBCU backgrounds, and from Liberal Arts Colleges (LACs) and the wider library community, who worked alongside HBCU Library Alliance and DLF leadership and staff.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| ❖ Dorothy Berry ( <i>University of Minnesota/UmbraSearch</i> ) | ❖ Kevin Butterfield ( <i>U of Richmond</i> )        |
| ❖ Meredith Broadway ( <i>World Bank/NDSR</i> )                 | ❖ Krystal Cooper ( <i>UIUC</i> )                    |
| ❖ Tatiana Bryant ( <i>U of Oregon</i> )                        | ❖ Jamaal Fisher ( <i>LeMoyne-Owen College</i> )     |
|  | ❖ Brianna Gormly ( <i>Franklin &amp; Marshall</i> ) |

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<sup>9</sup> On faculty needs in HBCUs, see Sandra **Phoenix** and Mantra **Henderson**: “Expanding Library Support for Faculty Research in Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” *Journal of Library Administration*, 56:5, 572-594. On design considerations for anti-racist and Afrofuturist digital libraries, see Bethany **Nowviskie**: “Speculative Collections:” <http://nowviskie.org/2016/speculative-collections/> and “Five Spectra for Speculative Knowledge Design:” <http://nowviskie.org/2017/5-spectra/>.

- ❖ Twanna Hodge (*U Virgin Islands-STT*)
- ❖ Alexia Hudson-Ward (*Oberlin College*)
- ❖ Arif Jamal (*U of Pittsburgh*)
- ❖ Katherine Kim (*DLF*)
- ❖ Bethany Nowviskie (*DLF*)
- ❖ Courtney Paddick (*Bucknell U*)
- ❖ Erin Pappas (*U of Virginia*)
- ❖ Sandra Phoenix (*HBCU Library Alliance*)
- ❖ Becca Quon (*DLF*)
- ❖ Chelcie Rowell (*Boston College*)
- ❖ Melde Rutledge (*Wake Forest U*)
- ❖ Emily Sherwood (*Bucknell U*)
- ❖ Christine Wiseman (*AUC Woodruff Library*)

We would also like to thank past organizers of the DLF LAC Pre-Conference, who planned and hosted events in 2015 and 2016 for the growing liberal arts college community within the Digital Library Federation—not only for pioneering the pre-conference model and providing good advice to our committee in 2017, but for recognizing the value of the more intimate pre-conference space as an “on-ramp” to larger DLF Forum conversations—and being willing to cede it for others’ use.

*Your experiences and generosity inspired us!*

## Who responded to the call for applicants?

The planning committee received nearly 50 applications for its DLF-HBCU Fellowship opportunities, from HBCU Library Alliance-affiliated librarians, faculty, and other employees, library practitioners with HBCU backgrounds, current HBCU students, and other members of historically underrepresented groups. The committee fulfilled individual budget requests for top candidates instead of distributing flat, equal stipends, thus allowing for the support of 24 fellows; a happy increase over the originally planned 21.

Of all those who applied, the largest group was comprised of new and mid-career professionals (27 out of 46 submissions). The second-largest group of applicants consisted of those at the leadership level: library directors, deans, and department heads (15 out of 46 submissions). The remaining applicants were students.

*“The highlight for me was the realization that there are professionals interested in advancing ...activism and social justice through digital library technologies.”*

*—Elizabeth Brumfield,  
Prairie View A&M*

The wide range of candidates is evidence that there is a strong desire and need for expanded travel funding to support networking opportunities across all levels of professional experience.

## Who were our DLF-HBCU Fellows?



**Pearl Adzei-Stonnes**

*Acquisitions Librarian, Virginia Union University*



**Arneice Bowen**

*Head of Cataloging, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University*



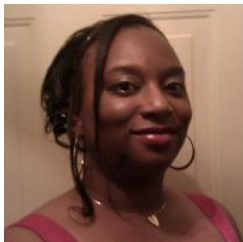
**Nicola Andrews**

*NCSU Libraries Fellow, North Carolina State University*



**Elizabeth Jean Brumfield**

*Distance Services Librarian, Prairie View A&M University*



**Danisha Baker-Whitaker**

*Archivist/Museum Curator, Bennett College*



**Tatiana Bryant**

*Outreach and Promotion Librarian, Adelphi University*



**Dorothy Berry**

*Project Manager and Metadata Coordinator, University of Minnesota*



**Zakiya Collier**

*Master's Candidate - New York University/Long Island University*



**Chianta Dorsey**

*Reference Archivist, Amistad Research Center*



**Jean Greene**

*Director of Library Services & Archives, Hinds Community College-Utica*



**Vanessa Ely Gosserand**

*Reference/User Services Librarian, Southern University*



**Chris Iweha**

*Associate Director for Public Service, Morgan State University*



**Mary Jo Fayoyin**

*Dean, Library Services, Savannah State University*



**Andrea Jackson**

*Executive Director, Black Metropolis Research Consortium*



**Kaneisha Gaston**

*Instructor, Livingstone College; MLIS student, North Carolina Central University*



**Laura Adair Johnson**

*Director of Library Services, Livingstone College*



**kYmberly Keeton**

*Independent Publisher, Art Librarian,  
bookista media group*



**Monika Rhue**

*Chair, HBCU Library Alliance and Director  
of Library Services, Johnson C. Smith  
University*



**Shatiqua A. Mosby-Wilson**

*Library Director, Southern University of  
New Orleans*



**Horacio Sierra**

*Assistant Professor, English Department,  
Bowie State University*



**Jessica C. Neal**

*University Archivist, Trinity University*



**Holly A. Smith**

*College Archivist, Spelman College*



**Ana Ndumu**

*Doctoral Student, Florida State University*



**LeTisha Stacey**

*Digital Librarian/Archivist, Philander Smith  
College*

Most fellows published reflections on their experiences at the Pre-Conference and DLF Forum. These are available on the DLF website at: <https://www.diglib.org/tag/hbcu-fellow/>



## Who else attended?

Over 110 individuals attended the event, representing 26 liberal arts colleges, 25 R1 institutions, and 17 HBCUs and affiliated organizations. Staff from organizations like Educopia, HathiTrust, DPLA, and the Library of Congress participated as well. Almost all Pre-Conference attendees stayed on for the DLF Forum. DLF welcomed over 800 attendees from all areas of the digital library/archives world across its “Forum Week” events.

*“The conference allowed for stimulating interaction with librarians from PWIs. How refreshing to discover how much we have in common.”*

*—Jean Greene, Hinds Community College, Utica*

We were also grateful to have representatives from funding or re-granting organizations like IMLS, NEH, Whiting, Mellon, CLIR, NHPRC, Knight, and Kress in attendance at the Pre-Conference and DLF Forum. Multiple grant officers gave lightning talks or other presentations informing attendees about funding opportunities and upcoming deadlines. Their presence in sessions throughout the conference days made it easy for attendees to approach them, and their perspectives in conversations proved very helpful.

## What did our keynoters share?

The Pre-Conference was keynoted by **Loretta Parham**, who spoke to the group on the theme of “Staffing for Our Digital Library: The Promise, the Plan and Our Response.”

Parham helped to establish the HBCU Library Alliance in 2002, serving as its co-founding director and founding Board Chair. She is presently the CEO and Director of the Atlanta University Center (AUC) Robert W. Woodruff Library— an independent academic library that serves four HBCUs: Morehouse College, Spelman College, the Interdenominational Theological Center, and Clark Atlanta University. Prior to joining AUC, Parham directed the Hampton University Harvey Library, served as deputy director of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, and served as District Chief of 20 urban branch libraries for the Chicago Public Library. She has also served in influential



leadership roles on a variety of committees and boards, including at the Georgia Humanities Council, ACRL, ALA, OCLC, SOLINET, ARCHE (the Atlanta Regional Council of Higher Education-Library Council), and the Oberlin Group Consortium. Among her publications is a 2006 guide book, co-edited with Barbara Dewey, on *Achieving Diversity: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians*.

*“The library as I  
know it today  
CANNOT exist  
tomorrow.”  
—Loretta Parham*

Loretta Parham received her MLS from the University of Michigan School of Information, which honored her with its Distinguished Alumni Award in 2016. Earlier this year, she was named 2017 Academic/Research Librarian of the Year by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL).

Parham’s **key messages for Pre-Conference attendees** were:

- ❖ Library services must change to support a new generation of users (“Gen Z,” born post-1995), with radically different information and interactivity expectations.
- ❖ Libraries *as employers* must change, too, to welcome a new generation of staff.

A collaborative note-taking document from this keynote is available: <https://goo.gl/4TR6ub>

Our 2017 DLF Forum keynote speaker, **Rasheedah Phillips**, Esq., who addressed participants the morning after the Pre-conference, provided a perfect transition to the larger meeting. Phillips is an Afrofuturist organizer, writer, lawyer, and director of a community archive and cultural memory lab working on urban gentrification in Philadelphia, as well as an artist, science fiction writer, and co-founder of a community center designed around principles of Afrofuturism and Black Quantum Futurism. Her talk was entitled “Creating Communal Space-Times, Activating Quantum Time Capsules.” In it, she discussed community-driven documentation, cultural memory and conceptions of time, and the potential of digital libraries to support and be shaped by marginalized people’s work to imagine alternate futures.



*“What does it mean  
to dismantle the  
master’s clock?”  
—Rasheedah Phillips*

Phillips is a 2008 graduate of Temple University’s Beasley School of Law. She serves as managing attorney for the housing unit at Community Legal Services of Philadelphia and Creative Director of an arts-based grassroots organization called The Afrofuturist Affair, which she founded in 2011. As part of the Black Quantum Futurism collective, she collaborated with Camae

Ayewa (who tours and performs as Moor Mother) to found and direct the Community Futures Lab. That work was originally supported by a Blade of Grass fellowship for a community archives project on “Time & Memory in North Philly.” Phillips is author (among other works) of the “Future” entry in *Keywords for Radicals: the Contested Vocabulary of Late-Capitalist Struggle*, and she serves on the Board of Directors of the Friends of the Free Library of Philadelphia.

Phillips’ **key messages** for the combined DLF Forum and Pre-Conference crowd were:

- ❖ Afrofuturism and Black Quantum Futurism offer powerful frameworks for community agency and the imagination of alternate futures.
- ❖ Digital libraries and community archives can help to subvert linear, colonial, and fatalistic notions of time that have played a strong in the oppression of marginalized people.

## What were the key Pre-Conference themes?

We felt that the HBCU Library Alliance and DLF were uniquely positioned to host conversations and focus the attention of our vibrant practitioner communities on two major, nationally-shared types of needs in the broader digital library sphere:

- the need for **an improved and more socially just digital library pedagogy and collections-building practice**, which might inspire a more diverse array of students to bring their critical perspectives to careers in libraries and information science;
- the need to improve job satisfaction, organizational culture, and a sense of shared mission among digital librarians and digital liberal arts staff at HBCUs and DLF member organizations, **fostering leadership and resulting in better retention of employees from under-represented groups.**

Ahead of the event, participants responded to a survey crafted by our planning committee, meant to get at common interests and provide an opportunity to suggest session themes. From this survey, 24 possible topics were derived. Participants indicated their interest in joining sessions in a dot-voting exercise conducted over breakfast, and collaboratively assembled an unconference program, on the fly. A full schedule is available online: <https://forum2017.diglib.org/schedule/>.

Ultimately, we hosted 12 small-group discussions and 20 lightning talks on various themes. Discussions for which materials are available are listed below.

Topic	Notes/Slides
Diverse, Inclusive, and Equitable Metadata	<a href="http://bit.ly/DLFs1a">bit.ly/DLFs1a</a>
Inter-institutional Collaboration: Building Networks of Practice and Projects	<a href="http://bit.ly/DLFs1b">bit.ly/DLFs1b</a>
Fellowships and Residency Programs	<a href="http://bit.ly/DLFs1c">bit.ly/DLFs1c</a>
Social Justice Principles in Online Spaces	<a href="http://bit.ly/DLFs2a">bit.ly/DLFs2a</a>
Digital Library Repositories	<a href="http://bit.ly/DLFs2b">bit.ly/DLFs2b</a>
Fundraising/Funding Digital Projects	<a href="http://bit.ly/DLFs2c">bit.ly/DLFs2c</a>
DH/DS Projects as a Means of Amplifying Underrepresented Voices + Reflecting Cultural Diversity	<a href="http://bit.ly/DLFs3a">bit.ly/DLFs3a</a>
Digital Pedagogy and Meaningfully Integrating Students into DH Research Projects	<a href="http://bit.ly/DLFs3b">bit.ly/DLFs3b</a>
Partnerships That Have Worked	<a href="http://bit.ly/DLFs3c">bit.ly/DLFs3c</a>
Diversity and User Experience/Accessibility	<a href="http://bit.ly/DLFs4a">bit.ly/DLFs4a</a>

A full listing of lightning talks is available here: <http://sched.co/Bzro> and compiled slides are online: <https://osf.io/n2bj9/>. Other user-contributed presentation materials from the broader DLF Forum are available at: <https://osf.io/view/forum2017/>.

Among the generally-shared agreements among participants and recommendations that emerged from the DLF/HBCUs Pre-Conference are the following:

- ❖ “Neutrality” (whether in collection development, designing library systems and services, or providing access to library spaces) is in fact inaction against systems of oppression.
- ❖ When it comes to ethically archiving anonymous online spaces, collection development policies should be based on impact to populations served rather than on ideas of subject matter abstracted from peoples’ lived experience.
- ❖ People from Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) must actively exercise skills in listening and following collaborators’ leads when partnering with communities of color. Project charters can help support clear and equitable partnerships.
- ❖ Fellowship and residency programs meant to result in greater diversity within host institutions should ask as much of institutional leaders and local mentors as they do of the resident fellow. More training and preparation to host is required.
- ❖ Getting involved in the review process is one concrete way to change the standards of the granting and accrediting bodies that shape our workforce.

- ❖ No single technical platform can provide a comprehensive solution to preservation and access. Librarians must be supported to engage across the spectrum of systems and tools.
- ❖ The vendor-provided systems that smaller institutions tend to use can be improved when librarians stress the fact that accessibility is not just “nice to have,”—it’s the law.
- ❖ Digital pedagogy assignments should be designed so that students’ collaborative processes as well as their end products can be valued and assessed.
- ❖ HBCUs have long been collecting and cultivating expertise in subject areas and communities that PWIs are just beginning to take an interest in; there is much to share and learn.

The Pre-Conference was an event oriented around an important community of HBCU and liberal arts practitioners in the digital library sphere, which is often driven by the concerns of relatively resource-rich, predominantly white research institutions. As organizers of both the Pre-Conference and DLF Forum, we held an intersectional feminist understanding of the way in which oppressions overlap in American society and can emerge against an individual who may be seen to fit multiple categories: racial, ethnic, and religious, gender- and sexuality-based, or those based in disability, non-neurotypicality, background, self-expression, and/or class, among others. We therefore ran both programs under the **DLF Code of Conduct** and worked with a second iteration of a new, dedicated Forum Inclusivity Committee to foster a nurturing and welcoming environment for all. Specific measures taken include: provision of subsidized childcare, scholarships and discounted registration opportunities, gender-neutral bathrooms, a quiet room, color-coded lanyards for photography preferences, badges that reflect preferred pronouns, accessible spaces for all, accessibility tips for presenters and moderators, and attention to dietary preferences, and mobility and other needs.

**A Code of Conduct helps create thoughtful and respectful environments** by providing guidelines for members of the community.

*“The DLF is committed to creating and supporting inclusive, diverse, and equitable communities of practice. We strive to be a welcoming organization and the focal point for a digital library culture that is anti-oppression, recognizes intersectionalities, and works compassionately across difference.”*

—From the DLF Code of Conduct ([diglib.org/about/code-of-conduct](https://diglib.org/about/code-of-conduct))

During the Pre-Conference, especially, we tried to place the desires and needs of HBCU participants and people w/HBCU experience firmly in the driver’s seat. Planners and volunteers were committed to gently and constructively redirecting any conversations that may have started to privilege already privileged perspectives. This experience and commitment translated directly



into the Forum that followed, leading to what we perceived as an improved climate for all. These are **lessons the DLF is taking into moderator and volunteer training** for future events.

## What's next for the Alliance and DLF?

**W**e look forward to the possibility of more work together, and are actively seeking funding opportunities that would allow us to **extend and expand our DLF-HBCU Fellowships model**, beginning in 2019. Our ideal program would support conference travel for fellowship winners, as we did in 2017, but bring in additional, needed elements identified by our Pre-Conference participants and HBCU Library Alliance Board and DLF Advisory Committee members.



*Monika Rhue, Board Chair of the HBCU Library Alliance, speaks at the closing panel of the 2017 DLF Forum while Sandra Phoenix and DLF Records Transparency/Accountability working group chair Rachel Mattson look on.*

These include: a cohort-based approach to fellowships, in which Fellows really get to know each other and have a chance to forge long-term shared strategies and supportive relationships; professional development programming that extends what would otherwise be a one-off conference experience to virtual networking and learning opportunities *year-round*; a mentoring program for Fellows that engages volunteer mentors from both the Alliance and DLF communities and taps into their professional networks and hard-won expertise; and additional opportunities, such as seed money for collaborative projects, that could help Fellows become a vector for promoting deepened and ongoing connections at the *institutional* level, among Alliance and DLF member organizations.

Beyond future grant-seeking to support DLF-HBCU Fellows, our experience in shaping this project together in authentic partnership has led to a shared commitment to working together more generally, in ways that we think are beneficial and sustainable for our membership organizations in the long term. Specific areas of mutual interest and exploration include:

- ❖ Possibilities for a DLF/HBCU Library Alliance exchange program, in which team members could spend time in residency in partnering institutions, to work on projects of shared strategic importance.

- ❖ Specific collaborations between HBCU Library Alliance and DLF working groups around digital collections, emerging trends and challenges, or new technologies.
- ❖ Fostering deeper regional connections among leadership and staff of HBCUs and DLF member organizations working in the same cities or geographic areas.
- ❖ Leveraging expertise in both our communities to provide consulting on digital library systems and infrastructure, teaching, and collections-building programs.

Our respective 2018 conferences will provide a next fruitful opportunity for the HBCU Library Alliance and Digital Library Federation to intersect. The theme of the **Alliance’s bi-annual membership meeting** is: “The Transforming HBCU Library

Alliance: Revisit, Refocus, Reframe.” It will be held on October 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> at the Atlanta University Center Woodruff Library, with a keynote to be delivered by Jacob Nadal, Director of Preservation at the Library of Congress. The **2018 DLF Forum** will be held in Las Vegas, Nevada, October 15-17<sup>th</sup>, with a pre-conference workshop day on the 14<sup>th</sup>, and *Digital Preservation 2018* immediately following, October 17-18<sup>th</sup>. The Forum will be keynoted by Anasuya Sengupta of the “Whose Knowledge?” campaign, delivering a talk entitled “Decolonizing Knowledge, Decolonizing the Internet: an agenda for collective action.”



*DLF HBCU Fellows gather for a photo with Sandra Phoenix of the HBCU Library Alliance at the 2017 DLF Forum.*

Finally, we’re excited to announce that, through the generosity of its member organizations, the Digital Library Federation will be able to keep up momentum by supporting **ten travel fellowships** for HBCU librarians to attend the 2018 DLF Forum.

These fellowships will include free registration, lodging, and all meals during the conference, along with supplemental funding to offset the cost of travel and incidentals. Details and a call for applications will be posted online when available: <https://forum2018.diglib.org/>

## Get in touch!

**W**e warmly invite your feedback on further possible areas for collaboration between the HBCU Library Alliance and the Digital Library Federation. Whether you come from one of our membership organizations, represent another potential partnering group, or are just an interested individual with ideas to share—please get in touch!



*Bethany Nowviskie, Sandra Phoenix, and HBCU Library Alliance Board members Jean Greene and Monika Rhue smile for the camera.*

Send feedback and suggestions to both our organizations using our partnership contact form, at:

<https://www.diglib.org/hbcu-library-alliance/>



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