

eBlackChampaign-Urbana OVCPE public engagement grant final report

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The eBlackChampaign-Urbana (eBlackCU) project grew out of three initiatives of the Community Informatics Research Lab at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science:

- Since Spring 2009 GSLIS students and the Community Informatics Club have worked with the Early American Museum in Mahomet to find ways to use digital technology to bring to life the un-cataloged Doris K. Wylie Hoskins Archive for Cultural Diversity, a community archive of local African-American history;
- Since 2007 the Lab has worked on eChampaign-Urbana, creating a census of public computing in Champaign-Urbana and working on the grant proposal for Urbana Champaign-Big Broadband (UC2B), especially the above-ground, public computing aspects of the proposal;
- Since 2000, Professor Abdul Alkalimat has worked on eBlackStudies, a project to completely integrate digital technology into all aspects of African-American Studies, moving the field from ideology to information and data-intensive research.

These separate strands are united in the theory and practice of community informatics, or the study of how the historical, local, organic communities interact with the revolutionary transformations of digital technology on community life.

The eBlackChampaign-Urbana (eBlackCU) project set out to investigate how African-American community archiving, by both established public repositories and local citizens, could and is being transformed by the powers of digital technology. The project was originally designed to fit into the broad-scale development of public computing centers funded by UC2B. However, since the above-ground portion of the UC2B grant was left un-funded, the project team for eBlackCU had to re-assess its strategy in light of this gap in its overall strategic sustainability plan.

This re-assessment led the project team to change its original plan by:

- Hiring local African-American youth to serve as eBlackCU interns instead of the originally proposed graduate hourly technical support staff. This change was deemed necessary since in the absence of UC2B funds to hire local cyber-organizers the project team had to demonstrate its commitment to community concerns through financial investment in local workforce;
- Organizing a large, two-day eBlackCU Campus-Community Symposium instead of the smaller half-day symposium originally proposed in the grant. This broadening of the scope and aims of the symposium to include many aspects of community life and technology was deemed necessary since without the UC2B above-ground funds the project team had to find ways to inspire conversation and resource sharing around technology and community-life, especially in the under-served yellow areas that will receive free installation of fiber-to-the-premise through the UC2B below-ground grant.

These modifications are reflected in the differences between our proposed and actual budget (below).

Despite these modifications of our original plan, the eBlackCU project was still able to move forward in its original mission to experimentally develop a digital community archive on local African-American history and culture with active participation of multiple community partners. The original partners in the project were: Champaign County Historical Archives, Early American Museum, American History Teachers Collaborative, and Michael Pollock of Urbana High School. Additional partners who joined the project throughout the year include: Salem Baptist Church, North First Street Business Association, National Council of Negro Women Champaign County, Women of Prestige Champaign County, University of Illinois Office of Equal Opportunity and Access, University of Illinois Library and Archives, and the Community Informatics and Informatics Student Clubs.

The following section briefly describes each partners' role in the development of the

eBlackChampaign-Urbana Project, demonstrating eBlackCU's deep engagement in the community:

- Champaign County Historical Archives (CCHA), Urbana Free Library – the CCHA provided the eBlackCU project team with almost unlimited access to their holdings on African-American history, including advice on where to look and access to the Archives' over-sized scanner and photo-copier scanner for digitization needs. The project team digitized approximately 10% of the Archives' named holdings on African-American history – including oral histories, records of the Champaign County Urban League and its local African-American newspaper collection;
- Early American Museum (EAM), Champaign County Forest Preserve – the EAM provided unlimited access to its Doris K. Wylie Hoskins Archive for Cultural Diversity, including shipping portions of the Archive from Mahomet to Salem Baptist Church throughout the Summer to allow the eBlackCU interns to easily digitize and describe approximately 20% of the Archives, with a special focus on digitizing the photographs and scrapbooks in the Archives;
- American History Teachers Collaborative (AHTC), Urbana School District – The AHTC allowed the eBlackCU interns to present their work at their Summer Institute on Civil Rights, with history and social science teachers from across East and Central Illinois in attendance. The AHTC also posted news on the eBlackCU project through its digital communications channels;
- Michael Pollock, Social Science Teacher, Urbana High School – Mr. Pollock, an early advocate for the project, provided advice throughout the project on how we could make eBlackCU into something more user-friendly in the classroom;
- Salem Baptist Church – Salem Baptist Church worked with the eBlackCU project throughout the entire year, with the project director attending its weekly Cyber-Church committee meetings to get a better sense of how the eBlackCU project could fit into the church's overall strategic mission to integrate technology into its community work. The church also opened its doors to host the summer eBlackCU interns every morning from June 7 to August 13 and also allowed the project to use its parking lot for the community-campus shuttle operated during the eBlackCU Campus-Community Symposium;
- North First Street Business Association – the eBlackCU project director was invited to attend North First Street Business District meetings in Spring 2010 to see how the project could fit into the Associations' needs. The eBlackCU team was invited to host an oral history day at the North First Street Farmers' Market. The oral history day was organized, advertised and staffed by the eBlackCU interns, who also created posters on the area's history which were donated to a local business, Rose & Taylor's Barbershop, where they continue to hang in their windows;
- National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), Champaign County Chapter – The NCNW served as co-sponsors of the eBlackCU Campus-Community Symposium, providing volunteer support throughout the event;
- Women of Prestige, Champaign County - The Women of Prestige served as co-sponsors of the eBlackCU Campus-Community Symposium, providing volunteer support throughout the event;
- University of Illinois Office of Equal Opportunity and Access (OEOA) – The OEOA sent a staff representative to eBlackCU planning meetings in Spring/Summer to offer support and advice. The OEOA also dedicated \$2000 to the eBlackCU Campus-Community Symposium to support food and printing costs associated with the event;
- University of Illinois Library and Archives – The UI Library and Archives allowed the eBlackCU project team to access and digitize records, publications, theses and dissertations documenting the University of Illinois' historical foot-print in the local African-American community. The eBlackCU team digitized approximately 5 % of the University Archives' holdings on local African-American history and approximately 90 % of the University Library's theses/dissertations on local African-American history and culture. The digitized theses and dissertations represent one of the most complete collections in the eBlackCU digital library.

Both the library and archives also provided advice throughout the project, with representatives from each attending eBlackCU planning meetings;

- Community Informatics Club/Informatics Club – These registered student organizations of the University of Illinois provided volunteer labor to support the Campus-Community Symposium.

eblackCU by the numbers

Throughout the year 2010, over 600 theses, dissertations, commemorative church programs, newspapers, scrapbooks, photographs, articles and Cotillion year-books were digitized, described, arranged and incorporated into the eBlackCU digital library. These 600 digital items include approximately 45,000 total pages of texts and photographs. This massive collaborative digitization effort required the labor of the eBlackCU interns, local African-American high school and community-college aged youth who received both training in digital technology and in the work ethic expected for excellence at the University of Illinois. Each day of the internship the youth digitized approximately 150 pages of texts, in addition to other duties.

The eBlackCU interns were strategically recruited to represent multiple sub-communities within Champaign County. Interns represented: Urbana High School, Champaign Central High, Judah Christian High, University Laboratory High School, Rantoul High School and Parkland College, as well as Salem Baptist Church, New Free Will Baptist Church, Dublin Street Church of God and Church of the Living God. Efforts were made to engage the interns not as atomized youth, but rather to use the interns' personal connections to engage with the communities and social networks they represented. Forty people attended the final ceremony for the eBlackCU interns at Champaign Public Library on August 13, 2010.

According to site statistics, 2655 absolutely unique visitors viewed 16,834 pages in the eBlackCU library, with views and visitors increasing throughout the year. Personal communications expressing gratitude for the project came from former African-American residents in Champaign-Urbana now living in 5 states: Colorado, Minnesota, Tennessee, Kentucky and Georgia.

Thirty-three University of Illinois students, faculty and staff attended planning meetings for the eBlackCU Campus-Community Symposium throughout the year, which were also attended by 17 community individuals. These meetings represented opportunities for University individuals and units doing engagement and research in the local community to come together and build collaborations.

185 people attended all or part of the eBlackChampaign-Urbana Campus-Community Symposium, held November 5 and 6 at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science and the Douglass Annex, to facilitate the creation of unity around technology and the future of the local community, as well as campus engagement in the local African-American community. 120 people have signed our manifesto to become difference makers, a document we designed to get people literally on the same page around the need to work together to get digital technology productively integrated into all aspects of community life and campus-community engagement.

Community Engagement @ Illinois: Connecting Research and Service at the University of Illinois, a 220 page book edited for and released at the eBlackCU Symposium, featured documentation of 64 current and/or recently complete community engagement and research projects involving the local African-American community. 43 academic and engagement units and departments of the University of Illinois were represented in the book. Difference Makers 2010, the second publication released at the Symposium, honoring 103 difference-makers in the lives of local African-Americans was compiled and organized based on research done with and through the eBlackCU digital library.

The eBlackCU digital library was also cited in one Master's thesis from Eastern Illinois University in Communications. The library has been incorporated into library education sessions taught by Afro-Americana librarian Thomas Weissinger throughout the year. We anticipate scholarly, family history and local history research, both on- and off-campus, being supported by the eBlackCU library and related publications in the future.

Appendix I: Actual and Proposed Budgets for eBlackCU

Public Engagement Actual Budget – BOLD = positive; REGULAR = negative

\$20,000.00	budgeted amount received
\$2,000.00	OEOA funds
\$2,000.00	Hourly wages – Noah Lenstra
\$128.53	Salem Baptist Church supplies
\$1,321.50	eBlackCU Symposium supplies and catering
\$50.40	Digital Curation Conference Poster
\$354.37	eBlackCU Symposium supplies: Difference Makers booklet printing
\$159.86	Hourly wages- Jaime Carpenter (Fall 2010)
\$123.20	AAHGS-Chicago Marketing Trip
\$235.70	Digitization Supplies
\$550.00	eBlackCU Symposium advertisement
\$293.20	eBlackCU t-shirts
\$135.68	pizza & groceries for interns final reception
\$6,543.00	eBlackCU intern salaries
\$88.13	eBlackCU poster printing (research showcase)
\$1,284.52	eBlackCU intern supplies
\$2,500.00	Community Engagement @ Illinois book printing
\$22,000.00	TOTAL POSITIVE BALANCE
\$15,768.09	TOTAL NEGATIVE BALANCE
\$6,231.91	REMAINDER (TO BE USED FOR eBlackCU 2011 project)

Public Engagement Proposed Budget	
Graduate hourly research assistant	12500
Travel budget	\$500.00
eBlackCU advertising and public programming supply budget	\$6,000.00
eBlackCU Symposium supplies	\$1,000.00