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This study examines the state of online access to African-American archival collections in North Carolina. To measure the relative progress made in providing online access to African-American materials in recent years, as online access to archival materials in general has increased, a survey was conducted that compared current data collected from North Carolina institutions against the information for those same institutions that appears in the *Guide to African-American Documentary Resources in North Carolina*, published online in 1996. Using criteria derived both from the 1996 *Guide* and from what might be expected of online access to archival materials at the present, the study reveals that only 15 of the 41 institutions appearing in the 1996 *Guide* demonstrated significant progress in online access to their African-American holdings. The 15 institutions included mainly well-funded universities, but also smaller institutions that made progress largely through collaborative efforts and/or successfully pursuing funding from outside sources.

Headings:

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THE STATE OF INTERNET ACCESS TO NORTH CAROLINA AFRICAN-
AMERICAN ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

by
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1: Introduction

African-American archival collections feature materials that provide resources for study of both the historical African-American experience as well as American history as a whole. North Carolina especially is a state rich in African-American history and heritage, with a long past of African-American cultural and historical contributions that are reflected in the archival collections and primary sources found in repositories across the state. These collections are held by all types of institutions, large and small, from public to private, and from academic to government facilities. All of these materials represent valuable resources documenting the history of both famous and everyday African Americans, and collectively contribute to the preservation of the historical record of North Carolina African Americans as well as the history and shared experience of all North Carolinians.

Providing access to these materials serves to promote the use of this historical record, offering extensive research and educational opportunities. While institutional finding aids providing information and access exist as physical documents that may be used onsite at repositories, in the 21st-century research and educational environment there is also the need for online access to resources. Recent years have seen the archives community nationwide move important resources online to meet these developing research needs. It is important that this trend also include the holders of African-American archival collections in North Carolina, so that the Internet can be used to provide continued access to these valuable resources.

In 1996 the *Guide to African-American Documentary Resources in North Carolina* was published online. At this time, there were relatively few people using the Internet, and the amount of information provided online by archival institutions was small. This *Guide* sought to promote “wider knowledge of the more than 2,500 African-American collections and tens of thousands of volumes of printed works in the Tarheel State's more than forty-five repositories of these materials” (Moltke-Hansen, 1996). The *Guide*'s beginnings came out of the work of the North Carolina African-American Archives Group, which was formed in 1989 and included members from institutions across the state. The work to create the *Guide* continued with a 1992 National Historical Publications and Records Commission grant that was awarded to the North Carolina African American Archives Group for the statewide surveying of African American holdings. The final *Guide* was edited by Timothy Pyatt and published in print form in 1995 and then electronically in 1996 by the University Press of Virginia. Included in this *Guide* was information then available on the collections of original research materials documenting African Americans that was held in North Carolina repositories.

Since the time the *Guide* was published, usage of the Internet has exploded, with nearly all institutions now hosting their own Web pages where few existed in 1996. It seems logical that the progress made in this area should coincide with increases in online access to African-American materials held in these institutions. The primary focus of this paper will be to determine if such progress has indeed been made by exploring what current levels of online access to North Carolina African-American archival collections are available to today's researchers. To do this, the paper will compare data collected from the present websites of institutions that house African-American collections against

the information provided for those same institutions in the 1996 *Guide to African-American Documentary Resources in North Carolina*. This comparison will allow analysis of the progress made in online access to these collections since the widespread adoption of the Internet.

2: Literature Review

Throughout the history and development of physical archives, one major overarching purpose has always been providing access to the unique historical collections they house. This fundamental principle is outlined in a 1994 official statement from the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), which stated:

A repository should not deny access to materials to any researcher, nor grant privileged or exclusive use of materials to any researcher, nor conceal the existence of any body of material from any researcher, unless required to do so by statutory authority, institutional mandate, or donor or purchase stipulation. (Association of College and Research Libraries [ACRL], 1994)

This statement emphasized the importance of the archival mission to provide equal access to all materials and collections. Not only did this ACRL statement emphasize access, but it also went further, calling on the institution to do whatever possible to inform the public of the archival materials available in its possession:

As the accessibility of material depends on knowing of its existence, it is the repository's responsibility to inform researchers of the collections in its custody. This may be accomplished through local, regional, or national catalogs; inventories and other internal finding aids; published guides; and the assistance of staff members. (ACRL, 1994)

This section of the statement takes on new meaning in the age of online research. With the widespread use of the Internet, the best way for an institution to meet these goals may be to place information about its holdings, digital representations of its holdings, or both online in order to successfully reach the largest number of researchers. The institutional goals have not changed in the current age, but the Internet has provided a brand new avenue of providing widespread access to archival collections.

2.1 Internet Access to Archival Collections Through Metadata Online

As we move into the digital information age, the Internet has opened up new ways to communicate and exchange information that can be used by archivists to make their collections more widely available. As institutions have begun to widely adopt the Internet, many have used it to publish holdings information online. This institutional holdings information can take many forms, such as simple or complex finding aids on the archival repository's own website or MARC records in an institution's main online library catalog. This information may also be seen in the form of Dublin Core or other types of metadata records that accompany online digitized versions of archival materials.

Richard Cox (1998) writes extensively on the potential benefits and challenges faced by archivists using the Internet to increase access to archival special collections. He talks generally about finding aids online, whether online versions of existing paper-based finding aids or finding aids newly created for the Internet. This process of making "finding aids directly available to users for searching, retrieval, and display has the potential of shifting part of the reference burden, especially the initial stages, from the staff to the user" (Cox, 1998, p.30). But Cox also cautions against providing Web pages that heavily utilize professional jargon and do not attempt to reach new audiences. In order to fully utilize the Internet to increase access, Cox suggests that archivists use creative approaches. It would be easy for archivists to "litter the World Wide Web with useless and non-understandable gateways to their repositories," but this would result in a "lost opportunity to enter into the public forum and to reveal the relevance of what [archivists] do" (Cox, p. 33). Cox's statements on using the Internet as an access tool are

important to examine, as he suggests moving beyond providing access simply through finding aids to doing everything possible to bring actual materials into the public forum through digitization and presentation on the Web.

2.2 Digitization and Access to Archival Collections

Another way in which archival institutions are currently using the Internet to increase access to collections is through digitization projects. Creating online digital images of primary source materials--correspondence, diaries, photographs, etc.--is seen by many as the best way to provide access to collections via the Internet. Anjana Bhatnagar (2006) touts some of these benefits in his examination of digitization efforts by academic libraries. Digitized collections are able to offer 24/7 remote access, as well as provide multiple points of simultaneous access to a single resource (Bhatnagar, pp. 40-41). Allowing multiple remote users full visual access to materials seems to ease some of the online services burden on archives staff as well as to greatly assist the online researcher. According to Bhatnagar, digitized materials can also raise currently unattainable expectations in the researcher. Users of digitized collections may have a tendency to believe that every collection has been digitally scanned and that all the information they seek is available online, and there is the risk that they may ignore the materials that have not been digitized. They may thereby fail to “understand or appreciate the scope of the collection and its relationship to other parts of the collection” (Bhatnagar, p. 42). Furthermore, while digitized collections may increase access, they also can place limitations on users without the appropriate computer software and stable Internet connections necessary to view the materials (Bhatnagar, p. 42). While computer

usage and access to the Internet has increased exponentially over the past ten years, these potential barriers to equal access must still be considered as it cannot be assumed that digitized collections are reaching all persons equally.

Along with the potential benefits of online digital images, the actual cost of digitization projects to archival institutions must also be examined. Even a relatively small digitization project can cause a huge expense to the parent organization, due to the many different components of a successful digital project. Digitization requires hardware such as scanners and computers, software such as imaging programs, a large amount of server space, as well as training and staffing costs (Wisser, 2006). For smaller archival institutions, these costs may be impossible to overcome. Outside sources of funding, such as grant funding, collaboration with other institutions, etc., therefore become necessary to accomplish digitization projects. Grant programs, such as those offered by North Carolina Exploring Cultural Heritage Online (NC ECHO) and funded by the State Library's implementation of the federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), exist specifically to fund digitization projects. NC ECHO offers a variety of grant opportunities, from digitization starter grants that support the purchase of equipment and training to help libraries beginning to digitize their special collections to multi-year, multi-institutional grants that support complex, extensive digitization projects (State Library of North Carolina, 2006).

In addition to grant funding, collaborative efforts among institutions, especially between large and small repositories, can be another way to ease the burden of the large costs of digitization projects. North Carolina's valuable African-American collections

are housed at both large and small institutions, and collaborations between institutions that hold these materials have the potential to benefit all involved:

The larger institutions within the state, many of which are nationally and internationally recognized, often have greater fiscal and staffing resources. Many have begun digitization or are well into the process. When smaller institutions begin to plan for digitizing their collections, they may want to collaborate with their colleagues at the larger institutions. Larger institutions may, in turn, wish to reach out to smaller, local institutions in order to expand their intellectual base. Often holdings at one institution can be linked to holdings at another or institutions can share in the development of a digital archive built around a particular concept. Small institutions can learn from the larger institution's practices and successes, while contributing valuable insight on content and organization as well as a reality check for technical experimentation. (Wisser, 2006)

These types of collaborations, as well as outside sources of grant funding, are ways to ensure that materials from all institutions can be represented and accessed through the growing number of online digitization projects. These efforts are especially important in North Carolina, where many African-American collections are housed at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) that often operate in the face of inadequate resources. Karen L. Jefferson (1992) writes that, "Black college archives seem to remain in perpetual crisis against budget reductions and downsizing" and are challenged "to not only survive the budget cuts, but to overcome this legacy of inadequate support, inadequate funding, and insufficient and inappropriate facilities" (p. 106).

2.3 Current State of Online Access to African-American Archival Collections

Because of the funding inadequacies faced by many of the institutions that hold African-American records, it is very important to examine the shift towards online access to archival materials within the specific context of African-American historic collections. Stanton F. Biddle (2000) writes that archivists working with African-American materials

face two major challenges in the current online research age: “The first is the need to become aware of the rapidly changing wealth of resources available on the World Wide Web ... the second is the need to develop plans and strategies for digitizing one’s own collections and making them available on the World Wide Web” (p. 231). Biddle warns of the possibility of institutions being bypassed by researchers unless they adopt the new methods of online access. With most initial research currently being done online, it is possible that “unless scholars are able to ascertain the scope and range of resources available at these institutions [that hold African-American materials], they are less likely to invest the time, energy, and expense it requires to make site visits and examine original materials, regardless of how well they might be organized and preserved” (Biddle, p. 234). This underscores the fundamental necessity of using the Internet to provide some level of access to archival collections.

The growing trend towards digitization as an avenue to increased access is further examined in the specific context of African-American records by Murle E. Kenerson. Kenerson (1997) examines the issues surrounding the digitizing of African-American archival materials, asking if digitization is “a true revolution in the effort to ensure more access to and preservation of African-American collections” and whether this process will allow “what has been for too long hidden resources to at last be revealed to all” (p. 7). Kenerson looks at the digitization of African-American archival collections as the “logical extension of the other technological innovations revolutionizing the academic library” (p. 3). While digitization is promoted as an excellent way of providing new levels of access to these collections, she also addresses the issue of funding. As explained above, the cost of digital imaging technology is very high, and keeping up-to-

date with this technology can be a large expense to the parent institution. Kenerson, though, concludes that digitization of African-American materials is incredibly important in the current information age, and recommends that institutions do whatever they can to fit the latest technologies into their budgets. Her suggestions include keeping the technology as simple as possible to keep costs down, looking for grant money to fund these efforts, and digitizing only the materials projected to have the highest research value (Kenerson, p. 6).

Following the work of Kenerson, Elaine L. Westbrook (1999) surveyed a sample of African-American digital collections on the Internet. Westbrook examines a sample of 20 digitized African-American collections, looking at their research value as well as any surrounding issues and trends. The institutions Westbrook surveyed were specially selected to include representatives from four categories: stand-alone archives, academic libraries, public libraries, and government institutions. The goal for each institution's digital projects was to increase access to archival materials, but Westbrook's analysis brings into question how well that was accomplished. What she discovered was great diversity among the digital collections she examined, which was due, in some part, to the diversity in institutions surveyed. This is important to consider when examining North Carolina's various African-American archival collections. While most are housed in academic libraries within academic institutions, those institutions vary widely between large and small, public and private, and other important factors. Westbrook concludes in her study that many of the digital collections she examined serve broad audiences and do not support scholarly research, existing as "nothing more than glamorized exhibitions serving as institutional advertisements" (Westbrook). She suggests more user studies

aimed at better understanding the needs of researchers and justifying the larger expenses associated with digitization projects that are more than simple Web pages. The importance of African-American digital projects is promoted in her conclusion: “[T]he final (and minimal) goal for all institutions should be to have well-planned digital collections that are practical, meaningful, and user centered” (Westbrooks).

While not focused specifically on African-American archives, research by Lorraine Normore (2004) offers interesting insights relating to improving understanding of issues surrounding special collections and online access through her survey of selected institutions of different types that provide such access. Normore examines a sample of 24 archives and special collections websites from a variety of institutions, including university libraries, state libraries, archives, and historical societies, all housing a diverse range of types of materials. Her research emphasizes access through the availability of online finding aids, external databases, digitized objects, and the presence of Web exhibits. Normore finds that the majority of the surveyed institutions offer some type of metadata, chiefly in the form of finding aids, and at least some selected digitized objects, but concludes that the better-endowed institutions are somewhat more likely to offer greater overall online access. To counteract any growing disparities in this area, Normore suggests large cooperative ventures among institutions as the best path for successful future growth in online access in order to ensure the inclusion of holdings from institutions with less funding available for such projects. Advances in online access are crucial, as “the value of a collection’s content derives from access. If people don’t know the content is available, it won’t be used. If it’s not used, it won’t be valued” (Normore).

Further research on African-American collections was done by Akilah Nosakhere (2004), who conducted a basic survey of archives and special collections staff at the libraries of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) that investigated their use of digital technology. Her research attempted to find common experiences in the execution of digital projects among archivists and librarians at HBCUs. While HBCU libraries are far from the only research institutions that hold archival collections relating to African-American history, Nosakhere's study was still able to reveal some important trends. Results of the study showed that few HBCU libraries had any sort of online presence for their archives and special collections, and of those that did, hardly any featured digital versions of their unique collections online. This leads Nosakhere to recommend that HBCU archives take actions towards digitization projects, using federal grant money if possible, in order to increase the accessibility, marketability, and commercial value of their historical collections.

3: Methodology

This study examines the progress made in online access to North Carolina African-American archival collections since the creation of the *Guide to African-American Documentary Resources in North Carolina* in 1996. To make a full comparison of the information currently available, the institutions examined were the same as those included in the 1996 *Guide*. The 41 institutions included in the *Guide* represent a wide spectrum of repositories, including those in public and private colleges and universities of various sizes, as well as several unaffiliated libraries and government institutions. Included among these institutions are ten of the state's eleven HBCUs: Bennett College, Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, Johnson C. Smith University, Livingstone College, North Carolina A&T State University, North Carolina Central University, Shaw University, St. Augustine's College, and Winston-Salem State University. For a list of all institutions included in the 1996 *Guide*, see *Appendix A: Institutions Included in the 1996 Guide to African-American Documentary Resources in North Carolina*.

In looking for Web pages for each institution's archives and special collections, the North Carolina Exploring Cultural Heritage Online (NC ECHO) institutional directory was used (<http://blue.dcr.state.nc.us/servlet/ascwg/search?qry=brinst>) to find the most specific URL available for each institution's archival collection. The content available on the home pages for the archives or special collections divisions at each institution was then evaluated to determine available levels of access via the Internet.

Content examined included contact information, reference services, collection descriptions, finding aids, digitized collections, online exhibits, the presence of information on outside funding sources, and any other information available online. Specifically examined was the overall body of collection information coupled with the level of description for items in each collection. Also examined were the online library catalogs at each institution that has an online catalog to evaluate the level of access to archival materials available through this research channel. For a complete list of evaluation criteria used to review each institution's online collection information, see *Appendix B: Content Examination Checklist for Online Access to African-American Archival Materials*.

This content, once evaluated for each institution using the set criteria, was then analyzed against the collection information provided in the 1996 *Guide to African-American Documentary Resources in North Carolina*. For each institution, the 1996 *Guide* provided contact information, visitor hours, services, and listings of the collections of African-American historical materials present, along with varying degrees of accompanying information. For some of the institutions this included only a one-sentence description along with information on the type of materials found in the collection. Other entries featured detailed descriptions of individual collections, with some also including introductions to the institution's historical efforts to collect African-American materials as well as collecting policies for these materials in place at the time. The resulting comparison between the entries from the 1996 *Guide* and the current data gathered in this study was then used to measure the progress made in online access to African-American collections in North Carolina since 1996.

4: Findings

The *Guide to African-American Documentary Resources in North Carolina* published online in 1996 provided information on African-American archival materials at 41 separate institutions. This survey examined the existing websites of all 41 institutions for information relating to African-American collection holdings. Only one of the surveyed institutions, the North Carolina African American Historical Society, no longer had an institutional Web presence. For the remaining 40 institutions, the presence of online information about African-American materials ranged from non-existent to detailed finding aids accompanied by digitized content. Even among the institutions that did feature some information on their African-American holdings on their websites, the extent of that information and the level of online access to the materials varied greatly.

4.1 Online Contact Information

In determining access to these African-American archival materials, the most basic element of the survey examined the presence of contact information online for the institution's archives or special collection department where those records are housed. The 1996 *Guide* provided contact information, including physical address and phone number, for all of the included institutions, along with hours and services provided. This information today, including email address, should be regarded as the first level of access for online researchers seeking collection information. Of the 40 institutions, 33 had some form of specific contact information for the archives or special collections division.

Twenty of those institutions included all three main forms of contact--physical address, phone number, and email address--on their Web pages. In addition, 13 institutions included specific links for submitting reference questions to the archives or special collections department, either via email or through an online form.

4.2 Information on African-American Collections

With the focus being on African-American collections at the surveyed institutions, the websites were reviewed for content in this area. Of the 40 institutions from the 1996 *Guide* with a Web presence, 23 of them currently have some mention of their African-American collections, while 17 of them have no information at all online concerning these materials. The 23 institutions with some mention of African-American collections were examined in depth to determine current levels of online access.

4.3 Current Information versus the 1996 *Guide*

A key component of the survey examined whether or not the same collection information found in the 1996 *Guide* was available online today. The range of collection information included in the 1996 *Guide* varied widely among institutions, but featured at least some mention of the types of African-American materials held by each. With all but one of these institutions now hosting their own Web pages, the information available in the 1996 *Guide* provided a base measure of progress in the area of online access. Of the 23 institutions with at least some mention of African-American holdings, 19 met this base criteria and were found to have at least as much information available on their websites as was included on the 1996 *Guide*. Significant progress was measured in this

study by identifying those institutions that currently include significantly more information than what was published in the 1996 *Guide*. It was found that 15 of the institutions surveyed currently feature significantly more information on their African-American collections when compared to the 1996 *Guide*. For a complete list of the 15 institutions that currently provide significantly improved access, see *Appendix C.1: Institutions Found with More Information on African-American Collections when compared with the 1996 Guide*.

4.4 Online Finding Aids

The 1996 *Guide* did not feature any complete finding aids to the included collections. The presence of finding aids on the surveyed websites would therefore indicate a major increase in online access to the collections. For this reason, one component of this survey specifically looked for the presence of online finding aids to African-American collections and examined how comprehensive the available ones are.

Fifteen institutions featured at least one finding aid for African-American materials on their websites, with another two institutions featuring some form of online index of African-American collections. The majority of these online finding aids provided collection information to the folder level, while also including background historical information, quantity of materials, types of materials, and access restrictions. In addition, nine of these institutions offer Encoded Archival Description (EAD) finding aids to African-American materials.¹ For a complete list of the institutions with online finding aids, see *Appendix C.2: Institutions with Online Finding Aids*.

¹ EAD is the current international structural standard for finding aids administered by the Society of American Archivists and the United States Library of Congress.

4.5 Digitization of Materials

One way in which archival institutions are using the Internet to provide access to their collections is through online digital images of selected materials. The presence of digitized versions of African-American collections online was reviewed because of its importance as a means of access. Twelve of the surveyed institutions offer online digital images of some portion of their African-American holdings. These digital offerings include many different types of materials and range from handwritten manuscripts to historic university catalogs to photograph collections. The amount of digital content also varies greatly, with some institutions offering only a handful of selected materials as online images. For a complete list of the institutions with online digital images, see *Appendix C.3: Institutions with Digital Images of African-American Collections*.

4.6 Online Exhibits

Along with digitized collections, online exhibits are another way to highlight featured collections and provide visual access to unique materials. For the purposes of this study, online exhibits must be clearly indicated on the institution's website, include visual content, and contain a significant amount of African-American materials with research, rather than simply pictorial, value. Eleven of the surveyed institutions were found to include online exhibits involving African-American archival material content. These online exhibits cover a range of topics: Winston-Salem State University's *Letters from 'Nam* exhibit features letters, memorabilia, and photos of Dwight Jones, a Winston-Salem native and Vietnam War veteran; Duke's *Digital Durham* exhibit, while not

entirely focused on African-American materials, includes digital images of the financial records of Durham-area African-American farmers among its featured documents. Other online exhibits highlight topics relating to the history of the parent institution, such as a historic look at Fayetteville State University's campus buildings or North Carolina State University's online University Archives exhibit entitled *African-Americans at N.C. State University*. For a complete list of the institutions with online exhibits, see *Appendix C.4: Institutions with Online Exhibits of African-American Materials*.

4.7 Online Library Catalog Access

Searching via an online catalog is one important way that remote researchers use the Internet to find materials, so this study sought out African-American archival collections through the main online library catalogs where available at each institution. Of the 15 institutions that currently offer significantly more online information than noted in the 1996 *Guide*, 12 are located within college and university library systems. Seven of these 12 institutions have online library catalogs that include information on African-American archival materials. The other three institutions are two public libraries and the North Carolina State Archives. The public libraries--the Greensboro Public Library and the Richard B. Harrison Library--did not offer complete access through their respective online library catalogs. The North Carolina State Archives features its own online catalog, Manuscript and Archives Reference System (MARS), which provides access to its collections.

The searches of the institution's main online library catalog were performed using search terms taken from the titles of previously located African-American collections,

such as names of individuals or organizations. Searches were also limited to the institution's archives or special collections department when possible in order to target specific areas. Of the institutions found to have catalog access to archival collections, searches by keyword or title produced full library catalog records including brief summaries of the collection, biographical notes, subject headings, as well as the amount and types of materials contained in that specific collection. For a complete list of institutions with online catalog access, see *Appendix C.5: Institutions with Access to African-American Archival Materials through the Online Library Catalog*.

4.8 Indications of Outside Funding Sources

The final component of the survey focused on indications of outside funding sources or collaborative efforts relating to providing online access to African-American collections. Of the 15 institutions that currently provide significantly more collection information than noted in the 1996 *Guide*, six of them indicate the presence of outside funding. Three of the institutions--Johnson C. Smith University, Fayetteville State University, and UNC-Greensboro--show participation in *Beyond Books and Buildings*, a project of NC ECHO documenting the history of higher education in North Carolina. An NC ECHO logo was also found on Shaw University's page of online digital content, along with this note: "digital project funding provided by Federal Library Services & Technology Act (LSTA)." Duke University's online exhibit, *Digital Durham*, was also shown to have been funded in part by NC ECHO. In addition, the Western North Carolina Heritage collaborative website, which is directly linked to from UNC-Asheville's archives and special collections site and includes digital images of materials

from African-American collections at UNC-Asheville, is also funded by NC ECHO. For a complete list of institutions whose websites refer to outside funding sources, see *Appendix C.6: Institutions with Online Indication of Outside Funding Sources*.

Collaboration is another means of gaining access to funding that a single institution may not be able to provide. The Western North Carolina Heritage site, which also includes materials from Appalachian State University, is an example of a collaborative effort among local institutions. Like outside grant funding, collaborative efforts are a way for institutions to make advances in providing online access when constrained by limited resources. Another collaborative effort revealed among the institutions in this survey was between UNC-Greensboro and the Greensboro Public Library. The resulting online project, *Greensboro Voices*, provides full and searchable transcriptions of oral history interviews relating to the civil rights movement in the Greensboro area. The 1996 *Guide's* full entry for the Greensboro Public Library's collections reads as follows: "Videos, audiotapes, and transcripts of interviews with people involved with the 1960 Woolworth's store sit-in. Also available is a bibliography of articles from the Greensboro newspapers concerning sit-in demonstrations." The entry for UNC-Greensboro is similarly brief: "The History Department conducted an oral history project related to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s in Greensboro and Guilford County. The audio tapes and transcripts from this project are part of Special Collections/University Archives." The current *Greensboro Voices* online project, though, actually includes the full transcripts of the oral history interviews from both these collections, along with biographical information on the interviewees. Comparing these two entries from the 1996 *Guide*, which represent the full body of online collection

information available in 1996, to the information resulting from the current collaborative effort reveals a great leap in online access to these valuable collections made in the ensuing time period.

5: Conclusions

Mary Jo Pugh wrote in 2004 that “archives at the millennium face a paradigm shift comparable to the invention of the printing press five centuries ago, perhaps even comparable to the invention of writing itself five millennia ago” (p. 1). The revolutionary changes cited by Pugh include increases in the availability and power of computers, increases in Internet connectivity, and increases in digital communications (pp. 1-3). Pugh’s commentary, while perhaps somewhat overstated, does reveal the technological developments behind the transformation in the way research is now typically conducted. Today’s researcher, both scholarly and casual, will oftentimes bypass an institution’s resources altogether if they cannot be discovered via the Internet. The 21st century almost necessitates that institutions, especially archives that hold unique materials that are not available or described elsewhere, offer information on the contents and range of their collections in some fashion online.

Taking this context into account, this paper hypothesized that online access to African-American archival collections would have greatly increased since the publication of the *Guide to African-American Documentary Resources in North Carolina* in 1996. This, however, was not the case for all institutions surveyed in this study. One institution had no Web presence at all, while another 17 institutions included no information online regarding their holdings of African-American archival collections. This means that for 18 of the 41 institutions surveyed (44%), the 1996 *Guide* is still the best source of information for their African-American holdings.

The survey results revealed that, of the 24 institutions with at least some mention of African-American holdings, only 19 of them have at least as much information available on their websites as was included on the 1996 *Guide*. With just less than half of the 41 institutions in the 1996 *Guide* now including at least that same information on their own websites, these results do not serve as an indicator of greatly increased access. The institutions that went beyond the information included in the 1996 *Guide* and showed major progress in online access to African-American materials were Duke University, Fayetteville State University, Greensboro Public Library, Johnson C. Smith University, North Carolina State Archives, North Carolina State University, Richard B. Harrison Public Library, Shaw University, UNC-Asheville, UNC-Chapel Hill, UNC-Charlotte, UNC-Greensboro, UNC-Wilmington, Wake Forest University, and Winston-Salem State University. This means that only 36.5% of the 41 institutions (15 institutions) in the 1996 *Guide* have made significant progress in online access to their African-American materials. Not surprisingly, the list includes the large state universities along with heavily endowed private institutions, such as Duke University and Wake Forest University. The findings are not all bleak, however, since the list also includes two public libraries and four of the state's HBCUs.

Results of the study indicate that three of the four HBCUs that made great progress in online access did so in major part due to digitization projects funded by NC ECHO grants. The websites of Johnson C. Smith University and Fayetteville State University indicate participation in the *Beyond Books and Buildings* project, which features digitization of materials relating to the history of both institutions. Shaw University includes the NC ECHO logo on its page of digital content, a series of

University academic catalogs dating from 1847 to 1901. The fourth HBCU that made great progress in online access, Winston-Salem State University, also features a large body of digitized content, but no outside funding source is cited. It must be assumed that no outside funding was received, because with digital projects “it is important to acknowledge funding sources ... presumably websites that do not post information are not being funded” (Westbrooks, 1999). The importance of outside funding sources and collaborative efforts to smaller archival institutions is evident in the fact that three of the four HBCUs with major increases in access used outside grant money to underwrite their success.

The main point here is that using grant money and collaborations to bridge the access gap between materials held by large and small institutions is important in this context because much African-American material is held by North Carolina’s HBCUs, only four of which made good progress in this area. Online access to many valuable collections at HBCUs that have not succeeded in garnering outside funding or forming collaborative partnerships is likely hindered by the limited resources available to these institutions. As these institutions continue to suffer from a lack of adequate financial, physical, and technological resources, they are prevented from making progress in providing online access to their archival collections, the importance of which is commented on by Stanton F. Biddle in the *Handbook of Black Librarianship*:

There is also a very critical need for institutions involved with documenting the African experience in America to become more involved in the use of the new advances in information technology to preserve and provide access to their resources. Although the government agencies appear to be making reasonable efforts to include African-American resources in their digitization programs ... very few historically black institutions or other research centers focusing on African-American historical documentation are making their presence felt on the Internet and World Wide Web. (p. 233)

The survey reveals this to be the case in North Carolina, with only four of the state's HBCUs having made significant progress in using the Internet to provide access to their historical collections. The importance of supporting and promoting access to the archival collections at HBCUs is of special importance because it is these institutions that hold a long legacy of preserving a historical record of the African-American experience, and also of providing educational resources for the African-American population. Karen Jefferson (1993) writes that archives and special collections at HBCUs have "a responsibility to be in the leadership of not only the preservation of Black history but also the promotion of that history" (p. 107). Promotion of that history, within an environment of limited resources, means utilizing available grant money and seeking out collaborations when necessary in order to continue to increase online access to archival collections.

Overall, the study concludes that, while progress has been made in online access to African-American collections, the level of progress has proven to be inconsistent among institutions. Archives have a duty to promote access to their collections, and usage of the Internet as an avenue of access has become a necessity in the current online research environment. The varying degrees of online access provided by the North Carolina archives and special collections repositories surveyed in this study are affected by the size of the parent institution and the availability of adequate funding. Much of the gains in online access, especially among smaller institutions, have been facilitated through grant funding and collaborative efforts between institutions. It is clear that the institutions with limited resources must explore these types of options in order to ensure proper access to their historical materials as new technologies and means of access

continue to develop. As this study has shown, such strategies are especially crucial for many of the institutions that hold materials documenting the state's African-American experience.

In fully examining the survey results, NC ECHO's North Carolina cultural heritage repository directory must also be taken into account. This site, which was created in the period between the 1996 *Guide* and the present, is available online (<http://blue.dcr.state.nc.us/servlet/aschwg/search?qry=brinst>) and features information on over 850 cultural repositories. It typically includes full contact information for the institutions, descriptions of the materials they hold, and actual photographs of the facility. In many cases, this information was more informative than what was currently offered on a given institution's own website. For example, the Bennett College website currently includes only the following information on its archival collections: "Materials about Bennett College are house [sic] in the lower level of the library" (Bennett College, 2007). The NC ECHO directory, on the other hand, offers the following information along with photographs of the archives and complete contact information:

The Special Collections at Bennett College, located in Holgate Library, consist of the African American Women collection, the selected papers from the Palmer Memorial Institute, and Bennett College archives. The University Archives is comprised of reports, letters, papers, photographs, books and other material relating to the history of Bennett College. (NC ECHO, Bennett College)

The St. Augustine's College archives, which has no information online whatsoever, can be discovered through its NC ECHO entry, which reads in part: "The library houses the College Archives, which includes dormant administrative records of the college, college publications, private manuscript collections, photographs, and more" (NC ECHO, St. Augustine's). The NC ECHO repository directory indicates that some increases in access

can be found outside the realm of the parent institutions. The importance of the NC ECHO site as a means of online access is clear in that the directory includes information on repositories whether they have their own Web presence or not. Because the NC ECHO website is relatively new and because NC ECHO itself has not been well publicized outside of the library and archival community, however, it is unlikely that researchers interested in finding African-American materials in North Carolina are aware of how useful the NC ECHO directory might be in their search. It is also true that the NC ECHO directory's primary purpose is to aggregate cultural heritage information, not to point to specific collections or items relating to specific subjects. It is also clear that institutions cannot rely on the sustainability of an organization like NC ECHO, which is itself grant-funded, to provide access to their materials into the future. It is, therefore, still important that each institution holding materials of historic interest takes responsibility for using the Internet to publicize and provide access to those materials. The recent years have seen the growth of the Internet provide institutions with a new and revolutionary way of reaching potential users, and the extent to which this new technology is used will ultimately determine the levels of usage of their unique archival collections.

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Appendix A: Institutions Included in the 1996 *Guide to African-American Documentary Resources in North Carolina*

American Dance Festival Archives
Appalachian State University
Bennett College
Brown Library, Washington
Cape Fear Museum
Carteret County Public Library
Cumberland County Public Library
Davidson Community College
Duke University
Durham County Library, Stanford L. Warren Branch Library
East Carolina University
Edgecombe County Public Library
Elizabeth City State University
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, North Carolina Synod Archives
Fayetteville State University
Forsyth County Public Library
Gaston County Museum of Art & History
Greensboro Public Library
Harnett County Library
Johnson C. Smith University
Livingstone College
Mars Hill College
N.C. A&T State University
N.C. State University
North Carolina African-American Historical Society
North Carolina Central University
North Carolina State Archives
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Rockingham Community College
Roman Catholic Diocese of Charlotte
Shaw University
Sheppard Memorial Library, Greenville
St. Augustine's University
UNC-Asheville
UNC-Chapel Hill
UNC-Charlotte
UNC-Greensboro
UNC-Wilmington
Wake County Public Library, Richard B. Harrison Library
Wake Forest University
Winston-Salem State University

Appendix B: Content Examination Checklist for Online Access to African-American Archival Materials

Institution:	
Contact information available for archives or special collections division (physical address, phone number, email address)?	
Online reference services available? (If so, how are questions submitted?)	
Can information on African-American collections or materials be found online?	
How are the collections described?	
To what level is collection description information available (series, folder, item, etc.)?	
Are the formats of materials clearly stated?	
Is the same collection information available on the 1996 <i>Guide</i> available?	
Is more detailed collection information available online than what was included in the 1996 <i>Guide</i> ?	
Are finding aids available online?	
To what level do the finding aids provide access (series, folder, item, etc.)?	
Are the finding aids encoded in EAD?	
Are digitized materials available?	
What types of materials have been digitized?	
Are online exhibits that feature African-American materials featured?	
Can the collections found be accessed through the main online library catalog (where available)?	
Is there any indication of outside funding sources (if so what is the source)?	
Is there any indication of collaborative efforts with other institutions?	

Appendix C.1: Institutions Found with More Information on African-American Collections when Compared with the 1996 *Guide*

Institution	Currently More Information Available on African-American Collections Compared with 1996 <i>Guide</i>?
Duke University	Yes
Fayetteville State University	Yes
Greensboro Public Library	Yes
Johnson C. Smith University	Yes
North Carolina Archives	Yes
N.C. State University	Yes
Richard B. Harrison Public Library	Yes
Shaw University	Yes
UNC-Asheville	Yes
UNC-Chapel Hill	Yes
UNC-Charlotte	Yes
UNC-Greensboro	Yes
UNC-Wilmington	Yes
Wake Forest University	Yes
Winston Salem State University	Yes

Appendix C.2: Institutions with Online Finding Aids

Institution	Online Finding Aids available for African-American Collections or Collections Mentioned in 1996 <i>Guide</i>?	Are Any of the Finding Aids Encoded in EAD?
American Dance Festival	Yes	No
Appalachian State University	Yes	Yes
Duke University	Yes	Yes
East Carolina University	Yes	Yes
Fayetteville State University	Yes	No
Greensboro Public Library	Index available	No
Johnson C. Smith University	Yes	No
North Carolina Archives	Yes	Yes
N.C. State University	Yes	Yes
Richard B. Harrison Public Library	Index available	No
Shaw University	Yes	No
UNC-Asheville	Yes	No
UNC-Chapel Hill	Yes	Yes
UNC-Charlotte	Yes	Yes
UNC-Wilmington	Yes	Yes
Wake Forest University	Yes	Yes
Winston Salem State University	Yes	No

Appendix C.3: Institutions with Digital Images of African-American Collections

Institution	Digital Images of African-American Collections Available Online?
Duke University	Yes
East Carolina University	Yes
Fayetteville State University	Yes
Johnson C. Smith University	Yes
North Carolina Archives	Yes
N.C. State University	Yes
Richard B. Harrison Public Library	Yes
Shaw University	Yes
UNC-Asheville	Yes
UNC-Chapel Hill	Yes
Wake Forest University	Yes
Winston Salem State University	Yes

Appendix C.4: Institutions with Online Exhibits of African-American Materials

Institution	Online Exhibits which Feature African-American Archival Materials?
Duke University	Yes
Fayetteville State University	Yes
Johnson C. Smith University	Yes
N.C. A&T State University	Yes
N.C. State University	Yes
Richard B. Harrison Public Library	Yes
UNC-Asheville	Yes
UNC-Chapel Hill	Yes
UNC-Charlotte	Yes
Wake Forest University	Yes
Winston Salem State University	Yes

Appendix C.5: Institutions with Access to African-American Archival Materials through the Online Library Catalog

Institution	Access to African-American Materials through the Main Online Library Catalog System?
Duke University	Yes
North Carolina Archives	Yes, MARS catalog
N.C. State University	Yes
UNC-Chapel Hill	Yes
UNC-Charlotte	Yes
UNC-Greensboro	Yes
UNC-Wilmington	Yes
Wake Forest University	Yes

Appendix C.6: Institutions with Online Indication of Outside Funding Sources

Institution	Online Indication of Outside Funding Source?	Source (if Indicated)?
Appalachian State University	Yes, Western North Carolina Heritage Site	NC ECHO
Duke University	Yes, “Digital Durham” online exhibit	NC ECHO
Fayetteville State University	Yes, participant in “Beyond Books and Buildings” project	NC ECHO
Johnson C. Smith University	Yes, participant in “Beyond Books and Buildings” project	NC ECHO
Shaw University	Yes	NC ECHO
UNC-Asheville	Yes, Western North Carolina Heritage Site	NC ECHO
UNC-Greensboro	Yes, participant in “Beyond Books and Buildings” project	NC ECHO