

A HISTORY OF FISK UNIVERSITY LIBRARY: 150 YEARS OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLIC HISTORY AND CULTURE, 1866 – 2016

by

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ABSTRACT

On January 9, 1866, a formal ceremony opened the doors of Fisk Free Colored School to educate whites and newly freed slaves in Nashville, Tennessee. This dissertation will argue that from the institution's opening in 1866, Fisk University Library evolved from a passive role of providing materials for students, faculty, and the public to a leadership role in the effort to collect, preserve, and shape the study of African American history and culture. By the twenty-first century, the library was a premier African American historical organization with connections to every sub-field of public history: oral history, archival science, historic preservation, programming, museum curatorship, documentary films, and digital humanities. Overall, this research will explore the various ways an underrepresented and under-studied group of people used their power and agency to produce a new historical narrative that included the contributions of Africans and African Americans to global society.

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This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Ola Joyce Owens, who passed away on February 12, 2019. I wish she was here to see the fruit of her prayers.

PREFACE

On January 9, 1866, a formal ceremony opened the doors of Fisk Free Colored School to educate whites and newly freed slaves in Nashville, Tennessee. Under the direction of the American Missionary Association (AMA), Rev. Erastus Milo Cravath, Rev. E. P. Smith, and John Ogden purchased an abandoned Union Army hospital complex, known as the Railroad Hospital, near the Union Depot in Nashville, Tennessee. They paid sixteen thousand dollars for the old barracks and converted all the buildings into a school. Within a year of opening, Fisk School taught approximately one thousand black and white students from the age of seven to seventy. It was named in honor of General Clinton B. Fisk, who financially, politically, and spiritually supported Cravath, Smith, and Ogden in their establishment of the institution. Fisk was a commissioned brigadier general for the Union Army during the Civil War. After the war, he was assigned to Nashville and appointed Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau for Kentucky and Tennessee. The Fisk Free Colored School continued to give thousands of black and white students a primary education until the city of Nashville opened its first public schools in the summer of 1867. At the same time, the academic progress of many of the students required Fisk School offer more advanced learning opportunities.¹

On August 22, 1867, the school was incorporated as Fisk University, making it the first institution devoted to African American higher education in the city of Nashville.

¹ Fisk University, *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee, for the Scholastic Year, 1892-1893* (Nashville, TN: Marshall & Bruce Stationers and Printers, 1893), 71; Fisk University, *History, Building and Site, and Services of Dedication, at Nashville, Tennessee, January 1st, 1876* (New York: Published for the Trustees of Fisk University, 1876), 5.

Since the establishment of Fisk University, its officials and faculty have made a conscious effort to give access to education and information regardless of race, creed, or economic status. The first graduating classes from Fisk's normal school and college courses included both blacks and whites. Likewise, the Fisk University Library has developed under the direction and guidance of educators and librarians of different races, genders, and ethnicities. All of them endeavored to collect, organize and provide access to materials related to the university's curriculum, history, and culture, but special attention was given to the collection, preservation, and promotion of African American history and culture.²

This institutional history of the Fisk University Library will examine its growth over the course of one-hundred fifty years and produce a narrative that reveals key moments in one historically black college and university (HBCU) library's development as an academic center for research in African and American history and culture. In this work, I argue that from the institution's founding in 1866, Fisk University Library has evolved from a passive role of providing materials for students, faculty, and the public to a leadership role in the effort to collect, preserve, and shape the study of African American history and culture. It will also show how, by the twenty-first century, the library became a premier African American historical organization with connections to every sub-field of public history: oral history, archival science, historic preservation, programming, museum curatorship, documentary films, and digital humanities. Overall, this research will shed light on the ways an underrepresented and under-studied group of

² Fisk University, *Catalogue, 1892-1893*, 70.

people used their power and agency to produce a new historical narrative that included the contributions of Africans and African Americans in a global society.

In *Silencing the Past: Power and Production of History*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, a Haitian professor of anthropology and social sciences at the University of Chicago, discusses how power has traditionally influenced historical narratives. According to Trouillot, those in power have continuously created a historical record that ignored, excluded, and silenced the stories of those without power. His research identified four critical moments when this power is used to influence the production of history: “the moment of fact creation (the making of sources);” “the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives);” “the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives);” and “the moment of reflective significance (the making of history in the final instance).”³ Based on Trouillot’s theory, Fisk administrators, librarians, professors, and philanthropists used their power and agency, at critical moments, to influence the production of African American history and culture.

Chapters I and II will show how, from the institution’s founding in 1866, academic administrators, both non-professional and professional librarians, professors, and donors made a point of assembling a collection of facts and materials by and about Africans and African Americans. From 1866 to 1933, the library grew from a small bookshelf with one or two books about Africa to a dedicated building with a Negro Collection of over four thousand volumes. Chapter III explores the library’s moment of

³ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995), 26.

fact retrieval and the important development of printed catalogs, indexes, and bibliographies to help both novice and erudite scholars find information and resources about Africans and African Americans in the Negro Collection. Chapters IV and V will cover multiple moments in which the library created historical facts with oral history projects, assembled manuscript and archival collections related to African American history and culture, helped users discover and retrieve information from the collection, and in the final instance made African American history through books, historic preservation efforts, public programming, museum exhibits, documentary films, and digital humanities.

The time is right for new studies into the growth and significance of HBCU libraries. Past monographs have reviewed the institutional development of HBCU libraries with a focus on administrators. No scholarly monographs focused on the historical information of the HBCU library and its impact on African American public history and culture exists. Sporadically, only a few people have written institutional histories of the people, social dynamics, and impact of a HBCU library's development. In 1938, for example, famous curator of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University Dorothy B. Porter published "A Library on the Negro." Porter carefully explained how her alma mater built its African American library collection from a donation of "a few books and pictures" in 1867, to "over 6500 books and more than 3600 pamphlets in addition to many periodicals."⁴ In a 1939 article titled "Savery Library Dedicated," assistant librarian Margaret H. Scott announced the opening of a new library

⁴ Dorothy B. Porter, "A Library on the Negro," *The American Scholar* 7, no. 1 (Winter 1938): 115.

building at Talladega College, in Talladega, Alabama. According to Scott, the library would also be open to the African American residents since they never had any public library service. Herman L. Totten, the first director of the Thomas Winston Cole, Sr. Library at Wiley College, in Marshall, Texas, traced the development of his school's library services from its early beginnings until the opening of the Cole Library and publication of his article titled "The Wiley College Library: The First Library for Negroes West of the Mississippi River" in 1969. Overall, most of the existing scholarship on the history of HBCU libraries consists of scholarly journal articles that discuss either the access or lack thereof to library resources for African Americans at those times.⁵

A few institutional histories of HBCU libraries do exist as unpublished master's theses. Ann McKay Duncan's 1951 master's thesis, for example, traced the history of Howard University's Library from its founding in 1867 to 1929. Duncan noted the library's humble beginning in a room, celebrated its new Carnegie Library in 1910, and boasted of its growth to fifty thousand volumes in 1929. However, she attributed most of the library's success to the leadership of Edward Christopher Williams; the first professionally trained African American librarian in the United States, and Howard University's head librarian from 1916 to 1929. In 1960, Margaret E. Battle wrote "A History of the Carnegie Library at Johnson C. Smith University." Her master's thesis for a library science degree from the University of North Carolina outlined the development of the Carnegie Library at Johnson C. Smith University, an HBCU in Charlotte, North

⁵ Margaret H. Scott, "Savery Library Dedicated," *Library Journal* 64 (September 1939): 634-636; Herman L. Totten, "The Wiley College Library: The First Library for Negroes West of the Mississippi River," *Negro History Bulletin* 32, no. 1 (January 1969): 6-10.

Carolina. Founded in 1867 as the Biddle Memorial Institute, the school's library grew to 5,000 books by 1890. Andrew Carnegie offered to fund construction of a dedicated library building on campus in 1903, but the school did not raise the matching funds for operation and maintenance of the library until 1911.⁶

Although a few institutional histories of Fisk University also exist, none of them provide a scholarly account or history of the library. Joe M. Richardson's *A History of Fisk University, 1865-1946* barely mentions the Fisk Carnegie library, and he briefly discusses three out of the institution's fifteen librarians during the scope of his work. Professor L. M. Collins wrote and published *One Hundred Years of Fisk University Presidents* in 1989 but, as the name implies, the monograph focuses on the administrative leadership of the institution, not the people and motivations behind library development. Like other HBCUs, the history of the Fisk University Library is limited to a few articles published in scholarly journals, brochures, pamphlets, and one unpublished master's thesis. In 1936, Eliza Atkins wrote "A History of the Fisk University Library and its Standing in Relation to the Libraries of other Comparable Institutions" to satisfy requirements for a master's in librarianship from the University of California. Atkins conducted her research while she worked in the library for a year. She primarily used the library's collection of catalogues, bulletins, news, and annual reports up until 1935 to

⁶ Anne M. Duncan, "A History of Howard University Library, 1867-1929" (Master's thesis, Catholic University of America, 1951), 4-5; Margaret E. Battle, "A History of the Carnegie Library at Johnson C. Smith University" (Master's thesis, University of North Carolina, 1960), 1-2.

compare Fisk favorably in personnel, buildings, annual budget figures, and collections against seven other HBCUs.⁷

Most of the primary source materials for this research came from the Special Collections and Archives at Fisk University's John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library. Several archival and manuscript collections were used, including but not limited to the following: the Fiskiana Collection, 1876-ongoing; the Fayette A. McKenzie Collection, 1915-1926; the Thomas Elsa Jones Collection, 1926-1946; the Charles S. Johnson Collection, 1866-1956; and the Arna W. Bontemps Collection, 1934-1965. Unfortunately, the Jessie Carney Smith Collection, 1965-2020 is unprocessed and unavailable for research. Thus, an oral history interview with Jessie Carney Smith will present the most accurate view of library development under her leadership. Newspapers, yearbooks, census records, city directories, and other public records were also engaged to produce a historical narrative of the library's development from 1866 to 2016.

⁷ Joe M. Richardson, *A History of Fisk University, 1865-1946* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1980), 67, 112, 146; L. M. Collins, *One Hundred Years of Fisk University Presidents, 1875-1975* (Nashville, TN: Hemphill's Creative Printing, 1989), 1-2; Eliza Atkins, "A History of the Fisk University Library and its Standing in Relation to the Libraries of other Comparable Institutions" (Master's thesis, University of California, 1936), 60.

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CHAPTER I

FISK UNIVERSITY LIBRARY'S EARLY DEVELOPMENT UNDER NON-PROFESSIONAL LIBRARIANS, 1866 - 1928

Although he never received the official title, George L. White served as the first librarian of Fisk University. Son of a blacksmith, White was born in 1833 at Cadiz, New York. He fought in the Civil War as a Union officer on the staff of General Clinton B. Fisk. After the war, White followed General Fisk to the Freedman's Bureau and took a position as his clerk. On January 9, 1866, White attended the opening ceremony at Fisk Free Colored School with Fisk and volunteered to become the school's first instructor in vocal music. Subsequently, he became the school's first music teacher, business manager, treasurer, and eventually librarian. White's office, located in one of the U.S. Army barracks that served the school at first, became the school's first library as White loaned books from his personal collection to students as they visited his office. At least two of his books were related to African history and in high demand among Fisk students: John Hanning Speke's *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* and David Livingstone's *Journals*.¹

John Hanning Speke's *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* is a detailed account of the author's adventures in central Africa during the 1850s. The Royal Geographical Society paid Speke to gather more knowledge of Africa's natural history,

¹ *Fisk Herald*, January 1910, 4; Ann Allen Shockley, "Special Collections, Fisk University Library," *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 58 (April 1988): 151.

geography, resources, and people. Speke's book included maps, portraits, and illustrations of Africa, African animals, and the African people he encountered during his adventures from the eastern coast of Africa to his discovery of Lake Victoria as the source of the Nile River. As a nineteenth-century Christian missionary, Speke described the conversations he had and the attempts he made to evangelize African kings and their sons along the way. David Livingstone was the first European to ever attempt to travel through South Africa and evangelize African peoples. Livingstone's *Journals* gave readers a first-hand account of religious beliefs and practices of African people. Both Speke's *Journal of the Discovery of the Nile* and Livingstone's *Journals* surely influenced the missionary spirit of early Fisk students who would later organize the "Society for the Evangelization of Africa" in 1875.²

George L. White encouraged several students to start another society at Fisk in 1867. The Union Literary Society, primarily a debate club, has been called "the first and one of the longest-running literary clubs of its kind in the history of HBCUs."³ After meeting for about two years under White's direction, the Society decided the school desperately needed a formal library. A committee was immediately formed to go out into Nashville and ask citizens for books. In addition, members used their annual collection of monthly membership dues (ten cents a month) to purchase the library's first set of books.

² John Hanning Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1864), 31-33, 223; American Missionary Association, *The American Missionary* 20, no. 3 (March 1876), 51.

³ Roy L. Brooks, *Atonement and Forgiveness: A New Model for Black Reparations* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), 63.

By 1871, the Society had purchased and collected at least fifty volumes to donate to the university for a library.⁴

That year, however, the school needed much more than a set of books. The U.S. Army barracks were falling apart and were unsuitable for the expanding college. The AMA lacked the funds to help the school purchase the land and buildings it so desperately needed. As a normal school and college, the institution wanted to provide housing for out-of-town students. In addition, administrators, teachers, and students needed adequate spaces for housing, dining, reading, recitation, and religious services.⁵ On October 6, 1871, George L. White set out with nine of his music students to raise money for the school. Unexperienced and doubtful, the Jubilee Singers traveled to perform concerts throughout the northern United States and Europe. The proceeds from their successful concert tours resulted in the purchase of the present site of Fisk University and construction of its first building, Jubilee Hall.⁶

In White's absence from the school, Helen C. Morgan assumed the role of university librarian and held the official title for more than twenty-five of her thirty-eight years at Fisk. Under her administration, the library began opening on a regular basis for students. Morgan was born in 1846 at Masonville, New York, but grew up on a farm in Oberlin, Ohio. At the age of twelve, she enrolled in the classical course at Oberlin

⁴ American Missionary Association, *Annual Report of the American Missionary Association* 32 (1876), 59; *Fisk Herald*, January 1910, 4.

⁵ Fisk University, *History, Building and Site, and Services*, 5-6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

College and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1866. Interestingly, Morgan enrolled in 1858 while Fisk founder and first president, Rev. Erastus Milo Cravath, graduated from the Oberlin School of Theology in 1857.⁷ After her graduation, she spent the next three years teaching part-time in various schools off and on throughout the North. Morgan formally met and interviewed with Cravath at Oberlin's 1869 commencement, and he hired Morgan as an instructor in Latin, Greek, and Mathematics at Fisk beginning in September 1869. Morgan was later promoted to Professor of Latin and Librarian when the AMA decided to develop a college program at Fisk. She administered the library and a reading room out of one of the old Army barracks from 1871 until Jubilee Hall opened on January 1, 1876.⁸

Professor Morgan directed the library's move from the old Army barracks to a large room on the west wing of Jubilee Hall's first floor. Today, the room is known as the "Blue Room," which serves as a sitting area or meeting room for the University. The Jubilee Singers also solicited and collected books for the school during their travels abroad. Upon their return, at least eight hundred books, many of high value, were added to the library's collection. Male students could check out books during an appointed hour on Saturday mornings. Females had to wait thirty minutes after the boys were gone

⁷ "Fisk University and Oberlin," *The Oberlin Review* 16 (Sept. 25, 1888): 178; *Fisk News*, October 1911, 14; W. Woodford Clayton, *History of Davidson County, Tennessee, with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of its Prominent Men and Pioneers* (Philadelphia, PA: J. W. Lewis & Company, 1880), 442.

⁸ *Fisk Herald*, January 1910, 4.

before they could go to the library to check out books. Due to limited classroom space, the small library in Jubilee Hall was also used for English classes throughout the week.⁹

During the summer of 1883, Professor Morgan moved the library from Jubilee Hall to the newly erected Livingstone Missionary Hall. Administrators named the new building after the great African missionary David Livingstone and in honor of Fisk University's commitment to train students for the evangelization of Africa. Fisk had already trained and sent five students as missionaries to Africa by the time ground was broken for Livingstone Missionary Hall. A sixty-thousand-dollar gift from Mrs. Valeria G. Stone of Malden, Massachusetts, funded its construction. Upon her death, Stone left two million dollars to educational and other benevolent institutions. The AMA received one hundred and fifty thousand of her inheritance and allocated a portion of it to five of its institutions: Fisk University, Atlanta University, Talladega College, Tougaloo College, and New Orleans University (now Dillard University).¹⁰ The Jubilee Singers also raised a portion of the construction funds during their last European tour through Germany, Great Britain, Holland, and Ireland. In September 1882, Livingstone Hall opened as a men's residence hall, with the capacity to house one hundred and fifty men. It also housed the offices for the president and the treasurer, classrooms, a study room, a chapel, a laboratory, and a geological museum.¹¹

⁹ *Fisk Herald*, January 1910, 4.

¹⁰ *New York Times*, January 16, 1884.

¹¹ American Missionary Association, *Thirty-First Annual Report of the American Missionary Association*, (New York: The American Missionary Association, 1877), 61; Fisk University, *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee, for the Scholastic Year, 1899-1900* (Nashville, TN: Marshall & Bruce Company Publishers, 1900), 73.

Students wrote with anticipation about the new library in the February 1882 issue of the school's newspaper, *The Fisk Expositor*. They took special pleasure in announcing that Fisk had provided its students with a much larger and more up-to-date library. According to the article, "the library room, in Livingstone Hall, will be nearly forty feet square, and will be so furnished as to give accommodation also for a good reading room."¹² Seven years later, another student wrote a more detailed report on the library in the *Fisk Herald*:

Our library and reading room is a pleasant and cozy apartment about 50 x 25 feet, situated on the second floor of Livingstone Hall. When one first enters it there insensibly creeps over him a feeling of reverence, being in the presence of such a multitude of volumes which represent the literary lore of the past and the present. On the walls are portraits of the Jubilee Singers, the faculty, Emperor William, Queen Victoria and others. Among the busts there are those of Lincoln, Sumner and John Brown. The 3,858 bound volumes of the library are contained in seven cases which are separated from the remainder of the room by an empanelment. Another case contains the books of reference. Two shelves and as many tables furnish a receptacle for the leading monthly magazines, illustrated journals, weekly periodicals, and the daily and weekly newspapers.¹³

Noted activist, author, editor, historian and sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois, who graduated from Fisk in 1888, evidently spent most of his time learning about the "literary lore of the

¹² *The Fisk Expositor*, February 1882.

¹³ *Fisk Herald*, April 1889, 5.

past and present” in this “pleasant and cozy apartment” on the second floor of his dormitory.¹⁴

As the library expanded in size, so too grew its collection. Since the initial gift of fifty books from the Union Literary Society, the library had received hundreds of books and periodicals from professors, students, and other benefactors. In its earliest days, Professor Adam K. Spence’s brother, Rev. E. A. Spence, gave the library several hundred books from the Phillips Congregational Church in Boston, Massachusetts. Rev. Frederick A. Chase, husband of Julia Augusta Spence, who, in turn, was the sister of Professor Adam K. and Rev. E. A. Spence, started a science collection when he was hired as professor of natural science in 1871. Chase continued to make library additions throughout his tenure. The Beta Kappa Beta Literary Association also added several books to the collection. Additionally, the library had received an endowment from Fisk Jubilee singer and preacher, Isaac Dickerson, which yielded a little over \$100 a year for the purchase of books.¹⁵

Between 1882 and 1894, the size of the library’s collection more than doubled. It grew from 2,360 to 5,227 bound volumes. Funding for the library continued to come from a small annual endowment, but the school started charging a library fee of fifty cents to each student’s account at the beginning of every academic year to purchase books.¹⁶ The library also continued to receive generous donations. In 1894, for example,

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ *The Fisk Expositor*, February 1882; Clayton, *History of Davidson County, Tennessee*, 442.

¹⁶ Fisk University, *Catalogue, 1892-1893*, 69.

Bishop Daniel A. Payne, the sixth bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and former president of Wilberforce University, bequeathed his entire library to the University along with “valuable paintings and entire real estate, valued at \$20,000 and so conditioned as to develop an endowment fund of \$100,000, of which two-fifths go to the University.”¹⁷

The following year, the library “received as a donation from Hon. Edward L. Pierce of Boston, Massachusetts, his *Memoirs of Charles Sumner*, in four large volumes, published by Roberts Bros., and *Works of Charles Sumner*, in fifteen fine volumes, published by Lee and Shepard of Boston.” As a United States Senator from Massachusetts, Sumner called for the end of slavery before the Civil War and fought for equal civil and political rights for African Americans during Reconstruction, 1865-1871. This gift gave Fisk students and faculty access to primary source evidence of a twenty-three-year political struggle against racial inequality in the United States.¹⁸

For years, Professor Morgan operated the library on her own with the assistance of students. The *1894-1895 Catalogue*, however, listed her as having an official assistant for the first time. The President’s secretary, Emma L. Parsons, took on extra work as the Assistant Librarian that year. Morgan, Parsons, and any student left in charge of the library sat behind a large railing throughout the day to check books in and out. The railing was about a foot-wide, and it separated patrons from the stacks on three sides. The

¹⁷ *Fisk Herald*, February 1894, 13, 20.

¹⁸ *Fisk Herald*, April 1895, 10; David H. Donald, *Charles Sumner and the Rights of Men* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2009), 111-124.

library had been “carefully catalogued by the card method according to the plan . . . used in most of the best libraries in the country. This tool, together with *Poole’s Index to Periodicals*, [made] its contents readily available” to students.¹⁹ At the time, *Poole’s Index to Periodical Literature* was the first and only subject index for British magazines and American periodicals.

For reasons unknown, spring 1895 was Professor Morgan’s last semester as a librarian. However, she continued as a Professor of Latin at Fisk for many more years. From 1895 to 1900, several history instructors tried to fill Morgan’s shoes. In September 1895, Fisk hired Josephine Beard, an 1894 Oberlin College graduate from West Springfield, Massachusetts. She served as an Instructor in History and Librarian until the 1897-1898 academic year. That year, the *Catalogue* listed Beard as “Instructor in History, and Librarian, part of the year.”²⁰ She left Fisk mid-year to become a cataloger at the Lawrence Public Library in Fairfield, Maine.²¹

Underneath Josephine Beard’s listing in the *Catalogue*, John Wesley Work, II appeared as “Instructor in History, and Librarian, part of the year.”²² Contrary to popular belief, Harlem Renaissance poet, novelist, and librarian Arna Bontemps was not the first African American to ever hold the position of librarian at Fisk University. John Wesley Work, II was born in Nashville, Tennessee, and received his undergraduate degree in

¹⁹ Fisk University, *Catalogue, 1892-1893*, 69.

²⁰ Fisk University, *Catalogue, 1897-1898*, 6.

²¹ New York State Library, *Library School Bulletin, Volume 2, 11-20* (Albany, NY: New York State Education Department, 1905), 38.

²² Fisk University, *Catalogue, 1897-1898*, 6.

history and Latin at Fisk in 1895. He is well known among Fiskites as the author of the alma mater, “The Gold and Blue.” After graduation, Work briefly served as principal of a public school in Tullahoma, Tennessee. He left to complete post-graduate work at Harvard in 1896 and returned to Fisk in 1897 to pursue a master’s in Latin. As a recent graduate and one of Professor Morgan’s Latin students, Work was surely asked to fill the void caused by Beard’s unexpected departure. He held this position until the end of the spring semester, when he received his master’s degree. Work is known to the public as the composer of “Go Tell It on the Mountain” and the first African American collector of folk songs and spirituals, but he now has first African American librarian at Fisk University to add to his already impressive resume. The next semester, he was hired full-time as an Instructor in Latin and Greek at Fisk. He directed the Jubilee Singers and taught courses in Latin, Greek, and history until he left in 1923 to become president of Roger Williams University, another historically black college in Nashville.²³

Cravath hired Myrta Lilian Preston as the next Instructor in History and Librarian in September 1898. She was born in Grinnell, Iowa, and graduated with a bachelor’s degree in philosophy from Iowa College in 1889. She went on to attend Wellesley College, a private women’s liberal arts college in Wellesley, Massachusetts, from 1892 to

²³ Fisk University, *Catalogue, 1894-1895*, 18; Frank L. Mather, ed., *Who’s Who of the Colored Race: A General Biographical Dictionary of Men and Women of African Descent* (Chicago: Publisher not identified, 1915), 292; Fisk University, *Catalogue, 1898-1899*, 6; Velma Singleton, “John Wesley Work, Sr.,” *Negro History Bulletin* 5, no. 5 (February 1942): 115-116.

1893. Preston completed two academic years as Librarian at Fisk, 1898 to 1900, before she left to marry her college sweetheart, Fred E. Burlew, a prominent attorney in Los Angeles, California.²⁴

By the turn of the century, Fisk finally found an Instructor in History and Librarian who would hold the position for more than a year or two. In September 1900, administrators hired Katherine Mather Marvin as the next Instructor in History and Librarian at Fisk. Marvin was from Lancaster, Massachusetts, but she graduated in 1895 from Wesleyan College, a private liberal arts women's college in Macon, Georgia. After graduation, Marvin served as local secretary at Atlanta University for several years, and later taught gymnastics and natural science courses.²⁵

When Marvin arrived at Fisk, the library's collection had grown exponentially. By the 1904-1905 academic year, the "pleasant and cozy apartment" on the second floor of Livingstone Hall was bursting at its seams with more than 7,000 books. During this same period, Andrew Carnegie was funding grants for new library buildings throughout the country. Fisk appealed to Carnegie and the library received a well-timed announcement from Dr. James Griswold Merrill, the second president of Fisk University. The *1904-1905 Catalogue* announced that "Mr. Andrew Carnegie has offered to give us

²⁴ Fisk University, *Catalogue, 1898-1899*, 6; Iowa College, *Catalogue of Iowa College, 1888-1889* (Grinnell, IA: Herald Printing Office and Bindery, 1888), 111; Ancestry.com, *California, County Birth, Marriage, and Death Records, 1849-1980* (Lehi, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2017).

²⁵ Atlanta University, *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Atlanta University, Atlanta, GA. with a Statement of the Courses of Study, Expenses, Etc., 1895-96* (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1896), 5; Atlanta University, *Catalogue, 1896-97*, 5; Atlanta University, *Catalogue, 1897-98*, 5; Atlanta University, *Catalogue, 1898-99*, 5; Atlanta University, *Catalogue, 1899-00*, 5.

\$20,000 for a Library Building when \$20,000 shall have been raised as an endowment for the maintenance of the Library.”²⁶

From that time forward, Fisk’s Board of Trustees, alumni and supporters set out to raise the \$20,000 Carnegie required as a match to receive his funding. On March 8, 1905, the Board of Trustees met and added the following statement and resolution to the minutes:

Whereas Andrew Carnegie, Esq. has offered to pay for the erection of a library building for Fisk University at a cost of \$20,000 provided an endowment of twenty thousand dollars is set aside for the upkeep and carrying on of such library; it is

Resolved, that the Board of Trustees set aside from the unappropriated funds of Fisk University the sum of twenty thousand dollars to be kept and invested as a separate endowment fund, the income of which shall be used solely for the upkeep and carrying on of the Carnegie library to be erected from funds donated by Andrew Carnegie.²⁷

That day, the Board ensured that the first Carnegie library built expressly for African Americans in the city of Nashville would open its doors on the campus of Fisk University.

In a similar manner, Carnegie funded construction of more than 3,000 libraries in the United States between 1893 and 1919.²⁸ Most HBCUs took years to raise the money for Carnegie’s cost-sharing library program. Founded in 1867, Biddle University (now

²⁶ Fisk University, *Catalogue, 1904-1905*, 18; *The Tennessean*, April 13, 1905.

²⁷ Fisk University, *Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees*, March 8, 1905, 285.

²⁸ Abigail Ayres Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries and American Culture, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 217.

Johnson C. Smith University) in Charlotte, North Carolina, for example, grew its collection to over 5,000 books by 1890, and it desperately needed a new library building. Carnegie offered to fund construction of a dedicated library building on its campus in 1903, but the school did not raise the matching funds for operation and maintenance of the library until 1911. Fisk's Board of Trustees, rather than waiting on donor appeals, agreed to set aside the \$20,000 out of the school's budget to immediately meet Carnegie's prerequisite and begin construction.²⁹

Then, the university had to replace those budgeted funds, thus it appealed to alumni and friends for the matching funds. The *1906-1907 Catalogue* for the following year made the same announcement of Carnegie's offer. It also said, "The University looks to its friends to enable it to avail itself of the offers which have come from the above sources and thus to take a decided step in advance."³⁰ Underneath, in italics, it also said "*An unknown friend in Philadelphia has given \$5,000 toward this. The alumni have given over \$1,200. A Boston friend has given \$200.*" By 1906, alumni and friends had raised an additional six thousand and four hundred dollars to replace the committed twenty thousand dollars for the Carnegie Library.³¹

The same *1906-1907 Catalogue* also announced that the librarian, Katherine M. Marvin, would be absent on leave from the university for four months. Mary Alice Bye

²⁹ Margaret E. Battle, "A History of the Carnegie Library at Johnson C. Smith University" (Master's thesis, University of North Carolina, 1960), 1-3.

³⁰ Fisk University, *Catalogue, 1905-1906*, 12-13.

³¹ Fisk University, *Catalogue 1906-1907*, 12-13.

was listed as Instructor in Bible and Librarian in her absence. At one time, Bye was President Cravath's secretary. She also taught Latin, history, and bookkeeping at Fisk. Surely, administration felt Bye could handle some extra duties as librarian for a few months. Marvin returned from leave just in time to see the erection of the Carnegie Library.³²

Construction of the new Carnegie library began towards the end of the 1907-1908 academic year. In April 1908, a formal groundbreaking ceremony took place, and the following children of the faculty broke ground: Junior Waterman (son of Warren G. Waterman, Professor of Physics and Geology), Sanoma Talley (daughter of Thomas W. Talley, Professor of Chemistry and Biology), Helen Cobleigh (daughter of Irving V. Cobleigh, Treasurer), and John W. Work, III (son of John W. Work, II, Professor of History and Latin).³³ On Friday, May 22, 1908, Secretary of War, and future President of the United States William Howard Taft delivered a speech and laid the cornerstone for the new Carnegie library. A large crowd of students and visitors assembled on the northwest end of campus, the site of the new building, to hear Taft's speech titled "Higher Education for Negro Leaders." Taft took the opportunity to tell the crowd of the good work done on this momentous day. First, he praised Fisk for its reputation of educational excellence. Then, he lauded the philanthropic efforts of Andrew Carnegie

³² Fisk University, *Catalogue 1906-1907*, 5; Fisk University, *Catalogue, 1897-1898*, 6; Fisk University, *Catalogue 1907-1908*, 5.

³³ *Fisk Herald*, October 1908, 13.

“[whose] interest is not so confined to his large business interests that he can not take time to think of his fellow-men”³⁴

Fisk hired African American architect Moses McKissack of McKissack and McKissack Architects to design the building. The Carnegie Library at Fisk University was McKissack’s first major work in Nashville, and one of the first major construction projects designed by an African American architect in America. Thus, the building was a formidable African American architectural statement – one which emphasized the importance of education for black advancement. The McKissack firm went on to design other academic buildings in Nashville such as Washington Junior High School, Pearl High School, and Tennessee State University’s Memorial Library.³⁵

In June 1908, the librarian, Katherine M. Marvin, gave the following statement to the *Fisk Herald* regarding the building and the interior arrangement of the new library:

To enter the library one passes through the vestibule, where all wraps and umbrellas will be left, and finds a spacious room eighty feet long and forty wide. The desk for discharging and giving out books is directly in front of the entrance; back of the desk is the stack room and on either side are the tables and chairs for the readers. Two smaller rooms each side of the vestibule, will be used for reference works or special collections, but will seem a part of the large room as the separation will be simply an arch.

Light will be secured from windows on the East and West, and by a well in the center of the building, which will extend to the dome. It is hoped that the north wall at one end of the room will prove a satisfactory place for the large oil painting of the Jubilee singers, while at the opposite side can be grouped copies of Tanner’s famous pictures. We

³⁴ *The Tennessean*, May 23, 1908.

³⁵ Bobby L. Lovett and Linda T. Wynn, *Profiles of African Americans in Tennessee* (Nashville, TN: Annual Local Conference on Afro-American Culture and History, 1996), 87-89.

hope to give a prominent place to a collection of books by Negro authors, and to display to good advantage some of the fine sets of books that have been donated to us.

The basement will be used as a gymnasium for the girls, and in the second floor around the well will be a number of rooms designed for club or similar uses, but for the present to be occupied by some of the lady teachers.³⁶

McKissack and McKissack completed construction of the long-awaited and highly anticipated Carnegie Library in less than a year. The two-story red brick classical-styled building with Georgia stone trimmings, a basement, a skylight, and a red tiled roof was ready for the students by spring 1909. “On the 25th of February, 1909, in an hour’s time, the students carried in their arms most of the 8,000 books in the University library from Livingstone Hall to the new Carnegie Library.”³⁷ Within a few weeks of opening, one of Nashville’s daily newspapers, *The Tennessean*, hailed the library as “one of the best patronized institutions of its kind in the city.”³⁸

The new library provided students with an abundance of materials for historical and contemporary research. It also gave them first-class facilities for both individual and group study, but the main benefit of the Carnegie Library extended well beyond the Fisk community. It was also open to the “colored citizens” of Nashville. Local African Americans had access to the same library services, materials, and facilities as Fisk students. They could come in and sit in the fine oak furniture found throughout the

³⁶ *Fisk Herald*, June 1908, 16. Henry Ossawa Tanner was an African American painter born in 1859.

³⁷ Fisk University, *Catalogue, 1909-1910*, 16-17.

³⁸ *The Tennessean*, April 4, 1909.

library, browse through and check out the books on the steel open stacks, or just walk around on the cork carpet floors that minimized sound. Portraits of the original Jubilee Singers, trustee board member Booker T. Washington, former President James G. Merrill, and long-time librarian of the university Helen C. Morgan adorned the walls for all to see.³⁹

Fisk University's Library played an important role in providing access to its books and educational resources at a time when there was no public library service for African Americans in Nashville. Like many other southern HBCU libraries, Fisk's library filled a huge void left by racial discrimination and segregation in library services. Paine College, in Augusta, Georgia, for example, established a children's library in 1939, because "Augusta [had] no public library for its Negro Population," and Talladega College opened its Savery Library that same year to provide service to three hundred African Americans in Talladega, Alabama, who never had any public library service.⁴⁰ Shortly after the city of Nashville received \$100,000 from Andrew Carnegie to open its first "free" public library for whites on the corner of 8th Avenue and Union Street in 1904, Fisk President James G. Merrill visited Carnegie in New York to negotiate the donation of \$20,000 to Fisk for its own library building. As soon as the school completed construction in 1908, the library's doors were opened to serve the broader public.⁴¹

³⁹ *The Tennessean*, April 4, 1909. President Merrill resigned in 1908, and Booker T. Washington was elected to Fisk's Board of Trustees in 1909.

⁴⁰ Ruth L. Bartholomew, "The Paine College Children's Library," *The Journal of Negro Education* 8, no. 1 (January 1939): 32; Scott, "Savery Library Dedicated," 634-636.

⁴¹ *Nashville Banner*, March 18, 1904; Fisk University, *Catalogue, 1928-1929*, 23.

Marvin opened the library to the public daily, from eight o'clock in the morning until seven o'clock in the evening, except during mealtimes. On Sunday and Friday nights it stayed open until nine o'clock in the evening. Students could withdraw books after classes and receive Marvin's help finding material for coursework anytime. Marvin insisted on open access to the stacks. According to one student, the free access had "great educational value as it allowed the students to see for himself what material the library possessed on any subject."⁴² Although the city of Nashville finally opened a Negro Branch of the Carnegie Library in 1916, Fisk University's Carnegie Library remained open and accessible to Nashville's African American community for more than twenty years.

In September 1918, the *Fisk News* described some major changes on campus and needed adjustments to its Carnegie Library. In an article titled "Reorganization of Fisk Campus for War Purposes," Belle Ruth Parmenter, the principal of the training school, explained how Fisk was logistically housing six-hundred African American soldiers. Employees removed all the furniture from Livingstone Hall and put in place a neat and orderly barracks from the fourth floor to the basement. They moved the bookroom (bookstore) from Livingstone Hall to the basement of the Carnegie Library. Members of the faculty living in the library moved to dormitories, and the second floor was exclusively used for seminars. The main floor of the library, however, was left undisturbed.⁴³

⁴² *The Tennessean*, April 4, 1909; *Fisk Herald*, December 1912, 13.

⁴³ *Fisk News*, September 1918, 5.

Librarian Katherine M. Marvin managed the library through the war years, but in September 1919 she left. The following lamentation appeared in the monthly issue of

Fisk News:

While the new librarian will be heartily welcomed into the fellowship of those who labor in the cause of education at Fisk, and will be given all of the friendly assistance that the University circle can give to her. It will be true, nevertheless, that the Library will seem a little strange without the presence of Miss Katherine Mather Marvin, a faithful teacher whose services run back through a long period of years. It is not easy to give up teachers like these – persons who have lost themselves in their desire to serve a given cause and who, as compensation, have found themselves again in the splendid opportunities to good for the Master. Miss Marvin was more than a librarian – she was an influence, a Christian woman who could be depended upon to do Christian work, both seen and unseen. The College Pastor is certain to miss her ministrations and help in connection with the University Church. All will miss her. And the President of the University is certain to miss the support and work which Miss Marvin's type of worker gave him. Her interest in this work and primarily in the colored people was deep – was genuine. We shall not forget that. We have given up a Christian woman. There is no need to say more. Some time in the future we hope to see her face here again, if she comes only to visit Fisk.⁴⁴

According to the *1919-1920 Catalogue*, the new librarian for the academic year was Mary E. Reed of Erie, Pennsylvania. Reed was a graduate of the Edinboro State Normal School of Pennsylvania. She was trained in librarianship at the Erie Public Library and attended the Chautauqua Summer School for Librarians, which trained nonprofessionals “who could not take a leave of absence from their positions to acquire

⁴⁴ *Fisk News*, September 1919, 15-16.

the necessary training to attain professional status.”⁴⁵ Reed completed the fall semester, but resigned for a better position at the Tulare County Library in Visalia, California, early in the spring.

In desperate need of another librarian, President McKenzie reached out to a candidate he had previously considered for Marvin’s position. Frances M. Birtwell had years of experience as a library assistant at the Divinity School Library and later as a cataloguer for the Law School Library at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. After more than twenty years of service at Harvard, Birtwell left to become head librarian at Atlanta University from 1915 to 1918. She left Atlanta University to accept a higher paying position at one of the war industries in Washington, District of Columbia.

In 1919, President McKenzie received a letter from Dr. George E. Haynes endorsing Birtwell. Haynes was a former Fisk professor of sociology under McKenzie’s administration, and now he was the Director of Negro Economics for the United States Department of Labor in Washington. According to Haynes, Birtwell was sure to lose her job since the recent signing of the armistice agreement ended World War I, and she had “that unusual point of view with reference to race relations coupled with ability and experience that would make her valuable in one of our schools.”⁴⁶ In a letter, Birtwell also expressed to McKenzie her strong desire to work with and among African American

⁴⁵ *Fisk News*, September 1919, 14; Kathleen Crocker and Jane Currie, *Chautauqua Institution, 1874-1974* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2001), 64.

⁴⁶ Letter, George E. Haynes to Fayette McKenzie, January 10, 1919, box 6, folder 4, Fayette McKenzie Papers, John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library, Fisk University.

students again. She regretted leaving Atlanta University and said, “It is comparatively easy to fill government positions; it is not so easy to find white people ready and glad to live and work with and for the colored people.”⁴⁷

McKenzie offered Birtwell a probationary period of four to seven months for one hundred dollars per month if she would come immediately. He admitted that the library resources were “exceedingly inadequate,” but he hoped for more money to support it later.⁴⁸ Birtwell accepted McKenzie’s offer. She resigned from her position in Washington, and left for Nashville the second week of February 1920.

In less than two weeks, President McKenzie wrote a letter to Ida Tourtellot, the Associate Educational Director for the Phelps-Stokes Fund in Washington. He asked her to personally see if Birtwell’s former employer could take her back before it was too late. McKenzie said:

This matter would not, of course, have arisen had not Miss Birtwell gone into our diningroom [sic] at Jubilee, but it seems she is troubled with catarrh and had a habit of rinsing her mouth out and spitting back into her glass at the table. This was noticed by the students and the girls refused even to clear away her glass from the table. No one would wash it, and several glasses and a pitcher have had to be broken because of the matter. The feelings of revulsion have spread through the school and it is pretty certain that whatever usefulness she might have developed here is quite at an end.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Letter, F. M. Birtwell to Fayette McKenzie, October 12, 1919, box 6, folder 4, Fayette McKenzie Papers.

⁴⁸ Western Telegram, Fayette McKenzie to F. M. Birtwell, January 27, 1920, box 6, folder 4, Fayette McKenzie Papers.

⁴⁹ Letter, Fayette McKenzie to Ida Tourtellot, February 24, 1920, box 6, folder 4, Fayette McKenzie Papers.

McKenzie, students, and faculty just could not tolerate such unsanitary behavior, despite Birtwell's years of experience as a librarian and her positive attitude towards African Americans. From 1918 to 1920, "epidemics of typhus, of recurrent fever, of Spanish influenza, and of cholera" swept the country.⁵⁰ Birtwell's excessive mucus build-up and repeated pattern of spitting it out made everyone on campus take precautions to prevent the spread of any disease; ergo, McKenzie's unexpected request to send her back to Washington and the breaking of her glasses and a pitcher.

Two months later, McKenzie wrote Birtwell and reminded her of their original agreement and the conditional terms of her employment at Fisk. McKenzie told her, "Your knowledge and your fidelity make me grieve to say that every sign points to a future of unhappiness for you and discontent for your associates if you remain."⁵¹ He also said he would do nothing to prevent her from leaving before the end of the four month agreement. Birtwell, however, stayed the four months and turned her resignation letter in June 1920.

McKenzie immediately began searching for a replacement. On June 23, for example, he wrote to former librarian Mary E. Reed and said, "Our librarian has resigned her place with us and will leave at an early date."⁵² McKenzie said he could make it through the summer without a librarian, but he wanted to know if anything could be done

⁵⁰ *The Nation*, September 25, 1920, 361.

⁵¹ Letter, Fayette McKenzie to F. A. Birtwell, April 5, 1920, box 6, folder 4, Fayette McKenzie Papers.

⁵² Letter, Fayette McKenzie to Mary E. Reed, June 23, 1920, box 12, folder 8, Fayette McKenzie Papers.

to arrange for her return in the fall. He even went as far as sending the same letter to both Reed's new place of employment in Visalia, California, and her home address in Erie, Pennsylvania. She received McKenzie's request at her home and wrote him back. Unfortunately, Reed said she could not return due to an illness in her family.⁵³

That summer, the Seventh Day Adventists made a notable donation to the library. The Tennessee River Mission of the Seventh Day Adventists held their annual meeting and conference on Fisk's campus from June 26 to July 4, 1920. "On Wednesday morning, June 30, Fisk President Fayette Avery McKenzie invited the whole conference to be present at the morning chapel services and to have some part, through their officials, in the devotions."⁵⁴ In return, the Seventh Day Adventists, by way the President of the Conference, presented President McKenzie, for his "private use," a "set of elegantly-bound books printed in their own establishment in Nashville" as a "token of appreciation." In acceptance of the books, McKenzie said he was "not a private person – that all he has and hopes for belong to Fisk University – and, therefore, he asked permission that the books be autographed and placed in the University Library as the perpetual property of the students of Fisk."⁵⁵

Mary E. Reed was not the only librarian McKenzie asked to return to Fisk. After an absence of one year, Katherine M. Marvin returned in the fall of 1920. According to *Fisk News*, she received a warm welcome. "The older workers and students here who

⁵³ Letter, Mary E. Reed to Fayette McKenzie, July 2, 1920, box 12, folder 8, Fayette McKenzie Papers.

⁵⁴ *Fisk News*, June 1920, 21.

⁵⁵ *Fisk News*, June 1920, 21.

knew Miss Marvin were glad to see her here again, and they showed it when she was asked to stand in the Chapel. She was given a decided ovation, although she would not make a speech.” Marvin also received some additional help this semester. An October 1920 article in the *Fisk News*, titled “Directory of New Faculty Members,” announced the arrival of Balance M. Shaw as the first Assistant Librarian. Prior to coming to Fisk, Shaw was an assistant in the Wilkinsburg Library in Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania. She also taught in Southern schools for several years and studied at the Chautauqua Library School in Chautauqua, New York. Marvin remained at Fisk until she finally moved back to Massachusetts in the summer of 1922.⁵⁶

That fall, twenty-four-year-old Fred A. Steiner sent a letter to President McKenzie inquiring about a position at Fisk. Steiner was from Corydon, Iowa, and had recently graduated from the liberal arts college of the University of Iowa with a bachelor’s degree in English, Economics, and Commercial Law. According to Steiner, he heard of a vacancy in the high school English department and boldly asked McKenzie, “May I have the pleasure of making application for that vacancy at this time?”⁵⁷ Before McKenzie sent his letter stating “that the position in English [had] been filled” and announcing the availability of another “position as Field Representative for Fisk University placing our Jubilee Singers over the country,” he looked over Steiner’s letters of recommendation

⁵⁶ *Fisk News*, October 1920, 22; *Fisk News*, November 1920, 45.

⁵⁷ Letter, Fred A. Steiner to Fayette McKenzie, September 13, 1922, box 2, folder 3, Fayette McKenzie Papers.

from the Western Teachers' Exchange.⁵⁸ After a thorough review of Steiner's credentials, McKenzie decided to keep the letter his secretary had typed, and he immediately sent Steiner the following Western Union Telegram:

Western Teachers Exchange state[s] you can do library work. Would you really be able to come here immediately and take entire charge of our library of 11,000 volumes for the year? We maintain simple but regular library methods and are especially eager to stimulate reading by all and to maintain study hall in the library at night. Wire reply.⁵⁹

The next day, Steiner sent a telegram back to McKenzie saying that he could report to work and take charge of the library on Monday, September 25, 1922.⁶⁰

On September 19, 1922, McKenzie sent Steiner an official offer letter by special delivery. He offered Steiner two thousand dollars for nine calendar months, or two thousand and four hundred dollars for eleven months. According to McKenzie, Steiner was being offered "a salary twice as large as we ever paid before," and "we shall of course expect from you a service of vigour [sic] and efficiency."⁶¹ McKenzie also explained the special conditions of Steiner's employment at Fisk University, he said:

You doubtless realize that no one can serve effectively at Fisk University who does not thoroughly comprehend the delicacy of our race situation and of our educational

⁵⁸ Unsent Letter, Fayette McKenzie to Fred A. Steiner, September 18, 1922, box 2, folder 3, Fayette McKenzie Papers.

⁵⁹ Western Telegram, Fayette McKenzie to Fred A. Steiner, September 18, 1922, box 2, folder 3, Fayette McKenzie Papers.

⁶⁰ Western Telegram, Fred A. Steiner to Fayette McKenzie, September 19, 1922, box 2, folder 3, Fayette McKenzie Papers.

⁶¹ Letter, Fayette McKenzie to Fred A. Steiner, September 19, 1922, box 2, folder 3, Fayette McKenzie Papers.

situation and who is not prepared to adapt himself thoroughly to the ideals and policies and practices of the institution and to be exceedingly discreet and reserved in speech and manner. It is thoroughly understood on this campus that our workers are not to be too intimate with students, or to do or say things that indicate sentimentality among themselves.⁶²

In closing, McKenzie's letter expressed his desire to ensure the library was open and available to students in the evening. He offered, "if necessary," to "close the library a number of hours per day, probably in the morning, in order to conserve the time of the librarian for service in the evening, at least for four evenings per week."⁶³

Based on written correspondence from the President's Office, Steiner lacked the vigor and efficiency McKenzie expected, at least as the school's librarian. In one letter, McKenzie asked Steiner to purchase the Keystone View Company's 1923 boxed set of the *World War Through the Stereoscope* for the library, but Steiner refused and said it was "wholly outside the jurisdiction of the Librarian" and suggested "departments who will find its use most valuable and through you, it will be ordered rather than through the library committee."⁶⁴ In a February 1923 letter, the President's secretary Edith G. Herbst complained that Steiner had not submitted his schedule of hours for the second quarter. Herbst said "I know how busy you are, but it is a very real help in case of an emergency for us to have these schedule at hand; and we make a practice of having them renewed

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Letter, Fred A. Steiner to Fayette McKenzie, unknown date, 1:45 p.m., Friday, box 2, folder 3, Fayette McKenzie Papers.

every quarter, even though a person's work may not change materially."⁶⁵ Indeed, Steiner was an extremely busy man. Aside from running the library, he was the school's football coach and a third-year student at Vanderbilt's Law School.⁶⁶

In the spring of 1924, McKenzie heard "by accident" about Steiner's plan to leave Fisk and that his position as Librarian would be vacant the following year.⁶⁷ In a stern letter dated April 2, McKenzie asked Steiner "whether you will not tell me of your own plans."⁶⁸ McKenzie suspected Steiner was leaving because he had either completed his law degree at Vanderbilt, or he was going to another institution to complete his study of law. Either way, McKenzie was extremely upset because Steiner had not told him personally about his plans and desires to leave. McKenzie was not the only person who heard about Steiner's impending departure.

During the 1924 summer break, Professor Dora Ann Scribner, head of Fisk's department of English, sent President McKenzie a letter of inquiry on behalf of her brother-in-law, Olin Sylvester Davis. Scribner started by reminding the president that he met Davis and her younger sister Bessie before at Laconia, New Hampshire. This meeting clearly took place when the University found out Professor Scribner's mother died on May 3, 1922, and "President McKenzie went from New York as the official

⁶⁵ Letter, Edith G. Herbst to Fred A. Steiner, February 6, 1923, box 2, folder 3, Fayette McKenzie Papers.

⁶⁶ Vanderbilt University, *Register of Vanderbilt University for 1923-1924, College of Arts and Science, School of Engineering* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University, 1924), 218 – 219.

⁶⁷ Letter, Fayette McKenzie to Fred A. Steiner, April 2, 1924, box 2, folder 3, Fayette McKenzie Papers.

⁶⁸ Letter, Fayette McKenzie to Fred A. Steiner, April 2, 1924.

representative of the University at the funeral.”⁶⁹ Scribner’s letter explained how her brother-in-law had received “early training under both Poole and Dewey” as a librarian, but he had recently clashed with his library’s “trustees who know little about the function of a library.”⁷⁰ This disagreement ultimately led to Davis’ resignation after twenty-one years of service as librarian for the Laconia Public Library. According to Scribner, she heard from Miss Cashin, an English professor, that the President “might be interested in knowing of this change since Mr. Steiner is not planning to stay the whole of another year.”⁷¹

On September 10, 1924, President McKenzie sent the following letter bidding Fred. A. Steiner good luck:

My dear Mr. Steiner:

I think you have vanished from sight. It was my intention to write you long ago and I still desire to write and thank you for the invitation to the Vanderbilt Commencement which you sent Mrs. McKenzie and myself. We appreciated the opportunity of being present upon that occasion. We also want to congratulate you upon the completion of your law studies. We wish for you success in your legal career.

I want to thank you again for the industry and devotion to the library work which characterized your stay here. I presume your successor will know better than I how largely valuable your services were. I have no large fears on that score.

⁶⁹ *Fisk News*, May 1922, 23.

⁷⁰ Letter, Dora A. Scribner to Fayette McKenzie, June 29, 1924, box 12, folder 13, Fayette McKenzie Papers.

⁷¹ Letter, Dora A. Scribner to Fayette McKenzie, June 29, 1924.

As a lawyer, you will have large opportunity for influence in the shaping of a new century. I trust that you will find yourself able to hold on to the permanent good even while cooperating with every new good. The legal profession, as a whole, is under suspicion not so much for evil but for failure to rise to the higher levels to which it might rise. The eternal verities should be held before the profession and by the profession before the world. It is a great opportunity you face.

Very sincerely yours,
FAM-MEB⁷²

The *1924-1925 Catalogue* listed Olin Sylvester Davis as Librarian for the academic year. Although Davis received his appointment through nepotism, he was by far the most experienced librarian to hold the position up to this point. Davis was born in Hartsville, Indiana, and attended Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, from 1881 to 1883. He started his career as a librarian under William Frederick Poole, known as the author of *Poole's Index to Periodical Literature*, at the Chicago Public Library in 1884. Within a year, he left to serve as a library assistant for two years under Dr. Melvil Dewey at Columbia College Library, now Columbia University in New York, New York. Davis spent the following year, from 1886 to 1887, working for Dewey's Library Bureau in Boston, Massachusetts.⁷³

Dr. Melvil Dewey, known as the inventor of the Dewey Decimal system of library classification, opened the Library Bureau in 1876 as the first business to sell library supplies to private and public libraries in the United States. The Library Bureau published

⁷² Letter, Fayette McKenzie to Fred A. Steiner, September 10, 1924, box 2, folder 3, Fayette McKenzie Papers.

⁷³ Education and Experience, Olin S. Davis to Fayette McKenzie, unknown date, box 12, folder 13, Fayette McKenzie Papers; Columbia College, "Annual Register of the Officers and Students of Columbia College, 1883-1884" (New York: The College, 1884), xv.

illustrated catalogs with what it called “standard fittings, supplies, and labor-savers” for the library.⁷⁴ Among the items Davis sold were card catalog cabinets, typewriters to write catalog cards, revolving bookcases, and book trucks. After the reorganization of the Library Bureau due to financial difficulty, Davis returned to work in public libraries.⁷⁵

In 1887, Davis worked at the Providence Public Library in Rhode Island for a “few weeks” before going West to become Librarian at the Topeka Free Public Library in Kansas from 1887 to 1890. Davis left Kansas to organize and help open the Duluth Public Library in Duluth, Minnesota, in 1890. After opening the Duluth Public Library, he returned to the East and studied under Dewey at the New York State Library School in 1891. From 1892 to 1903, Davis was Librarian for the Lakeport Public Library in New Hampshire, and before coming to Fisk, he was Librarian for Laconia Public Library in Laconia, New Hampshire, from 1903 to 1924.⁷⁶

As a sixty-three-year-old librarian with forty years of experience, Davis did not have a significant impact on the library or its development during his tenure. The 1924 to 1925 academic year was like none other at Fisk. That year, students and alumni began to protest the autocratic leadership of President McKenzie. W. E. B. Du Bois even called Fisk “a place of sorrow, of infinite regret; a place where the dreams of great souls lay dusty and forgotten” because of McKenzie’s racial perspective, strict rules, and

⁷⁴ Library Bureau, *Classified Illustrated Catalog of the Library Bureau* (Boston: Library Bureau, 1886), i.

⁷⁵ Wayne A. Wiegand, *Irrepressible Reformer: A Biography of Melvil Dewey* (Chicago and London: American Library Association, 1996), 110.

⁷⁶ Education and Experience, Olin S. Davis to Fayette McKenzie, unknown date, box 12, folder 13, Fayette McKenzie Papers.

disciplinary policies.⁷⁷ Du Bois took it a step further and collected personal stories from students, faculty, and alumni to prove his point. Many of his interviewees accused McKenzie of tyranny, intolerance, and institutional oppression.⁷⁸

McKenzie's policy of decorum, discipline, and control was especially maintained in the library. The following library rules and regulations for the 1924-1925 academic year show the stark difference between Marvin's administration under President Merrill and Davis' administration under President McKenzie:

Primarily this is a student's library, unadapted to group study. Our golden rule is 'walk gently and let their voice be low.' You are presumed to know these rules. Books may be taken for a 14 day period, and are always due back upon the date stamped on the 'date due' slip. This date will always be on Monday.

Five cents a day will accrue for lateness. Reserved books may be taken, after proper arrangements with the librarian and at the librarian's discretion, from closing time until nine o'clock the following library morning. Five cents an hour or fraction thereof accrues when late.

Magazines, bound and current alike, never leave the library. Likewise newspapers.

Unpaid library fines or books overdue may cause forfeiture of library privileges, discretionary with the librarian.

The stacks are always closed to everyone. Thank you.

Ladies will use the east reading room exclusively and gentlemen will the west room exclusively. Permission must be obtained to speak across the library, and must be confined to studies, and for no more than one minute.

⁷⁷ *The Crisis*, September 1924, 199.

⁷⁸ *The Crisis*, October 1924, 251; Raymond Wolters, *The New Negro on Campus: Black College Rebellions of the 1920s* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 38; Richardson, *A History of Fisk University 1865-1946*, 94-95.

Let your efforts here be honest; let your wants be known; let your cooperation be a reflection of university training and educational ideals.”⁷⁹

In Davis’s defense, he simply enforced the same rules previously imposed by Fred Steiner under McKenzie’s direction.

Although previously published listings of the librarians at Fisk University and the dates of their employment say the Library Committee took charge during the 1926-1927 academic year, further research shows Davis continued to serve as Librarian through the ousting of President McKenzie in 1925 and the 1926 appointment of President Thomas Elsa Jones as the fifth president of Fisk University.⁸⁰ In fact, Thomas Elsa Jones was listed as President and Olin Sylvester Davis was listed as Librarian on the same page of the *1926-1927 Catalogue*. Davis was also listed as a librarian at Fisk University and living at Jubilee Hall in the 1926 Nashville City Directory.⁸¹

The error may have occurred because the *1927-1928 Catalogue* failed to list a Librarian for the academic year. The *1928-1929 Catalogue*, however, noted a correction with an asterisk next to the name of Mrs. Paul W. Gordon. Harriet Rawls Gordon was the librarian from 1927 to 1928. Paul Gordan and Harriet Rawls were college sweethearts and 1921 graduates of Earlham College, a private liberal arts college established by the

⁷⁹ Fisk University, *Library Rules and Regulations, 1924-25*.

⁸¹ Marshall-Bruce-Polk, *Nashville City Directory 1926* (Nashville: Marshall-Bruce-Polk Company, 1926), 272.

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Richmond, Indiana. After graduation, the young couple left to teach at the American School in Tokyo, Japan.⁸²

In Tokyo, Gordon and Rawls met future Fisk President “Tom” Elsa Jones while he was working as a missionary for the Religious Society of Friends. On September 1, 1923, a horrific “Japanese Earthquake” destroyed more than three hundred and fifty thousand homes and killed more than one hundred and fifty thousand people in Tokyo. That month, the *Earlham Press* listed all three as “American Earlham alumni who were in Tokyo at the time of the earthquake.”⁸³ Gordon, Rawls, and Jones were among the nine Earlham survivors, but a tsunami demolished the American School where Gordon was principal and Rawls taught. After the earthquake, the three Earlhamites returned to the United States.⁸⁴

Jones, a 1912 graduate of Earlham College, attended Hartford Theological Seminary from 1912 to 1915 and earned his master’s from Columbia University in 1917, right before he went to Japan as a missionary. He returned in 1924 to pursue a doctorate from Columbia and graduated with a Ph.D. in 1926. Gordon and Rawls also returned in 1924, but they taught at separate schools until they married in 1925. President Jones brought the newlyweds with him to Fisk University in 1926. According to the September 4, 1926 issue of the *Tennessean*, “Paul W. Gordon comes to Fisk with Dr. Jones to

⁸² Earlham College, *Who’s Who Among Earlhamites, 1928* (Richmond, IN: Earlham College, 1928), 62.

⁸³ *Earlham Press*, September 17, 1923.

⁸⁴ J. Franklin Stevens, “The Japanese Earthquake and Its Effect Upon the Oriental Situation,” *Engineers & Engineering* 41, no. 1 (January 1924): 5; *Earlham Press*, September 17, 1923.

succeed F. H. Fairchild as treasurer, with the additional duties of business manager, will fill the office to be known as university comptroller. Mr. Gordon is also a graduate of Earlham College and has taught in Japan as principal of the American school in Tokyo.”⁸⁵ Harriet Gordon was not listed in this news article, but she did appear in another *Tennessean* article later that month.⁸⁶

On September 25, 1926, the *Tennessean* published an article with the following headline and subheading, “FISK TO OPEN MONDAY – MANY APPLICANTS TURNED AWAY: New Instructors Will Supply Increased Enrollment. Freshman Week Will Initiate Arrivals in New Environment.” This article listed new administrators, administrative assistants, deans, and fourteen new instructors Fisk hired to teach “the largest student body in the history of the university.”⁸⁷ Mrs. Paul W. Gordon was listed as an additional member of the music department along with Alrtheus Ambush “A. A.” Taylor as a new professor of history and Alexander Z. Looby as an assistant professor of economics and debate coach. Gordon was also listed in the *1926-1927 Catalogue* as a music instructor under Mrs. Belle Ruth Parmenter in the Training School.

Harriet Gordon had a degree in English and history from Earlham, but no formal training or experience as a librarian. Although most of her experience came from teaching English and music in public schools, Gordon made every effort to learn the

⁸⁵ *The Nashville Tennessean*, September 4, 1926.

⁸⁶ Earlham College, *Who's Who Among Earlhamites, 1928* (Richmond, IN: Earlham College, 1928), 79; *Earlham Press*, September 22, 1924; Ancestry.com, *Indiana, Marriages, 1810-2001* (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014).

⁸⁷ *The Nashville Tennessean*, September 25, 1926.

practices and procedures of the library profession during the 1927 to 1928 academic year. According to the library report for the year, she was mainly concerned with the library building and its physical equipment, cataloging and classifying the books, weeding out the old and obsolete books, and adding more books to the collection.⁸⁸

In 1927, Gordon oversaw the renovation of the Carnegie Library. The rooms around the well on the second floor were finally converted from boarding rooms for the teachers to “classrooms for Social Sciences and offices for the Professors.”⁸⁹ Contractors built panels around the light well, moved the staircases to the front hallway, and installed glass doors at the entrance of the reading room to reduce the amount of noise from the second floor. They added new magazine racks, shelving, alcoves, and glass partitions to the reading room. Staff organized the reference collection on new shelves in the reading room to make it easily accessible to the students.⁹⁰

Gordon also spent the year consolidating and converting the library catalog. Prior to her arrival, the library used two catalogs for its active collection. During the 1926-1927 academic year, Gordon took the two catalogs and made them into one. She removed over seven thousand obsolete books from the collection, added over two thousand new books and made four thousand more pamphlets available to the students. Charles A. Cutter developed the two-number Cutter table to organize library materials alphabetically by

⁸⁸ Fisk University, *Report of the Librarian, 1927-1928*; Atkins, “A History of the Fisk University Library,” 42.

⁸⁹ Fisk University, *Report of the Librarian, 1927-1928*.

⁹⁰ Fisk University, *Report of the Librarian, 1927-1928*; Atkins, “A History of the Fisk University Library,” 11-12.

author in the late nineteenth century. By the 1920s, most libraries were using “three numbers in addition to the initial letter.”⁹¹ Gordon updated the library from the two-number to the three-number system and changed all the book numbers. She also had five hundred volumes of magazines bound, and two thousand books rebound during the academic year. For a non-professional, Gordon did a formidable job updating and maintaining the library from 1927 to 1928.⁹²

Paul and Harriet Gordon left Fisk before the 1928 to 1929 academic year began. According to the *Murfreesboro Union*, Paul Gordon left his position as comptroller to study at the Sorbonne in Paris, France, and he was “succeeded by Mr. Jesse F. Beals, who for the past seven years . . . held a similar position at Earlham.”⁹³ Harriet Rawls Gordon was the last non-professional librarian in charge of Fisk University’s Library. In the summer of 1928, President Jones hired the school’s first librarian with a master’s degree in library science.⁹⁴

This history of the first sixty-two years of the early development of Fisk University’s Library under non-professional librarians reveals several factors influencing the collection of materials related to Africa and African American history and culture. From the very beginning, the school’s mission has been the most influential factor in the

⁹¹ Edwin Wiley, “Some Sidelights on Classification,” *Library Journal* 44, no. 6 (June 1919): 363.

⁹² Fisk University, *Report of the Librarian, 1927-1928*; Charles A. Cutter, *Expansive Classification: Part I* (Boston: C. A. Cutter, 1893), 4; Atkins, “A History of the Fisk University Library,” 26-27, 42-43.

⁹³ *The Murfreesboro Union*, October 13, 1928.

⁹⁴ Fisk University, *Catalogue, 1928-1929*, 16-17; Eliza Atkins, “A History of the Fisk University Library,” 12.

library's development of information resources. Over four million enslaved people were freed with little to no education and few if any resources after the Civil War. To educate them, the Freedmen's Bureau and the American Missionary Association worked together to establish schools like the Fisk Free Colored School.⁹⁵

In March 1865, Congress established the Freedmen's Bureau to provide various types of relief to both dislocated poor whites and recently freed men, women, and children of color in the antebellum South. The Freedmen's Bureau provided food, clothing, healthcare, education, and protection from unfair labor contracts, but it also aimed "to instruct them in religious truth."⁹⁶ Some of the Bureau's local reports from the first year also show a genuine interest in converting the freed men and women to Christianity. A May 1865 report from Louisville, Kentucky, for example, said "We want to convert our former servants, as soon as possible, into intelligent, industrious, useful Christian citizens."⁹⁷

The American Missionary Association (AMA) shared the Freedmen Bureau's desire to both evangelize and educate former slaves. The AMA was founded in 1846 as a Protestant-based anti-slavery society. In its constitutional articles of association, the AMA committed to sending "the gospel to those portions of our own and other countries

⁹⁵ Paul David Phillips, "Education of Blacks in Tennessee During Reconstruction, 1865-1870," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, 46, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 99.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 99-100.

which are destitute of it, or which present open and urgent fields of effort.”⁹⁸ After emancipation, the South became the AMA’s most “urgent” area of work. Between 1865 and 1870, the AMA helped establish Hampton Institute (now Hampton University) in Virginia, Berea College in Kentucky, Atlanta University (now Clark Atlanta University) in Georgia, Talladega College in Alabama, Straight University (merged with New Orleans University to form Dillard University) in Louisiana, Tougaloo College in Mississippi, and Fisk University in Tennessee.⁹⁹ It is no coincidence that two of the first books related to African or African American history available for Fisk students to “check-out” from George L. White’s bookshelf were related to European missionaries who had a genuine desire to educate and convert Africans to Christians. By the late 1870s, the AMA renewed its focus on spreading “the gospel to ... other countries which are destitute of it;” therefore, after it helped establish and incorporate higher education institutions throughout the South, Africa once again became the AMAs most pressing place for evangelization.¹⁰⁰

Fisk University’s charter of incorporation and the earliest available Fisk *Catalogues* confirmed the institution’s mission aligned with the goals and objectives of the Freedmen’s Bureau and the American Missionary Association. The charter stated, “the purposes of the Corporation are the Education and Training of young men and

⁹⁸ Lewis Tappan, *History of the American Missionary Association: Its Constitution and Principles, Etc.* (New York: n.p., 1855), 23.

⁹⁹ American Missionary Association, *History of the American Missionary Association with Illustrative Facts and Anecdotes* (New York: American Missionary Association, 1891), 26.

¹⁰⁰ Tappan, *History of the American Missionary Association*, 23.

women, irrespective of color; and to that end the Trustees shall have the right to prescribe a course or courses of study and the power to confer all such degrees and honors as are conferred by Universities in the United States.”¹⁰¹ Although the charter fails to mention the motivating influences of Christianity and Christian education, the annual *Catalogue* made it clear to everyone. According to the *1869-1870 Catalogue*, “the students are . . . brought under all the social, refining and elevating influences of a Christian family and home.”¹⁰² The *1871-1872 Catalogue*, with more specificity said, “religious influences . . . are made a central idea in the management of the institution,” and “holding firmly to Christian faith, as promulgated in the Bible, it would unite with all denominations of Christians, aiding them all, and being aided by them.”¹⁰³ As a result, Fisk University’s successful development depended heavily on financial support from faith-based organizations and philanthropic individuals who supported the education and evangelization of Africans and African Americans.

Likewise, gifts and donations from sympathetic organizations and private individuals defined the library’s collection development strategy during its formative years. George L. White, the Union Literary Society, and Nashville residents were among the first donors to the collection, but the *1871-1872 Catalogue* made the school’s first official appeal to any given reader. Although the library’s collection had grown to “about seven hundred volumes” in less than five years, the catalogue said, “books for the Library

¹⁰¹ Original copy of Articles of Incorporation of Fisk University in Fiskiana Collection, original in Register’s office, Davidson County, Tennessee, book 38, 339; registered August 24, 1867.

¹⁰² Fisk University, *Catalogue, 1869-1870*, 26.

¹⁰³ Fisk University, *Catalogue, 1871-1872*, 26, 29.

are needed, and standard works from publishing houses or private libraries would be most opportune.”¹⁰⁴

The Jubilee Singers, however, were more instrumental and effective in the acquisition of books for Fisk University’s Library than any written appeals. During their domestic and European tours in the 1870s, the Jubilee Singers received numerous gifts of books and funds to support the library. In Andover and Taunton, Massachusetts, “the good-will of the people took the shape of contributions for the purchase of books for the University library.”¹⁰⁵ Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom William Ewart Gladstone offered the Jubilee Singers “a little present in books in acknowledgment of their kindness, and in connection with the purposes, as they have announced, of their visit to England.”¹⁰⁶ Former U. S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom and noted historian John Lothrop Motley also donated books to fulfill a promise he made to the Jubilee Singers when he met them at Carlton House Terrace in London. Jubilee Singer Isaac P. Dickerson even helped secure the library’s first endowment while they were in Europe. According to *Fisk News*, “Through the agency of Mr. Isaac P. Dickerson, the Sabbath schools of Great Britain contributed thirteen hundred dollars toward the establishment of a library fund. The sum of three hundred dollars was expended for books and one thousand invested as a fund to be known as the Dickerson Library Fund.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Fisk University, *Catalogue, 1871-1872*, 25, 27.

¹⁰⁵ J. B. T. Marsh, *The Story of the Jubilee Singers: With Their Songs* (Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Company-Riverside Press, 1880), 38.

¹⁰⁶ Marsh, *The Story of the Jubilee Singers*, 53.

¹⁰⁷ *Fisk News*, October 1911, 7.

Fisk faculty members also contributed to the library's collection of information resources during its early years of development. Most notably, Professor Frederick A. Chase began a collection when he came to Fisk in 1871 and contributed to it until his death in 1903. As faculty members like Professor Chase provided materials to support the science program, others contributed books to help students gain new levels of understanding in their own academic disciplines. By the late nineteenth century, most collections in small academic libraries like Fisk's consisted of donations primarily focused on the school's curriculum rather than research.¹⁰⁸

One faculty member's course clearly contributed to Fisk Library's initial collection of materials to support the course of study on African American history and culture in the early nineteenth century. In 1910, Fisk hired George Edmund Haynes as "head of the department of Social Science."¹⁰⁹ Haynes was a 1903 graduate of Fisk and earned a master's degree from Yale in 1904. In 1905, he began his career in the South as a field secretary for the African American division of the Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.). Although most biographies and encyclopedia entries state Haynes returned to Fisk in 1912, after he finished his Ph.D. from Columbia University, further research reveals he came back to Fisk in 1910, "after two years of graduate study in Columbia University."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ *The Fisk Expositor*, February 1882; *Fisk Herald*, January 1910, 4; Eugene R. Hanson, "College Libraries: The Colonial Period to the Twentieth Century," *Advances in Library Administration and Organization* 8 (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1989), 171-199.

¹⁰⁹ *Fisk Herald*, November 1910, 13.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Under Haynes' leadership, Fisk University offered the very first college course on the history of African Americans. As part of his new sociology program, each student had to take "History of the Negro in America: The Negro Problem" during Junior and Senior year. The *1910-1911 Catalogue* announced the following detailed description for the course:

A rapid survey is made of the early period of the importation of slaves and of the social and economic conditions which gave rise to slavery, as well as the suppression of the slave trade. A more intensive study is made of the two periods, 1820-1860, and 1860 to the present day.

The last semester of the Senior year is taken up with reviews of current books and articles on the Negro problem. The aim is to acquaint the student with the part the Negro has had in the development of America, particularly the South; with the economical (sic), social, political and educational forces that have entered into the condition and relations of the Negro in America. The study thus gives historical perspective for the understanding of present conditions, an appreciation of the honored names of the Negroes of the past, and an estimate of the genuine contributions the Negro people has made in the way of labor force, military strength, musical culture, etc., to American civilization.

There is no suitable text-book to be used for the historical part of such a course, so that assigned readings are selected from standard histories, from Du Bois' "Suppression of the Slave Trade", Williams' "History of the Negro in America", Washington's "Story of the Negro", and Hart's "Slavery and Abolition". In addition, each student is required to use original sources and report upon some assigned topic, and to make a digest of some current writing on the Negro problem.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Fisk University, *Catalogue, 1910-1911*, 44-45.

Since there was no textbook for the new course, the library provided most of the materials for the assigned readings and reports. According to the December 1912 issue of the *Fisk Herald*, the library purchased a significant number of new books and most of them were for the Sociology department.¹¹²

Fisk presidents also played a significant role in the development of the library's early collection of materials. President McKenzie, for example, made several requests for the library to purchase books. On February 12, 1923, he wrote a letter to the librarian, Fred A. Steiner, and asked him to purchase "a number on Abraham Lincoln."¹¹³ He specifically asked that the collection include the Lincoln biography by Lord Charnwood, Godfrey Benson. In fact, this 1916 edition is still in circulation and available for check out by Fisk students today. McKenzie also asked Steiner to "lookout for significant articles relating to Negro Education, The Race Problem, and also Educational Standards?"¹¹⁴ In 1923, Steiner found and added the following published articles to the library's holdings: "A Letter from Captain A. B. Spingarn about early Education of the Negroes in New York," Du Bois' "The Superior Race" and "The Negro's Economic Problem," and Trotsky's article "On the Negro Question."¹¹⁵

¹¹² *Fisk Herald*, December 1912, 13.

¹¹³ Letter, Fayette McKenzie to Fred A. Steiner, February 12, 1923, box 2, folder 3, Fayette McKenzie Papers.

¹¹⁴ Letter, Edith G. Herbst to Fred A. Steiner, April 30, 1923, box 2, folder 3, Fayette McKenzie Papers.

¹¹⁵ Carter G. Woodson, ed., "Contents of Volume," *The Journal of Negro History*, 8, no. 1 (January 1923): iii.

Aside from the technical aspects of ordering, organizing, and making the resources available to students, faculty, and the public, early Fisk librarians had little to no impact on the collection of materials by and about Africans and African Americans. Availability and access to the materials were more important during this stage of development. The library went from opening during an appointed hour on Saturdays in the 1870s to opening seven days a week, including evenings in the 1920s. President McKenzie's willingness to adjust the librarian's hours, just to make sure the library remained open at night, was a prime example of the desire to ensure users had full access to the collection. President Jones, however, would take steps to ensure the students had full access to a professional librarian, a first-rate facility, and a Negro Collection.

CHAPTER II

FISK UNIVERSITY LIBRARY'S DEVELOPMENT OF THE NUCLEUS FOR A NEGRO COLLECTION, 1928 – 1933

In the summer of 1928, President Jones called for immediate large-scale changes to the library. He looked to his alma mater, Columbia, to find the first professional librarian for Fisk. Louis Shores, a 1928 graduate of the Columbia University School of Library Service, accepted the president's offer to serve as Librarian at Fisk University for the 1928-1929 academic year. Twenty-three-year-old Shores was born Louis Steinberg in Buffalo, New York. His parents, Paul and Earnestine Steinberg moved several times until they settled in Toledo, Ohio, where young Louis attended Jessup W. Scott High School and the University of Toledo.¹

According to the 1920 Census, his father was Russian, and his mother was Romanian, and the Steinberg family was Jewish. Like his older brother Jacob had done in 1920, Louis changed his last name to Shores during his senior year at the University of Toledo. Since Shores never explained why he changed his name, we can only postulate or assume he changed it to avoid the rampant discrimination against Jews in America. By the 1920s, most Ivy League schools like Harvard, Yale, and Columbia restricted their number of Jewish admissions to 10% or less each year. According to a 1922 letter from Columbia College Dean Herbert Hawkes, "We have honestly attempted to eliminate the lowest grade applicant and it turns out that a good many of the low grade men are New

¹ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Louis Shores, June 18, 1928, box 40, folder 2, Thomas E. Jones Collection, John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library, Fisk University; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Toledo Ward 4, Lucas, Ohio*, T625_1408, Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, (Washington: National Archives), 5A; Orvin Lee Shiflett, *Louis Shores: Defining Educational Librarianship* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 1-6.

York City Jews.”² One researcher of the “Jewish Problem” at Columbia even asserted that the college created “new channels for students to go,” and “one of these channels was City College.”³ Ironically, Shores followed his family to New York City in 1925, enrolled in City College of New York, and completed a master’s degree in education before he pursued the master’s in library science at Columbia University.⁴

Shores graduated from Columbia on June 5, 1928, and on June 11, he accepted his appointment as Librarian at Fisk University. Since the academic year did not begin until September 10, Shores used the entire summer to prepare for his new role as a professional librarian at a historically black university. In his letter of acceptance to President Jones, Shores said he would “do work in the 135th Street, Harlem Branch of the Public Library as well as visit Howard University” before he came to Fisk.⁵

By 1928, the 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library had already inaugurated the Division of Negro History, Literature and Prints “to preserve the historical records of the race; to arouse the race consciousness and race pride; to inspire art students [and] to give information to everyone about the Negro”⁶ Shores quickly immersed himself in one of the first public libraries in the country to develop a collection

² Letter, Herbert Hawkes to E. B. Wilson, June 16, 1922, Columbia University Files, Herbert Hawkes File.

³ Wendy J. Villa, “Virginia Gildersleeve and The Jewish Problem,” Columbia University, <http://www.columbia.edu/~wc116/jewprob.html> (accessed August 8, 2020).

⁴ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*; New York State Archives, Albany, New York, *State Population Census Schedules, 1925*, Election District: 05, Assembly District: 23, City: *New York*, County: *New York*, Page: 31; Shiflett, *Louis Shores*, 6, 10.

⁵ *New York Daily News*, June 5, 1928; Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Louis Shores, June 18, 1928.

⁶ “Opening of Negro Department at One Hundred and Thirty Fifth Street Branch,” *Opportunity* 3 (May 1925): 159.

devoted to African American history, literature, art, and culture. At this time, the 135th Street Branch was also known as “Harlem’s cultural center” since many of the Harlem Renaissance writers and artists went there for black history lectures, community meetings, cultural events, and endless inspiration.⁷

Shores also visited Howard University in Washington, District of Columbia; the first HBCU with a professionally trained African American librarian. In 1916, Howard University hired Edward Christopher Williams to head its Carnegie Library, teach a class in bibliography, and direct a new library training program. Williams was born in 1871 to an interracial couple in Cleveland, Ohio. His father, Daniel P. Williams, was from a wealthy African American family; his mother, Mary Kilkary, was an Irish immigrant who came to America in 1861. Williams grew up in Cleveland and attended Adelbert College of Case Western Reserve University; one of the first colleges in the state to admit African Americans.⁸

Williams graduated from Case Western in 1892 and became the university’s first assistant librarian. In 1894, Williams was promoted to head librarian at his alma mater. He held this position for five years before he took a sabbatical to study library science at the New York State Library School. Williams completed the two-year program in less than a year, and in 1900 became the first professionally trained African American male

⁷ Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto, Negro New York 1890-1930* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 181; Elinor Des Verney Sinnette, *Arthur Alfonso Schomburg, Black Bibliophile and Collector: A Biography* (New York: and Detroit New York Public Library and Wayne State University Press, 1989), 134; Sarah A. Anderson, ““The Place to Go”: The 135th Street Branch Library and the Harlem Renaissance,” *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 73, no. 4 (October 2003): 383.

⁸ Howard University, “1916-1917: Catalog of the Officers and Students of Howard University,” *Howard University Catalogs* 44, 10; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900 Cleveland Ward 14, Cuyahoga, Ohio*, T623, Records of the Bureau of the Census, (Washington: National Archives and Records Administration), 8.

librarian in the United States. Williams returned to Western Reserve and served as its University librarian until 1909. For unknown reasons, he left Western Reserve to become principal of the renowned M Street School, now known as Dunbar High School, in Washington, District of Columbia. After seven years as principal of an important African American high school, Williams returned to librarianship and accepted the position at Howard. By the time Shores visited him, Williams had grown the collection at Howard's Carnegie Library to fifty thousand volumes.⁹

Although Shores began preparations during the summer of 1928, President Jones initiated his plan for the reorganization and rebirth of library services upon his arrival in 1926. To immediately improve the library facilities, services, and resources at Fisk, Jones sought the advice of an expert in library assessment and evaluation. Once again, he hired someone from his alma mater, but this time it was a professor.

On August 5 and 6, 1926, Ernest J. Reece, Associate Professor of Library Administration in the Columbia University School of Library Service inspected the Fisk University Library. The work of re-organizing the Library on the basis of Professor Reece's recommendation was begun the following summer by Miss Ruby Ethel Cundiff of Columbia University, was ably carried forward in 1927-1928 by Mrs. Harriet Gordon, and was continued through the present year by the Library Staff.¹⁰

According to this excerpt of Shores' first report as Librarian of Fisk University, the formidable work completed by his predecessor Harriet Rawls Gordon, during the 1927 to

⁹ E. J. Josey, "Edward Christopher Williams: Librarian's Librarian," *Negro History Bulletin* 33, no. 3 (March 1970): 70-73; Duncan, "A History of Howard University Library," 5; Howard University, "1927-28: Catalog of the Officers and Students of Howard University," *Howard University Catalogs* 50, 20.

¹⁰ Fisk University, *Report of the Librarian, 1928-1929*, box 23, folder 9, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

1928 academic year, was a direct result of his former professor Ernest J. Reece's recommendations.

This report also provides an explanation for Shores' biographer, Orvin Lee Shiflett, who after years of research said, "Shores credited Cundiff with being one of the people who influenced his decision to accept the job at Fisk where she had worked prior to entering Columbia as a student," but "there is no evidence that Cundiff had worked at Fisk."¹¹ As an employee during the summer of 1927, Cundiff would not have appeared in any of the usual primary source documents such as a *Catalogue*, a census record, or a city directory; however, Shores made sure to document his classmate's contributions in the 1928 to 1929 *Report of the Librarian*. It is also to be noted that before Ruby Ethel Cundiff worked at Fisk during the summer of 1927, she was an assistant librarian and acting librarian at Earlham College. In fact, she was working in the library when Paul and Harriett Gordon graduated in 1921.¹²

Although Cundiff influenced his decision to accept the position, it was Professor Ernest J. Reece who persuaded President Jones to offer Shores the job at Fisk. Within a week of Shores' appointment, Reece wrote to commend Jones for his decision. He said:

I was interested to learn that you had offered the Fisk librarianship to Mr. Shores and that he had accepted it. My feeling is that this appointment ought to work out well. While it is true that Mr. Shores will bring a background very unlike that which has been customary at Fisk, he is well prepared and well equipped, he is a hard worker, and he possesses that sympathy with the Fisk aim which is

¹¹ Shiflett, *Louis Shores*, 59.

¹² Ibid.; Fisk University, *Report of the Librarian, 1928-1929*; Earlham College, *Who's Who Among Earhamites, 1847-1967* (Boston: Spaulding-Moss, Inc., 1967), xix; Earlham College, *The Nineteen Twenty-One Senior Annual* (Richmond, IN: Senior Class of Earlham College, 1921), 34-35.

essential to success. I hope everything may go splendidly and I see no reason it should not.¹³

Reece was obviously referring to the fact that Shores was a Jew when he said his “background” was “very unlike” any other since, traditionally, Fisk faculty and staff were Christians. Reese also mentioned his “sympathy with the Fisk aim,” which certainly meant Shores supported equal higher educational opportunities for Africans and African Americans.¹⁴

Aside from hiring a library consultant in 1926 and a professional librarian in 1928, President Jones also secured a grant to construct a new library building and establish a perpetual library endowment for Fisk. In 1902, American financier and founder of the Standard Oil Company John D. Rockefeller founded the General Education Board (GEB) as a philanthropic organization for “the promotion of education within the United States of America, without distinction of race, sex, or creed.”¹⁵ In 1921, President McKenzie convinced the GEB to offer the university a \$1,000,000 endowment if Fisk raised half the funds. McKenzie successfully raised the \$500,000 before his abrupt departure in 1925, but one condition of the agreement had not been met. Fisk had to be debt-free. As soon as he took office in July 1926, President Jones implemented a fund-raising strategy to eliminate the \$150,000 debt President McKenzie

¹³ Letter, Earnest J. Reece to Thomas E. Jones, June 25, 1928, box 40, folder 2, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ General Education Board, *The General Education Board: An Account of Its Activities, 1902-1914* (New York: General Education Board, 1915), 3.

left behind. By July 1, 1927, Fisk was debt-free and qualified to receive the \$1,000,000 endowment.¹⁶

A year after securing the endowment from the GEB, President Jones asked the foundation to help fund construction of a new library at Fisk. In a letter dated September 28, 1928, Jones submitted building plans and a detailed description of the proposed library building to the GEB for consideration. The letter also included recommendations from Professor Reese, Louis Shores, and meetings with other librarians including some American Library Association (ALA) officials, and a detailed survey by the designer and University architect, Henry C. Hibbs, who was a prominent white architect in Nashville. The following excerpts from the letter reveal important details Jones used to persuade the board:

The cost of the building, drawings for which are submitted herewith, will be approximately \$150,000, with an additional 20% for a permanent maintenance fund, and about 10% for equipment making a total of \$200,000.

The proposed building should accommodate 1000 students, 500 of these may be graduate students. It is recognized that it will be several years before the graduate departments will have attained this size but in the meantime students of Meharry medical college may be permitted the use of the building. It should be placed so as to be accessible to that institution.

There should be reading room space for 250 students at any one time, and stack space to care for 150,000 volumes. Seminar rooms for the various departments should be placed in ready access to the stacks. There should be a room for reference reading, for a special collection of Negro books. There should also be a lecture room with seating space for one hundred to take care of special lectures.

¹⁶ Richardson, *A History of Fisk University*, 81-83, 110-111; *Nashville Banner*, April 14, 1924; *New York Times*, July 2, 1927.

The need for the library building is urgent. The present reading room only accommodates about sixty students at any one time, which is less than half the space needed for a school of this size. The rooms are small and unadapted to the purposes of a class 'A' library. There is no seminar space and special reading rooms are totally inadequate for present needs. Stack space will care for barely more than 30,000 volumes when we should have 100,000 volumes.

It is essential for Fisk University to undertake a building program in the immediate future and the library is the place to begin.

...I respectfully request therefore that the General Education Board appropriate to Fisk University \$280,000 for a library building and equipment. . . .¹⁷

According to the minutes from a meeting of Fisk University's Board of Trustees on December 12, 1928, President Jones reported that the General Education Board had approved his plans and offered to give Fisk \$400,000 for "the construction, equipment, and endowment of a new library building to be jointly used by Fisk and Meharry Medical College," which had hopes to build a new campus adjacent to Fisk.¹⁸

Before it was even built, Shores revealed his intent to use the new library building for yet another purpose in the 1929-1930 *Report of the Librarian*. In a subheading formerly titled "Department of Library Science," Shores announced that "the first professional course in librarianship ever offered at Fisk was one in Reference in the spring of 1929."¹⁹ During the 1929-1930 academic year, Shores said he offered courses

¹⁷ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to General Education Board, September 28, 1928, box 57, folder 8, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

¹⁸ "Minutes and Reports, 1928" box 19, folder 4, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

¹⁹ Fisk University, *Report of the Librarian*, 1929-1930, box 23, folder 9, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

in Book Selection and Reference regularly, and he planned to offer “a major of thirty hours planned to meet the standard set up by the Board of Education for Librarianship for normal schools and colleges.”²⁰ He admitted that the curriculum was “not the equivalent of that offered by an accredited one year library school,” but it met the current demand for teacher librarians – “people trained to teach part time and to care for the school library the rest of the time.”²¹ Shores was confident “that in every way Fisk [was] now the logical location for a second library school for Negroes. With its enlarged academic program, its superior liberal arts faculty and its new library, Fisk [was] prepared to train librarians and to give them the cultural background real librarianship demands.”²²

In February 1930, Shores published an article in *The Library Journal* titled “Public Library Service to Negroes” as concrete evidence of the need for a second African American library school at Fisk. Shores claimed, “In the last two years Fisk University has received repeated requests to establish a library school for the professional training of Negroes, on the one hand, and on the other it has been cautioned that existing facilities for training the Negro are adequate to meet the demand for some time.”²³ Shores sent a questionnaire to eighty cities with the largest African American populations, according to the ALA and the U.S. Census, to prove his point. The results showed a desire for trained professional librarians in African American branches, especially for segregated libraries in the South, but none were available. In closing,

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Louis Shores, “Public Library Service to Negroes,” *The Library Journal* 55 (February 15, 1930): 150.

Shores said “trained Negro librarians in greater numbers must be provided to carry out the fuller program.”²⁴

The first and only library school to professionally train African Americans in the United States opened in 1925 at Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia. A grant from the Carnegie Corporation funded the establishment of the school, but the GEB, in cooperation with the Board of Education for Librarianship (BEL) of the ALA, had “the final decision as to the location of the school.”²⁵ After an investigation of Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama, and Hampton, the board “suggested that they look into the possibilities at Hampton Institute since its library and resources would enable it to place the school on a good basis immediately.”²⁶ Based on these circumstances, Shores felt the GEB and BEL would surely endorse Fisk as the second library school for African Americans.²⁷

For the 1929-1930 academic year, Shores focused on construction of the new library, purchasing the equipment for it, and building up an adequate collection to support a first-class liberal arts program that allowed students to learn about the experiences of Africans and people of the African Diaspora in the new library. According to his annual report, a minimal amount of changes took place at the existing library since the new building was under construction. On October 6, 1929, Shores hosted an official

²⁴ Ibid, 154.

²⁵ S. L. Smith, “The Passing of the Hampton Institute Library School” *Journal of Negro Education* 9 (1940): 51.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Fisk University, *Report of the Librarian*, 1929-1930.

groundbreaking ceremony for the new library during the annual celebration of the Fisk Jubilee Singers® departure on their first tour – Jubilee Day. Aside from new bulletin boards, the Carnegie Library remained the same. Shores stated that “a good part of the staff’s time . . . was consumed in looking after details for equipment for the new building.”²⁸ He himself was personally sorting out details with the “stack people” as late as June 1930.²⁹ On his way to Canada for summer break, Shores stopped by the Art Metal Construction Company in Jamestown, New York, just to ensure the metal book shelving arrived by September 1, 1930.³⁰

Shores also made sure he worked with faculty members to develop a collection of resources to support the study of African and African American history and culture at Fisk. Like sociologist George Edmund Haynes in the 1910s, sociologist Charles Spurgeon Johnson had the most influence on the library’s collection of resources to support students and faculty as they explored the social identity and history of Africans and African Americans during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Johnson was a 1916 graduate of Virginia Union University, a small private historically black university in Richmond, Virginia. From 1916 to 1919, Johnson studied under the direction of early American sociologist Robert E. Park at the University of Chicago. World War I, however, interrupted his studies. Johnson served as a sergeant major in the 103rd Pioneer Infantry and fought in France in 1918. He returned to the University of Chicago in 1919

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Letter, Louis Shores to Thomas Elsa Jones, June 19, 1930, box 40, folder 4, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

³⁰ Ibid., Fisk University, *Report of the Librarian*, 1929-1930.

and completed his doctorate in sociology. Johnson was immediately named Associate Executive Secretary for the Chicago Commission on Race Relations. In 1921, he became the Director of Research and Investigations for the National Urban League (NUL) and moved to New York, New York. Under the auspices of the NUL, Johnson founded a monthly academic journal called *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* in 1923, and he served as its editor-in-chief and Director of Research and Investigations until he left to accept the position at Fisk in 1928.³¹

Although Johnson did not accept the position as professor of sociology and director of the Department of Social Sciences at Fisk until 1928, he began offering President Jones assistance in “the shaping of the Research Program and the planning of the work for the future” in June 1927.³² His first recommendation was the purchase of a collection of rare books by and about African Americans for the library. Johnson had “learned of the death of Mr. Morris in Boston, who had for many years been collecting rare books about the Negro.”³³ Emery T. Morris was an African American deputy sealer of weights and measures in the city of Boston for sixteen years.³⁴ He was considered “one of the leaders of the colored race in New England and for many years was president

³¹ Patrick J. Gilpin and Marybeth Gasman, *Charles S. Johnson: Leadership beyond the Veil in the Age of Jim Crow* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 5-6; Joseph J. Boris (ed.), “Charles S. Johnson,” *Who’s Who in Colored America: A Biographical Dictionary of Notable Living Persons of Negro Descent in America, Vol. I* (New York: Who’s Who in Colored America Corp., 1927), 105.

³² Letter, Charles S. Johnson to Thomas E. Jones, July 25, 1927, box 34, folder 20, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ As a deputy sealer of weights and measures, Morris managed the testing and inspection of commercial weighing and measuring devices in Boston, Massachusetts.

of the Massachusetts Branch of the National Equal Rights League.”³⁵ Morris was survived by his wife Elizabeth, who refused to sell his books, but she told Johnson’s associate that “when she dies, ...she wants some Negro college, like Howard or Lincoln or Fisk, to get them.”³⁶ Johnson told Jones “the University eventually might get [the collection], if it is interested to the point of taking steps now to secure it.”³⁷

In September 1927, Johnson sent Jones the following memorandum with his thoughts and recommendations for the social science department at Fisk:

It seems both possible and important that the Department of Social Science of Fisk University should be associated with a definite set of research problems that it may ultimately be regarded as the outstanding authority and source of reference on those questions in about the way that the University of Chicago is identified with urban problems, the University of North Carolina with problems of the new south, the University of California with mental testing, the University of Indiana with rural research, Johns Hopkins with certain branches of medical research, etc.

The most logical field is that of
THE NEGRO AND RACE RELATIONS IN THE
UNITED STATES.³⁸

The memo also advised President Jones to take the following first step towards the establishment of the department:

1. Systematic collection of printed sources of information.

³⁵ *The Boston Globe*, September 27, 1924; United States, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Census Place: *Cambridge Ward 9, Middlesex, Massachusetts*, roll T625_708, 3B.

³⁶ Letter, Eugene Gordon to Charles S. Johnson, June 13, 1927, copy, box 34, folder 20, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

³⁷ Letter, Charles S. Johnson to Thomas E. Jones, July 25, 1927, box 34, folder 20, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

³⁸ Letter, Charles S. Johnson to Thomas E. Jones, September 28, 1927, box 34, folder 20, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

This includes selection of various government statistical publications bearing upon the Negro, and upon general questions – industry, wages, health, etc., for their relations with the specific situations.³⁹

Aside from encouraging Jones to collect resources documenting the experiences of people of African descent, Johnson also described how the “continuous work of the Department . . . would take the form of accumulative research over a long period,” and it would someday result in the following:

1. A collection of Negro life histories with some sort of guiding outline designed to draw out Negro emotional experiences and in relation to ancestry, social position within and without the group, physical appearance, economic status, etc.
2. Case records of abnormal, interracial occurrences, which would serve as clinical material for the study of relations. This would include incidents involving friendships developed, taboos, inconsistencies in the expression of customary relations, “freak” successes and failures, racial outbreaks, etc.
3. Mechanical recording of folk music, folk speech, etc.⁴⁰

For a year, Johnson attended meetings and wrote similar memorandums to assist Jones with the development of the department.⁴¹

Charles S. Johnson finally accepted the President’s offer to head the social science department and came to Fisk in September 1928. Since he had two research studies (African Origins and Tennessee Health) already underway at Fisk, Johnson did

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Charles S. Johnson, October 24, 1927, box 34, folder 20, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

not teach during the first quarter. He did, however, offer to help with “the courses in journalism, the student publication and the development of a collection of Negro books for the Library.”⁴² In February 1929, President Jones personally asked Johnson to serve as the co-chair on the Library Committee. According to Jones, “the purpose of this Committee is to allocate the book fund and to discuss the Library building plans and general Library policy.”⁴³

Johnson and Shores worked together to design the new library and coordinate the purchase of an adequate collection of books on Africans and people of the African Diaspora for the Fisk community. With a common sense of purpose, they both asked President Jones to approach a close friend and associate of theirs, Arthur Alfonso Schomburg. Johnson and Shores knew Schomburg from New York; more specifically, they all met at the 135th Street (Harlem) Branch of the New York Public Library. Arthur Alfonso Schomburg, a Puerto Rican of African descent, was known as one of the country’s foremost collectors of African and African American books during the Harlem Renaissance. He was a founding member and primary donor of the Division of Negro History, Literature and Prints at the 135th Street Branch. Schomburg often loaned materials from his collection to the 135th Street Branch and 42nd Street Library for historical exhibits on African Americans. The 135th Street Branch purchased his books in

⁴² Letter, Charles S. Johnson to Thomas E. Jones, September 29, 1928, box 34, folder 22, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁴³ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Charles S. Johnson, February 9, 1929, box 35, folder 1, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

1927 as a distinct reference collection and named it “The Arthur A. Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature and Art.”⁴⁴

In February 1929, President Jones asked Arthur Alfonso Schomburg to assist Fisk with the acquisition of the Morris collection. According to Jones, his “chief concern [was] not to allow any of the valuable material to get away from us during the next few months while the building is being erected.”⁴⁵ Schomburg agreed to go to Boston “and look over the books carefully and get the lowest price the lady is willing to part with her books.”⁴⁶ Two weeks later, Schomburg gave Jones the following report on the Morris collection:

While the number of books represent the nucleus of a collection they are a heterogenous mass gathered without reference to any systematic viewpoint. Some need binding while others are in excellent condition. I could get no commitment on the part of the lady, except that she would stand for top-notch price for the entire collection including a number of engraving, a water color and an oil painting of T. L’ Overture by a French painter. I told Mrs. Morris that I wasn’t strong on the pictures, for my instruction was specific as to books. We did not reach an agreement as to the price and I did not insist in putting a valuation after going over the matter, for I felt while it represented a mass of books, the base was rather weak as an investment. The nucleus of a collection must be materially stronger than the Morris collection for Fisk University.

I therefore regret to state that no advantage will be gained in spending any money to duplicate many of the books

⁴⁴ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Arthur [Schomburg], February 8, 1929, box 39, folder 18, Thomas E. Jones Collection; Sinnette, *Arthur Alfonso Schomburg*, 137, 150.

⁴⁵ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Arthur [Schomburg], February 8, 1929.

⁴⁶ Letter, Arthur A. Schomburg to Thomas E. Jones, April 7, 1929, box 39, folder 18, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

which you now have on your shelves at Fisk and which are in the Morris collection.⁴⁷

After Schomburg delivered the disappointing news about the Morris collection, he recommended Jones consider purchasing other collections.⁴⁸

Over the next year, Schomburg approached several book collectors to see if they would sell their collections to Fisk. In April 1929, he contacted “Henry P. Slaughter of Washington, D.C. and Rev. Charles D. Martin of New York city; individuals who have [spent] considerable sums of money in the building of their respective collections of Negro books,” and Schomburg continued to “impress them with the belief that the time is opportune to dispose of their books.”⁴⁹ By March 1930, he thought he had finally found the perfect collection for Fisk to purchase. Charles Tuttle of the Tuttle Company, long-time printers and dealers in books and paper in Rutland, Vermont, was “willing to sell all matters in his collection dealing with the subject of the Negro for a stated price to be arrived after a careful examination of the material itself.”⁵⁰ Schomburg was confident he could purchase the entire collection along with some additional books about Africa for less than five-thousand dollars, and indeed he did before the new library opened.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Letter, Arthur A. Schomburg to Thomas E. Jones, April 22, 1929, box 39, folder 18, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Letter, Arthur A. Schomburg to Thomas E. Jones, March 6, 1930, box 39, folder 18, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁵¹ Ibid.; *Rutland Daily Herald*, August 1, 1935.

On Saturday, April 26, 1930, an impressive cornerstone ceremony took place during Fisk's second annual Festival of Music and Art (now Spring Arts Festival). President Jones and Louis Shores hosted several notable figures for the celebration of a new \$250,000 library building. Among those present were John D. Rockefeller III, American philanthropist; Walter Lippman, newspaper editor; James Weldon Johnson, African American poet; Samuel Sachs, American investment banker; and John Erskine, a novelist and president of Julliard School of Music who gave an address on the place of music in the preparation of life. An original member of the Fisk Jubilee Singers®, Mabel Lewis Imes, also attended the ceremony and graced the stage.⁵²

President Herbert Hoover sent his pastor, Dr. Augustus T. Murray of the Church of the Society of Friends in Washington, D.C., to congratulate Fisk on its achievements, preach “a gospel of work as a means of attaining real education,” and offer “a plea for liberal education in the broadest sense of the word.”⁵³ Murray said, “All institutions of learning have to fight barbarism, and by that I mean they have to fight such things as ignorance, prejudice, narrowness and unreason. We have to combat these things in order to live lives of [sincerity] and truth.”⁵⁴ Chancellor James H. Kirkland from Vanderbilt University also spoke briefly. Greetings were brought by Hilary E. Howse, Nashville's

⁵² *The Tennessean*, April 26, 1930.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

mayor; Carl Milam, representing the ALA; and Robert E. Park, head of the sociology department at the University of Chicago.⁵⁵

Construction of the library began early in 1930, and Fisk gave the contractor two hundred days to complete the job. As anticipated, the library was ready by the new academic year. The new building occupied a central position on campus. The building is considered one of the major works of architect Henry C. Hibbs, who came to Nashville to supervise the construction of George Peabody College for Teachers in the 1910s. Hibbs is best known for his Collegiate Gothic design of the Rhodes College campus in Memphis, but he also designed buildings for Meharry Medical College, Vanderbilt University, and present-day Belmont University in Nashville. At Fisk, Hibbs' library design featured a modern Gothic style with red-face brick trimmed in Indiana limestone that had a one-hundred-foot tower in the center. Two two-story wings extended from the tower on each side to form classrooms, reading rooms, work rooms, etc., and the tower contained the stacks. The first floor had locker rooms and toilets, supply closets, and a shipping room. The second floor had two large reading rooms, one in each wing, seating for one hundred and twelve students, a public catalog, librarian offices, and a restroom. The Negro Collection was placed in a dedicated room on the third floor.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ "Facts and Figures," Library, Library Dedication, November 20, 1930, Fiskiana Collection, John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library, Fisk University; *The Tennessean*, December 29, 1929; *The Tennessean*, April 24, 1930; *The Tennessean*, April 26, 1930.

⁵⁶ *Fisk Herald*, December 1930, x; Atkins, "A History of the Fisk University Library," 15; James A. Hoobler, "Henry Clossen Hibbs," Carroll Van West., et al., eds., *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, online edition (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003).

In the middle of September 1930, the move from the Carnegie Library to what Shores called at this point the “Rockefeller edifice” began.⁵⁷ Over twenty-five thousand books and several thousand pamphlets were moved from the old library to the new one. To make it easier, Shores had the librarians and student workers construct three-foot boxes to carry entire shelves of the books over at a time. According to Shores:

... precisely on the first day of school the mighty oak doors of the Library swung open to admit students and faculty. But the building was not yet complete: steel shelving to the extent of three and a half miles had to be erected in the tower before Dedication and 25,000 volumes had to be moved once more to their regular resting place. The task was consummated after seven nights of feverish enterprise, and at last on Dedication Day the Library was ready.⁵⁸

Shores planned an impressive dedication ceremony and a national African American library conference during Fisk’s homecoming to celebrate completion of the new library. During the summer, he began working with a committee of leading library professionals to develop a tentative program for the conference which involved the dedication ceremony and the highly anticipated football game against Bluefield College on the afternoon of Saturday, November 22, 1930. The committee included the following individuals as members: Louis Shores, chairman; Tommie Dora Barker, regional field agent for the South, American Library Association; Thomas F. Blue, Head, Colored Division, Public Library, Louisville, Kentucky; Florence R. Curtis, director, Library School, Hampton Institute, Hampton, Virginia; Ernestine Rose, librarian, 135th Street

⁵⁷ Fisk University, *Preliminary Report of the Librarian*, July 1, 1930 - April 1931, box 23, folder 10, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Branch, Public Library, New York City; and Charlotte Templeton, president, Southeastern Library Association. Shores also received funds from the Carnegie Corporation, the General Education Board, and the Rosenwald Fund towards the expenses for the conference.⁵⁹

On October 2, 1930, Shores sent a mass mailing to college administrators and city librarians inviting them to send a delegate to the dedication ceremony and “a Negro Library Conference...to consider problems related to Negro library service.”⁶⁰ This was only the second conference of its kind in the country. The first conference to bring African American librarians together in formal and informal discussions was held in 1927 at Hampton Institute, and Shores was one of its keynote speakers. Shores asked each administrator and city librarian to make arrangements for their librarian, or the librarian in charge of their African American branch to come to Fisk for what he considered to be a historic event in the development of library programs, especially in the South. Aside from the leading library professionals Shores had already assembled as an advisory committee, the letter announced he had also gathered the following group of speakers for the conference: Adam Strohm, president of the American Library Association; Carl H. Milam, secretary of the American Library Association; Dr. C. C. Williamson, director of University Libraries, Columbia University; Robert M. Lester, Carnegie Corporation, New York City; Clark Foreman, Julius Rosenwald Fund, Nashville, Tennessee; Arthur A.

⁵⁹ Letter, Louis Shores to Thomas E. Jones, June 19, 1930, box 40, folder 4, Thomas E. Jones Collection; *Nashville Banner*, November 22, 1930.

⁶⁰ Letter, Louis Shores to College Administrators and City Librarians, October 2, 1930, Library, Library Dedication, November 20, 1930, Fiskiana Collection.

Schomburg, book collector and donor of Schomburg Negro Collection, New York City; Monroe N. Work, Tuskegee Institute, compiler of bibliography on the Negro; Rachel Harris, Public Library, Louisville, Kentucky; Lucile Fargo, Peabody College, and author of *The Library in the School*; and Dr. Louis R. Wilson, vice-president of the American Library Association.⁶¹

From November 20 to November 23, Fisk University hosted seventy-one librarians from every southern state and a dozen from northern states on campus. The Carnegie Corporation and the Rosenwald Fund allowed a portion of their contributions to cover travel expenses for the delegates, and Fisk provided housing and food to all the librarians from African American institutions. Librarians from over thirty HBCUs attended the conference, including Alabama State Teachers College, Atlanta University, Bethune-Cookman College, Florida A. & M. College, Hampton Institute, Howard University, Johnson C. Smith University, Kentucky State Industrial College, Lane College, Meharry Medical College, Miles Memorial College, North Carolina College for Negroes, Paine College, Prairie View State College, Rust College, Spelman College, Talladega College, and Tuskegee Institute.⁶²

On Thursday, November 20, 1930 at 2:00 p.m., the University held its dedication ceremony for the new Fisk Library in the Chapel. President Jones presided over the program, and Rabbi Julius Mark of Nashville's Congregation Ohabai Sholom, then better

⁶¹ Ibid.; Letter, Louis Shores to Alumnus, [December 15, 1930], Library, Library Dedication, November 20, 1930, Fiskiana Collection.

⁶² Program, "Dedication of Fisk Library," Library, Library Dedication, November 20, 1930, Fiskiana Collection; Letter, Louis Shores to Alumnus, [December] 15, 1930, Library, Library Dedication, November 20, 1930, Fiskiana Collection.

known as the Vine Street Temple, gave the invocation. The architect, Henry Hibbs, opened with a presentation of the library building to the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Paul D. Cravath. Cravath's father was a co-founder of Fisk University and its first president from 1875 until his death in 1900. Greetings were brought by Henry H. Horton, governor of Tennessee; Louis R. Wilson, head librarian at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill; Jackson Towne, head librarian at George Peabody College for Teachers and president of the Tennessee Library Association (TLA); and Herbert S. Hirshberg, dean of the school of library science at Western Reserve University. Remarks were given by Robert R. Moton, president of Tuskegee Institute; Adam Strohm, president of the ALA; and Louis Shores. Herbert E. Hawkes, the dean of Columbia College, Columbia University, gave the keynote address titled "The Modern College and the Imponderables."⁶³

The new library was certainly an almost imponderable feat for the Fisk campus community. According to the dedication program's forward, "There is a new patience with barren dormitory rooms, rickety furniture and inadequate equipment. When a lovely miracle has happened before your eyes you somehow believe in other miracles to come. There is more hope and pride on Fisk campus than in many a weary day."⁶⁴

Indeed, everyone was proud of the new library. In December 1930, *The Fisk Herald*, a monthly publication by the students at Fisk University, devoted the entire issue to the new library. The cover of the "Library Issue" featured a picture of the library's new

⁶³ Program, "Dedication of Fisk Library," Library, Library Dedication, November 20, 1930, Fiskiana Collection.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

bookplate designed by Fisk student Donzleigh H. Jefferson. Inside, the students included three multi-page articles and one single-page piece with eleven full-page interior and exterior images of the library. The first article was a copy of Herbert E. Hawkes's keynote address from the dedication ceremony, in which he closed by saying, "Fisk University is to be congratulated upon the possession of this beautiful building. In dedicating it she must need rededicate herself to the cause of truth made accessible. For this involves nothing less than thinking the thoughts of God after Him."⁶⁵ There is a bit of irony in the fact that the students used the white space between his speech and the next article to print an anonymous poem titled "Hypocrite." The *Herald's* editorial staff obviously felt like Hawkes's speech contradicted his publicized rationale behind restricting Jewish and African American admissions at Columbia University.⁶⁶

Although a prominent white architect had designed the building, those who visited it discovered stunning murals from African American artist Aaron Douglas shaped the soul of the building. Douglas discussed his intentions in an article in the Fisk Herald titled "Library Murals." By 1930, Douglas had gained national attention from his artwork during the Harlem Renaissance, and he was well known for his illustrations focusing on African American social issues in the *New York Sun*, W. E. B. Du Bois' *The Crisis*, and Charles S. Johnson's *Opportunity*.⁶⁷ As co-chair of the Library Committee, Johnson recommended Douglas to President Jones and Shores for the design and

⁶⁵ *Fisk Herald*, December 1930, 15.

⁶⁶ *Fisk Herald*, December 1930, 8-26.

⁶⁷ Joseph J. Boris (ed.), "Aaron Douglas," *Who's Who in Colored America: A Biographical Dictionary of Notable Living Persons of Negro Descent in America, Vol. II* (New York: Who's Who In Colored America Corp., 1929), 113.

presentation of decorative murals throughout the entire library. At the president's behest, Douglas travelled from New York to Nashville during the summer of 1930 to design and paint the murals. His two-page article in the *Fisk Herald* explained the concept, style, and depictions for each room, and here are a few excerpts:

The story of the [Negro's] progress from central Africa is told on the north wall of the reserve room and the south wall of the reference room. Beginning at the eastern corner we see the jungles which represent the homes of the slaves. Further along the wall appears a group of men going down into Egypt and bearing packs upon their heads....

At the extreme west end of the wall a long line of slaves, chained together, march down to the sea. Around the angle of the end wall a three mast slaver arrives for the cargo....

The story is continued on the north wall of the reserve room. Proceeding left to right as before, the slaves march up from the shore massed against a darkening background. Just beyond a fettered slave kneels upon the auction block. The light of Christianity penetrates the encircling shadows and causes yellow ribbons of light to surround the figures....

Christianity, the first great source of spiritual light for the American Negro, is symbolized by a skull. Golgotha, over which is spread outstretched wings. The idea of wings is often encountered in the spirituals and symbolizes the flight of the soul from death to eternal life. An arresting group, burdened on head and shoulders, marches toward Christianity for them an unfailing source of joy and beauty....

The four figures, leaving their work in the cotton fields turn toward the light of learning, symbolized by Jubilee Hall, built by funds raised by the Jubilee Singers, was in the early years of freedom a beacon light in almost total darkness. This building springing from the depths of the souls of the black folk, makes a perfect symbol for the Negro education... The last figure measures a building which has the simple outlines of the new library. The small figure at the end of the wall goes out into the world in

search of truth which is symbolized by a pyramid upon a hill with a star at its apex....

In the mural decorations, the artist has succeeded in effectively representing the education, achievement and religion of the Negro. This has been done by an unexplained means of symbolistic representation.⁶⁸

Overall, the decorative art in the new library was designed to teach Fisk students, and anyone from outside of the university who visited the library, the history of African Americans. The murals placed African American culture literally in the heart of the library building. At the same time, the murals, Douglas and others hoped, encouraged those who viewed them to “rid themselves of the inferior feeling of being Negro.”⁶⁹ In an issue of *The Southern Workman*, Douglas later described the murals in the Fisk Library as an “attempt to show three things which have affected the Negro in his progress in this country – first, his religion, second, emancipation, and third, his education.”⁷⁰

The students asked President Jones to expound on the educational benefits of the library in a one-page piece following Douglas’s article. It is worth mentioning that there was a considerable amount of white space between the two articles, but the editors left it blank this time. Titled “Fisk – A University in the South,” President Jones credited the new library with helping the University’s case for accreditation:

For the past sixty years public institutions have looked to Fisk to train teachers, social workers, ministers and other

⁶⁸ *Fisk Herald*, December 1930, 16-18.

⁶⁹ *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life*, 1, no. 1 (January 1923): np. In the inaugural issue of *Opportunity*, Charles S. Johnson wrote, “Accurate and dependable facts can correct inaccurate and slanderous assertions that have gone unchallenged...and what is important, to inculcate a disposition to see enough of interest and beauty of their own lives to rid themselves of the inferior feeling of being Negro.”

⁷⁰ Rose Henderson, “Aaron Douglas, Negro Painter,” *The Southern Workman* 60, no. 9 (September 1931): 384-385.

leaders. It was not, however, until the inauguration of the research program in the field of social sciences, the erection of the new library building and the transfer of the Meharry Medical College to the proximity of Fisk campus that the institution began to assume the proportion of a real university....

Fisk should become a real university. The accrediting agencies in the South have been asked to judge Negro schools by the same standards as those set up for the white schools. Educators will increasingly call for teachers who have been trained in schools which can meet the highest requirements of American educational standards....

Both faculty and students must have comfortable and beautiful surroundings and they must have library and laboratory equipment with which to work. With this in mind every brick, every beam, every picture and every book that has gone into the new library has helped to realize the dream of a real university in the South where leaders of high proficiency and integrity may be trained for increasing opportunities and responsibilities in American life.⁷¹

Shortly after this article was written and published, Fisk became the first African American college or university to gain accreditation in the South. According to the 1930-1931 *Report of the President of Fisk University*, “on December 6, 1930, unconditional “A” class rating was granted by the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Southern States, membership in the American Council on Education was obtained, and full “A” class standing with the New York Board of Regents was received.”⁷²

For the last article in the special issue of the *Fisk Herald*, news associate Pearl W. Sanders conducted an interview with former librarian Katherine Marvin who returned to

⁷¹ *Fisk Herald*, December 1930, 21.

⁷² Thomas E. Jones, *Report of the President of Fisk University, 1930-1931* (Nashville, TN: Fisk University Bulletin, 1931), 4.

Fisk for the new library's dedication ceremony. Sanders used the commentary from the interview to write a piece titled "The Library of Old." In the article, Marvin reminisced over old times and discussed the library in Jubilee Hall, the library in Livingstone Hall, the corner-stone laying by Taft in 1908, and the students carrying the books to the then new Carnegie Library in 1909. According to Marvin, "We were as proud to enter that building as you are to enter this magnificent building this year."⁷³ Marvin also provided immense visual and informational details about the old library in the article, including the green ferns she brought in as decoration, the annual Christmas tree that reached high into the center well, the small statues throughout the building, and the three paintings by Henry O. Tanner that the library acquired "from Paris through Miss Parmenter's uncle who was an art dealer in Chicago."⁷⁴ Sanders also revealed in her article that the old Carnegie Library became the new hall for the social sciences department in 1930.⁷⁵

After the library dedication and conference, President Jones, Louis Shores, and Charles S. Johnson worked to find a grant or philanthropist to pay for Fisk to hire Arthur A. Schomburg as a full-time curator for the new Negro Collection at Fisk. Schomburg had already helped Fisk purchase and place the Tuttle Collection of 4,000 books on the third floor of the new library as the foundation for the dedicated room and collection of Negro-Americana and Africana. In a letter dated December 19, 1930, President Jones admitted to Shores that the GEB and the Rosenwald Fund "felt we should raise the

⁷³ *Fisk Herald*, December 1930, 25.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

money from outside sources feeling that there are individuals who should be interested in the uniqueness of this appeal.”⁷⁶ The growing severe depression had already strained both foundations’ financial standing. The GEB would not contribute any additional funds towards Fisk library projects, but the Rosenwald Fund offered a \$25,000 grant toward the development of the collection and to encourage someone else to assist in the effort. Jones suggested putting Schomburg on the library budget for a year, asking individual donors to support the “Negro book fund,” and applying for additional funds from the Carnegie Corporation. In any case, President Jones wanted Schomburg on staff, and he expected Shores and Johnson to write letters in support of the endeavor.⁷⁷

Ultimately, Shores used funds from the Rosenwald grant to hire Schomburg as curator of the Negro Collection at Fisk. According to his annual *Report of the Librarian*, “Under Mr. Arthur Schomburg’s direction material by and about the Negro is gradually being collected and organized.”⁷⁸ Schomburg immediately added several hundred items to the collection. He personally went through the stacks, removed the books by and about African Americans, and placed them in the Negro Collection room where they were reclassified by the catalog department. In March 1931, Schomburg began opening the Negro Collection room to patrons on a regular schedule for the first time, which “contributed to an increased use of the material by students and faculty.”⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Louis S. Shores, December 19, 1930, box 40, folder 4, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁷⁷ Ibid.; Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Louis S. Shores, December 21, 1930, box 40, folder 4, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁷⁸ Fisk University, *Preliminary Report of the Librarian of Fisk University to the President, July 1, 1930 to April 1, 1930*, box 23, folder 9, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Schomburg also placed African American artifacts from the library's collection on prominent display for the first time, thus creating an important African American-centered museum for not just the Fisk community but the many visitors who came to the campus. He found what is referred to as the Lincoln Bible in a concealed area of the old library and featured it as the centerpiece of the Negro Collection in the new library. The freemen of Baltimore originally gave the Bible, bound in purple velvet with an eighteen-carat gold plate, to President Abraham Lincoln in 1864. His son, Robert Todd Lincoln, donated the Bible to Fisk in 1916, and it sat in an obscure area of the Carnegie Library collecting dust until 1931. The Lincoln Bible was encased in glass and placed on display during the annual Festival of Music and Fine Arts that year.⁸⁰

In October 1931, President Jones asked Schomburg to chair a committee "to properly mount and exhibit the Baldrige Collection of paintings and drawings."⁸¹ Samuel D. Insull, an American business man, purchased a collection of more than 300 drawings of native African scenes and types by Cyrus Leroy Baldrige and donated it to Fisk as a gift. During the 1931 Spring Arts Festival, the collection was placed on display as an exhibit in the old Carnegie library. At the president's behest, Schomburg had the collection professionally framed and matted for the University. Many of the pieces are still on display in the newest and oldest libraries at Fisk. The Lincoln Bible is also still a

⁸⁰ *Nashville Banner*, April 19, 1931.

⁸¹ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Arthur Schomburg, October 23, 1931, box 39, folder 18, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

major piece in the library's collection and is currently on display in Fisk's Special Collections and Archives.⁸²

In January 1931, Schomburg wrote the proposal asking the Carnegie Corporation to continue funding his position at Fisk. He also asked them to finance his global search for more African and African American materials for the library. In his application, Schomburg said:

I respectfully request that if my petition is favorably considered I be permitted, on the basis of a fellowship, to devote a first year to the important task of assembling a basic collection for Fisk University, and for consultation with other institutions and with students and faculty who have indicated that some benefits have been derived from such limited assistance as I have been able to give under the present circumstances, and that the value of this first year be used as a basis for consideration of a request to pursue these explorations referred to above in the Spanish Archives.”⁸³

He wanted to make sure the Negro Collection at Fisk included materials about Africans in Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean; therefore, he would spend the second year traveling to Spain to investigate and translate materials about travelers and explorers of African descent to the Americas in the sixteenth century. As references, Schomburg submitted the following list of names to the Carnegie Corporation: Franklin F. Hopper, Director, New York Public Library; Henry Goddard Leach, Editor, FORUM; President Thomas Elsa

⁸² Sinnette, *Arthur Alfonso Schomburg*, 154-155.

⁸³ Letter, Arthur A. Schomburg to The Carnegie Corporation, January 14, 1931, box 39, folder 18, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

Jones, Fisk University; Professor Vernon Loggins, Columbia University; and James Weldon Johnson, New York, New York.⁸⁴

Charles S. Johnson wrote an impressive letter to the Carnegie Corporation in support of Schomburg's application on the same date. Johnson said Fisk needed Schomburg to judiciously assemble a working collection of material on African Americans. Johnson argued that Schomburg's fellowship was essential because "a very great deal of the bibliographical exploration of students is in the field of the Negro, race relations, the South, slavery, etc.," and "his work in the field, covering a period of thirty years, not only merits an opportunity . . . , but makes him available at the most valuable period of his life for service to this institution – and to others that are concerned with the assembling of these most necessary 'tools' for the social science professions."⁸⁵ Johnson also said Schomburg had already created an entire development plan for Fisk to incorporate small and large private collections with a global perspective.⁸⁶

While Schomburg focused on adding books by and about Africans and African Americans to the collection, Shores spent the year "ordering and preparing books from the Carnegie list for College Libraries for which purpose ten thousand dollars was released from the original grant."⁸⁷ He ordered book titles for every department in the university with a balanced distribution, except for the history and English departments

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Letter, Charles S. Johnson to The Carnegie Corporation, January 14, 1931, box 39, folder 18, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Fisk University, *Preliminary Report of the Librarian of Fisk University to the President, July 1, 1930 to April 1, 1930.*

who received a few more books than everyone else. Between July 1, 1930 and March 1, 1931, Shores added over three-thousand books to the collection. These additions, along with Schomburg's, brought the library's holdings up to 28,747 volumes.

Shores also spent the 1930 to 1931 academic year making his case for the establishment of the second African American library school at Fisk. After the library conference, he published and contributed to several journal articles to place Fisk prominently in the library world. On January 1, 1931, the *Library Journal* featured his one-page article on the "Negro Library Conference Held" at Fisk. The same month, Shores published a study of "Library Services to Negroes" in the *Wilson Bulletin*, "with two front page photographs of the library and the group of librarians who attended the Conference."⁸⁸ Ethel B. Gilbert worked with Shores to publish a history and description of "Fisk's New Library" in the February 1931 issue of the *Southern Workman*, and Shores had another article published about "Fisk University's New Library" in the February 1, 1931 issue of *Library Journal*.⁸⁹

Aside from the journal articles, Shores continued to offer library training at Fisk during the academic year. He had twelve students enroll in his professional librarian courses. The students even had an opportunity for professional fieldwork. They helped organize a library at Nashville's first African American public high school, Pearl High, which stood near the Fisk campus. Shores also had library orientation sessions for

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.; Louis Shores, "Negro Library Conference Held," *Library Journal* 56 (January 1, 1931): 40; Louis Shores, "Library Services to Negroes," *Wilson Bulletin* 5 (January 1931): 310-315; Ethel B. Gilbert, "Fisk's New Library," *Southern Workman* 60 (February 1931): 60-67; Louis S. Shores, "Fisk University's New Library," *Library Journal* 56 (February 1, 1931): 107-110.

Freshmen and Sophomores and offered a special one-hour course to teach students how to use the library.⁹⁰

Although he accomplished much during the academic year, Shores spent most of it away from campus. In the fall of 1930, he enrolled in the newly inaugurated doctoral program at the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago. Between late December 1930 and March 1931, Shores sent President Jones regular correspondence from the famous Drake and Harvard Hotels in Chicago, Illinois. Most of his letters announced a random trip back to Nashville to work from his desk in the library for three or four days. However, Shores made sure to mention the progress of his dissertation, a study of the “Non-fiction Reading Interests of Fisk Alumni Compared with Those of Northern College Graduates,” in every letter. In one of his letters, Shores offered to ask his dissertation chair, Douglas Waples, and other committee members if he could conduct his research at Fisk in April, May, and June with monthly trips to Chicago for conferences and meetings. According to Shores, he would return to Chicago during the summer and thereby complete his three required quarters of residence.⁹¹

Before Shores could gain approval to return to Fisk, he had to leave Chicago for a more pressing matter. On March 5, 1931, Shores met President Jones in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, for a Conference on Training for Librarianship for Negroes at the

⁹⁰ Fisk University, *Preliminary Report of the Librarian of Fisk University to the President, July 1, 1930 to April 1, 1930*.

⁹¹ Letter, Louis Shores to Thomas E. Jones, December 30, 1930, box 40, folder 4, Thomas E. Jones Collection; Letter, Louis Shores to Thomas E. Jones, January 5, 1931, box 40, folder 5, Thomas E. Jones Collection; Letter, Louis Shores to Thomas E. Jones, January 9, 1931, box 40, folder 5, Thomas E. Jones Collection; Letter, Louis Shores to Luanna J. Bowles, January 15, 1931, box 40, folder 5, Thomas E. Jones Collection; Letter, Louis Shores to Thomas E. Jones, February 2, 1931, box 40, folder 5, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

University of North Carolina. The meeting was called by the BEL chairman, Louis R. Wilson, to discuss the future of professional education for African American librarians. Wilson specifically invited the presidents and librarians from Hampton Institute, Fisk University, and Atlanta University to discuss their plans and objectives for establishing library schools.⁹²

According to the meeting minutes, all three institutions wanted a library school, but each had financial concerns. Hampton was considering adding an undergraduate degree to its admission requirements, but prospective students were refusing to attend the library school because of its emphasis on industrial education and lack of major fields. Fisk had a new library building with space for a library school, a collection of thirty thousand books, and twenty-five prospective students for its teacher-librarian program, but only two full-time instructors in comparison to Hampton's five full-time instructors. Atlanta was planning to build a new library with space for a library school. Its location was considered ideal because of its location in a densely populated African American community and affiliation with Emory University, but its plans were entirely contingent on the BEL's decision regarding the need for a second library school. At the end of the discussion, the following suggestions were made: (1) a concerted effort by all institutions to support Hampton Institute's library courses and (2) restrict attempts to train teacher-librarians. Removal of the library school from Hampton Institute to another location was also mentioned as a possibility in the future.⁹³

⁹² "Minutes of the Conference on Training for Librarianship for Negroes," March 5, 1931, box 40, folder 5, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

In June 1931, Wilson asked President Jones to follow up with a letter to the Board of Education for Librarianship concerning the conference on March 5. Wilson specifically wanted to know what Jones thought about the meeting and his plans for the library science program at Fisk. His letter also mentioned that the GEB was only interested in funding library buildings not library science programs, the Rosenwald Fund was only interested in Atlanta, and the Carnegie Corporation was not interested in fully-funding another library school.⁹⁴

Jones responded by acknowledging the fact there was only one library school for African Americans and that was at Hampton Institute. Jones said he also thought the BEL would not oppose Fisk offering undergraduate library courses if it had a standard course for part-time teachers and librarians in smaller high schools. He said he did not feel like it was necessary for Fisk to stop offering the library courses after the meeting in Chapel Hill, especially since Fisk had been offering the courses for the past two years. Though he did not agree with it, Jones said in the spirit of cooperation, he would consider discontinuing the library courses if the ALA felt like Fisk should stop. Jones closed the letter by expressing a genuine desire for the second library school at Fisk, but admitted that it could not happen without an endowment, and he would support the committee's decision whether they chose Fisk or Atlanta for the next African American library school.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Letter, Louis R. Wilson to Thomas E. Jones, June 4, 1931, box 40, folder 5, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁹⁵ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Louis R. Wilson, June 9, 1931, box 40, folder 5, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

Instead of returning to the University of Chicago as he had planned, Shores spent the summer of 1931 in Dayton, Ohio. He taught library courses for two months at the University of Dayton. His biographer, Orvin Lee Shiflett, said “the librarian of Dayton had begun a summer program the year before to train school librarians,” and Shores “was probably recommended for the appointment by Douglas Waples.”⁹⁶ While he was working at the University of Dayton, Shores met and hired a full-time assistant librarian and library science instructor for the 1931 to 1932 academic year at Fisk.⁹⁷

On June 26, 1931, Shores wrote President Jones to tell of his meeting, impression, and hiring of Frances L. Yocom. Yocom had received her bachelor’s degree from Oberlin College, a master’s degree in education from Columbia, and a library science degree from Western Reserve University. According to Shores, she was “a dignified little lady in the early thirties, some grey hair and a sparkling sense of humor.”⁹⁸ Prior to accepting the position at Fisk, Yocom spent three years as the librarian at Straight College, a historically black college in New Orleans, Louisiana. She had also worked in the Cleveland Public Library. Yocom left a position as an assistant cataloger at Oberlin College Library to begin working at Fisk on August 1, 1931. President Jones offered her \$1800 per year to work as a library administrator and to teach one library course per quarter.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Shiflett, *Louis Shores*, 38.

⁹⁷ Letter, Louis Shores to Thomas E. Jones, June 26, 1931, box 40, folder 5, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*; Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Louis Shores, July 3, 1931, box 40, folder 5, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

As soon as the summer session ended at the University of Dayton, Shores returned to campus on July 31, 1931. He spent the first week of August showing Yocom the library, introducing her to the staff, and helping her get acquainted with her responsibilities. Then, he went to New York for a two-week vacation. From there, Shores made one more trip to Chicago to discuss his thesis with the dissertation committee before returning to Fisk a full month before the opening of what he called “the biggest school year in the library’s history – serving and disciplining 1000 students.”¹⁰⁰ The 1931 to 1932 academic year was momentous because Fisk Library would open its doors to both Fisk and Meharry Medical College students for the first time.

In February 1928, the Meharry Board of Trustees formally asked the GEB for funds to provide more adequate and up-to-date facilities for its students. The GEB gave Meharry \$1.5 million toward the cost of a new campus. Large amounts were also given by George Eastman of the Kodak Corporation, by the Julius Rosenwald Fund, and by the Edward Harkness Foundation. A campaign among the citizens of Nashville and Meharry alumni also raised fifty thousand dollars. Meharry’s trustees purchased six acres on Eighteenth Avenue, a mile northwest of Tennessee’s capitol and the heart of downtown Nashville. Across Eighteenth Avenue, on the new campus’s eastern border, stood Fisk University. Construction began in 1930 and it took a year and a half to complete and in fall 1931, Meharry Medical College moved from South Nashville to occupy its new quarters – three modern brick buildings in North Nashville. The main building housed

¹⁰⁰ Letter, Louis Shores to Thomas E. Jones, July 6, 1931, box 40, folder 5, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

nearly the entire “college and hospital, including the schools of medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, and nursing.”¹⁰¹ The second building was a dormitory for nursing students and the third, a power plant. Attached to the main building was an auditorium, the Public Health Lecture Hall. With the move to North Nashville, Fisk agreed to designate the south reading room on the second floor as Meharry’s own library. This collection was devoted to medicine, dentistry, nursing, and allied sciences. Shores even had a special bookplate made for the books; it said Meharry Medical College Collection, Fisk University Library, Nashville, Tennessee.¹⁰²

Shortly before the start of the quarter, Shores received a letter from Carter G. Woodson. According to the September 16, 1931 letter, Kentucky State Industrial College, in Frankfort, Kentucky, had just purchased a collection of new and out-of-print books on African and African American history from Associated Publishers. As president of Associated Publishers, the publishing-arm of his Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), Woodson urged Shores to work with him in a similar way to build Fisk’s Negro Collection. Woodson provided a two-page price list of “rare out-of-print books on the Negro” and suggested he order immediately.¹⁰³ Since library reports and records do not include itemized lists of Shores and Schomburg’s purchases, it is impossible to establish when, where, and how a particular book was acquired by the

¹⁰¹ James Summerville, *Educating Black Doctors: A History of Meharry Medical College* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1983), 67-69.

¹⁰² Letter, Louis Shores to Thomas E. Jones, September 16, 1931, box 40, folder 5, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

¹⁰³ Letter, Carter G. Woodson to Louis Shores, September 16, 1931, box 40, folder 5, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

library, unless they had the book plated with this information. Nevertheless, this 1931 list of rare books by and about people of African descent provides an opportunity to illustrate the strength and depth of the African American collection Shores and Schomburg built at Fisk. Figure 1.1 shows the list of titles and authors Carter G. Woodson enclosed with his letter, the year the book was published, and its current circulation status in the Fisk University Franklin Library catalogue:

Figure 1.1 African Americana Collection and Circulation at Fisk University Library¹⁰⁴

Book Title and Author	Published	Special Collections (Library Use Only)	General Collection (Available for Check-Out)	Not Available
The Marrow of Tradition, Charles W. Chestnut	1901	X	X	
The Conjure Woman, Charles W. Chestnut	1899	X		
Lyrics of Lowly Life, Paul Laurence Dunbar	1898	X*		
Folks from Dixie, Paul Laurence Dunbar	1898	X-	X-	
Father Henson's Own Story, Introduction by H. B. Stowe	1858	X	X	
The Rising Sun, William Wells Brown	1874 and 1875	X		
Life and Times of Frederick Douglass	1881	X*	X*	
My Bondage and Freedom, Frederick Douglass	1855	X		
A Voice from the South, A. J. Cooper	1892	X		
Finding a Way Out, Robert Russa Moton	1922	X*	X*	

¹⁰⁴ X = exact same edition; X* = earlier edition; X- = later edition, but before 1931.

Working with the Hands, Booker T. Washington	1904	X	X	
Up from Slavery, Booker T. Washington	1901	X	X	
The Future of the American Negro, Booker T. Washington	1900	X*	X*	
Tuskegee and its People, Booker T. Washington	1905	X	X-	
My Larger Education, Booker T. Washington	1911	X	X	
Character Building, Booker T. Washington	1902	X		
The Negro in the South, Washington and Du Bois	1907	X		
The Negro Problem, Washington, Du Bois, and others	1903	X		
The Man Farthest Down, Booker T. Washington	1912	X	X	
Speeches Lectures and Addresses, Wendell Phillips	1863	X-	X-	
Memorial of Wendell Phillips, by Order of the City of Boston	1884	X		
Army Life in a Black Regiment, Thomas Wentworth Higginson	1882	X*	X*	
Samuel Chapman Armstrong, Edith Armstrong Talbot	1904	X		
Hampton and Its Students with Plantation Songs, T. P. Fenner	1874	X		
Negro Servitude in Illinois, N. Dwight Harris	1904	X	X	

Biographical Sketches of Persons of Color, Lucretia Mott	1838			X
The Despotism of Freedom, David Lee Child	1833	X	X	
Song Sketches of the Life of Blind Tom	Unlisted			X
An Historical Research, Opinions of the Founders of the Republic on Negroes as Slaves, as Citizens, and as Soldiers, Georg Livermore	1862	X-	X-	
Memorial of Crispus Attuck [sic], by Order of the City Council of Boston	Unlisted	X	X-	
Letters on American Slavery, John Rankin	1838	X*		
White and Black in the United States, Sir George Cambbell	1879	X		
White and Black in the Southern States, Maurice S. Evans	1915	X		
Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro, F. L. Hoffman	1896	X		
Race Adjustment, Kelly Miller	1910	X*	X*	
The Impending Crisis of the South, H. R. Helper	1860	X*	X	
William Lloyd Garrison and His Times, Oliver Johnson	1879	X-	X-	
The Public Life of Captain John Brown with an Autobiography of His Childhood and Youth, James Redpath	1860	X		

The Life and Letters of John Brown, F. B. Sanborn	1917	X*		
Race Orthodoxy in the South, Thomas Pearce Bailey	1914	X	X	
Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington	1906	X-	X-	
Twenty-Two Years of Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute Records of Negro and Indian Graduates and Ex-Students	1893	X		
Autographs of Freedom, Julia Griffiths	1854	X*	X	
Teachings of Patriots and Statesmen, Ezra B. Chase	1860	X	X	
The Problems of the Present South, E. G. Murphy	1924	X*	X*	
Anthony Burns, A History, Charles E. Stevens	1856	X		
Prison Life and Reflections, Work, Burr, and Thompson	1847	X-	X-	
American Slave Code, William Goodell	1853	X	X	
Journal of Residence on a Georgia Plantation, F. A. Kemble	1863	X	X	
The Southern Platform, Daniel R. Goodloe	1853	X-		
The Black Phalanx, Joseph T. Wilson	1892	X*		
The Southern States Since the War, Robert Somers	1871			X
The South Since the War, Sidney Andrews	1866	X		

The Silent South, George W. Cable	1835	X		
The Southern States of the American Union, J. L. M. Curry	1895	X		
The Basis of Ascendency, E. G. Murphy	1909	X	X	
Studies in the Race Problem, A. H. Stone	1908	X	X	
The Slave Power, J. E. Cairnes	1862	X		
Notes on Slavery in Massachusetts, George H. Moore	1866	X	X	
Negroes and Negro Slavery, J. H. Van Evrie	1861	X-	X-	
Mungo Parks Travels, Joseph Thompson	Unlisted	X*		
The American Negro, William Hannibal Thomas	1901	X		
The Rev. J. W. Loguen as a Slave and a Freeman	1859	X		

Shores either purchased the entire list from Woodson, or Schomburg had already wisely included these sixty-three books in the four thousand he purchased from Tuttle as the nucleus of the Negro Collection. Out of the sixty-three rare books Woodson rushed Shores to buy, Fisk has sixty available to students, faculty, and researchers today. The youngest books in this list are ninety-six and ninety-eight years old. The remainder of these books are over one hundred and some are almost two hundred years old, but more than half of them are available for any student to walk up and grab for an afternoon read. A rare book's availability for check-out today is clearly an indication of the depth of the

African American collection at Fisk, since the current collection development policy states multiple copies of an edition must be available in Special Collections before it is placed in the General Collection for check-out. Seventeen of the exact same editions are on the open stacks and available for check-out today.¹⁰⁵

In early 1932, the strength and depth of Fisk's Negro Collection led to an advantageous cooperative agreement with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) Graduate School in Nashville, Tennessee. The Southern College of the Young Men's Christian Association (later YMCA Graduate School) was established in 1919 to provide training for YMCA personnel throughout the South. The Graduate School's founder and president Willis Duke Weatherford along with his librarian Tula B. Pelletieri met with Louis Shores and Charles S. Johnson to outline an agreement for the two libraries to collaborate on race relations materials. Weatherford had recently developed a race relations department at the Graduate School because he felt an understanding of racial problems should be a prerequisite for employment as a YMCA Secretary in the Southern Field. During the meeting, the four of them agreed on a collection development and resource sharing plan that would save both institutions time and money.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Letter, Carter G. Woodson to Louis Shores, September 16, 1931, box 40, folder 5, Thomas E. Jones Collection; Fisk University, *The John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library Policies & Procedures Manual* (Nashville, TN: Fisk University, 2020), 71. According to the collecting guidelines for Special Collections, "Materials by and about blacks, American and foreign (especially African and Caribbean) will be rigorously collected. When the publication warrants it, two copies will be acquired. One copy will be added to the Special Collections' stacks and one to the General Collections' stacks. Exceptions may be made for variant editions or for editions containing significant marginalia."

¹⁰⁶ Letter, Willis D. Weatherford to Louis Shores, January 28, 1932, box 40, folder 6, Thomas E. Jones Collection; George P. Antone, "The Y.M.C.A. Graduate School, Nashville 1919-1936," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (1973): 67-75.

As specified in the memorandum, Fisk and the YMCA Graduate school reached agreement in the following areas:

It is agreed that Fisk University Library shall specialize on “The Negro Outside of America and prior to 1865”

It is agreed that the Y.M.C.A. Graduate School shall specialize on “The Negro in America before 1865”

It is agreed that both Libraries should have working material on the Negro during the last fifty years.

It is agreed that Fisk would normally have a working library on “The Negro in America” – that is materials that would be used in constant class room reference.

It is agreed that the Y.M.C.A. Graduate School shall have some small working library on “The Negro Outside of America” – such material as would be used in regular class room reference.

It is agreed that in the purchasing of books, Fisk would call the attention of the Y.M.C.A. Graduate School Library to any books referring to the Negro in America, and if the Y.M.C.A. Graduate School did not have such volumes, the refusal of purchasing the same would be in the hands of the Y.M.C.A. Graduate School. In case the Graduate School did have the volume, then Fisk, if it seemed important in a case of any particular volume, would purchase.

In contrary fashion, the Y.M.C.A Graduate School would call to the attention of the Fisk Library any volumes on “The Negro Outside of America prior to 1865” and Fisk University would be given priority in the purchasing of the same.

In carrying our items six and seven, regular interchange of information about rare volumes available should be carried on between the two libraries. In case representatives of either of the Libraries in the field found rare volumes, they should purchase the same and a Committee of three representatives from each of the

two schools would from time to time get together to discuss the problem of allocation of such volumes.

With reference to material from the West Indies, each Library should check with the other before purchasing, and in case the other Library has the volume, purchases should not be made unless the volume was one of great importance for regular class room work.

It is agreed that each Library will furnish an author's card for all titles to the other Library and that across the bottom of this card would be stamped the name of the Library where the book is located.

Agreed that the Y.M.C.A. Graduate School would undertake as rapidly as possible to work out full index material on certain magazines, such as DeBow's Review, Niles' Register, Southern Review, etc. and furnish copies of such material to the Fisk Library; and then Fisk would undertake to work out an index for material such as The Crisis, etc. and furnish copies of the same to the Y.M.C.A. Graduate School.

Agreed that from time to time the two libraries should unite in a publication of extra bibliography material not now available in Monroe Work's Bibliography of the Negro or in other Bibliographies available.

A definite effort should be made to ultimately have in the two libraries as near a complete set of all publication on the Negro as can be made.

It is understood that students from the Y.M.C.A. Graduate School are welcome at the Fisk Library and students at Fisk are welcome at the Y.M.C.A. Graduate School Library.¹⁰⁷

Regrettably, Schomburg was not available to attend the meeting or contribute to this new cooperative agreement with special reference to African and African American

¹⁰⁷ "Working Principles for Cooperation between the Fisk University Library and the Library of the Y.M.C.A. Graduate School with Special Reference to Material on the Negro," January 28, 1932, box 40, folder 6, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

materials. At the beginning of the academic year, Shores had to tell Schomburg that amid the Great Depression the University could no longer afford to pay his salary without additional external funds. He suggested Schomburg either volunteer his services to Fisk or find another source to fund his salary. The Carnegie Corporation denied Schomburg's request for a fellowship, and the Rosenwald Fund felt their "gifts to Fisk should be for general purposes rather than for detailed projects" of this sort.¹⁰⁸ Schomburg began searching for external funding, but he found another job instead. In January 1932, he returned to New York to become the curator in charge of his own collection at the 135th Street Branch. The financial crisis of the Great Depression cost Fisk Library one of the great collectors and scholars of African American primary sources and artifacts, who would continue to add to the Harlem library's collection and have that institution become one of the nation's most important public repositories of African American history and culture.¹⁰⁹

By February 1932, Shores was ready to return to Chicago and complete his doctorate work. In a letter to President Jones, he asked that a letter be written to "the General Education Board requesting a fellowship for me to work on my doctorate in the University of Chicago."¹¹⁰ Several months later, Shores had some sort of disagreement with his dissertation chair, Douglas Waples. The details are unclear, but Waples felt compelled to write President Jones in October 1932 to reverse an earlier attack on

¹⁰⁸ Letter, Edwin R. Embree to Thomas E. Jones, December 11, 1930, box 39, folder 18, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.; Sinnette, *Arthur Alfonso Schomburg*, 158-160.

¹¹⁰ Letter, Louis Shores to Thomas E. Jones, February 22, 1932, box 40, folder 6, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

Shores' "competence as a student and his personal integrity."¹¹¹ Shores changed his mind too, and decided to stay in Nashville to complete his doctorate. He enrolled in classes at George Peabody College for Teachers and began to pursue a doctorate in education instead of library science.¹¹²

In the meantime, Shores started a book drive for the library and developed an aggressive way to increase alumni giving during the Christmas vacation. Shores planned to attend the ALA midwinter conference in Chicago and visit his mother in New York during the break. He asked President Jones if he could visit "individuals in both cities on our publicity list from whom you expect to receive no money but who might possibly be willing to let me look over their libraries and select from among the books they are willing to donate those titles which will be of value to our library."¹¹³ President Jones enthusiastically approved the plan and began donating books from his own library after the break. On February 13, 1933, he told Shores "I went through our library yesterday and selected a hundred fifty or two hundred books and magazines which I am sending over to the University Library."¹¹⁴ In May 1933, Shores reported to the comptroller, Jesse

¹¹¹ Letter, Douglas Waples to Thomas E. Jones, October 20, 1932, box 40, folder 7, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

¹¹² Ibid.; Shiflett, *Louis Shores*, 41.

¹¹³ Letter, Louis Shores to Thomas E. Jones, December 7, 1932, box 40, folder 7, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

¹¹⁴ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Louis Shores, February 13, 1933, box 40, folder 7, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

F. Beals, that he had received well over two thousand volumes from friends, alumni, faculty, and students all over the country.¹¹⁵

By the spring 1933 quarter, Shores was almost done with his doctorate, but he asked President Jones to postpone his previously approved leave of absence from July 1933 to January 1934. Instead, he felt it would be best to take his leave from January 1, 1934 and extend it to January 1, 1935. Shores, of course, would be paid half his salary for the entire year, but he thought it was best since he could “conduct the courses in library science and complete several organization processes now under way.”¹¹⁶ He also said he would not be able to complete his studies until January because he was in the process of “preparing a book on the Library in American Higher Education which will not be ready for publication before the late fall.”¹¹⁷

During the summer, a unique opportunity presented itself to Louis Shores and on Tuesday, June 27, 1933 he met with President Jones to discuss it. Although Shores had not completed his doctorate yet, he was offered a position as director of the library school at Peabody for \$3,600 a year. After ten days of deliberation, Shores wrote his official letter of resignation and asked Jones to accept it effective July 1, 1933. Shores said he left the annual report with Yocom and suggested she “act as Librarian pending the appointment of my successor.”¹¹⁸ On July 26, President Jones accepted his resignation

¹¹⁵ Letter, Louis Shores to Jesse F. Beale, May 27, 1933, box 40, folder 7, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

¹¹⁶ Letter, Louis Shores to Thomas E. Jones, April 25, 1933, box 40, folder 7, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Letter, Louis Shores to Thomas E. Jones, July 8, 1933, box 40, folder 7, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

and thanked him for the remarkable transformation of the library during his time at Fisk. Shores, using Peabody College Library School letterhead, responded that no librarian can want for anything more than a library-conscious president who knows that his college is built around satisfactory library service.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Shiflett, *Louis Shores*, 42; Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Louis Shores, July 26, 1930; Letter, Louis Shores to Thomas E. Jones, July 29, 1933, box 40, folder 7, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

CHAPTER III

FISK UNIVERSITY LIBRARY'S DEVELOPMENT OF CATALOGS, INDEXES, AND BIBLIOGRAPHIES FOR THE NEGRO COLLECTION, 1933 – 1942

Frances L. Yocom became the Acting Librarian for the 1933-1934 academic year. According to the last annual report Shores submitted to the presidents of Fisk and Meharry, Yocom had “assumed almost full responsibility for the highly technical work of classification, supervised Periodical, Negro Collection, and Browsing Rooms, assisted in the Medical Reading Room regularly and taught one class in library science the first two quarters.”¹ Yocom had enough experience in library administration to take over the position, but she had not earned a master’s degree in library science. As a result, President Jones left the Library Committee in “charge of administrative policies,” and said she would only be in the position “until a successor to Mr. Shores can be found.”²

A biracial group of some of the nation’s leading scholars composed the Library Committee, although Charles S. Johnson was no longer a member. Alrutheus Ambush Taylor, better known as A. A. Taylor, was dean of the College of Liberal Arts and chaired the committee. Taylor was a well-known African American historian who challenged Anglo-American historians from the Dunning School with his revisionist history of Reconstruction. He wrote *The Negro in South Carolina During the Reconstruction* (1924) and *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia* (1926) to counter

¹ Annual Report, Louis Shores to the Presidents of Fisk University and Meharry Medical College, July 20, 1932, box 40, folder 6, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

² Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Elizabeth Lawson, July 31, 1933, box 44, folder 20, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

the Dunning School's narrative of disaster, tyranny, and political failure. Taylor's books used diaries, census records, newspaper articles, and other primary sources, ignored by Dunning School historians, to provide a more balanced interpretation of the African American experience during Reconstruction. The chair of the history department, Theodore S. Currier, was also on the committee. Currier was a Harvard-trained Anglo-American historian who had recently published *Los Corsarios del Rio de la Plata* (1929), a history of the territorial conflicts and adventures of Rio de la Plata written in Spanish. Famous African American author, poet, and lyricist James Weldon Johnson, who came to Fisk in 1930 after retiring from his position as head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), was an influential and trusted voice on the committee. Clarence E. Van Horn, an Anglo-American professor of mathematics who received his PhD under the direction of American mathematician E. H. Moore at the University of Chicago, also served on the committee. President Jones obviously asked the comptroller, Jesse F. Beals, to serve as the last member on the committee just to ensure the library stayed within budget.³

In her annual report, Yocom thanked "the Library Committee for its cooperation throughout the year, particularly in the matter of forming regulations for departmental libraries, rules concerning use of the Library by persons not alumni, students, or faculty, and regulations governing inter-library loans."⁴ The rules and regulations on

³ "Regulations for Departmental Libraries," 1933-1934, box 44, folder 20, Thomas E. Jones Collection; Richardson, *A History of Fisk University*, 113, 118, 142, 143-144; Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Jesse F. Beals, September 30, 1933, box 25, folder 8, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁴ Annual Report, Francis L. Yocom to the Presidents of Fisk University and Meharry Medical College, June 30, 1934, box 23, folder 11, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

departmental libraries was a direct result of a grievance from Meharry Medical College President John J. MULLOWNEY. MULLOWNEY complained that the only recommendation Meharry received from its pharmaceutical accrediting agency was for its library. In a personal and confidential letter to President Jones, MULLOWNEY quoted the representative's report:

It is true that the students of Meharry Medical College have access to the Library of Fisk University. I examined the chemical library and the general library of Fisk University and I am frank to say that I was disappointed with what I found, especially with the chemical library. Such important publications as those of the American Chemical Society were conspicuous by their absence, except for the last year or two. I do not know whether the chemical library is open at night or not. If it is not, there should be some arrangements made whereby pharmacy students could have access to the library in the evening.⁵

MULLOWNEY closed the letter by saying that this assessment is what happens "when the head of any department monopolizes the books and journals relating to his particular department ... namely Chemistry."⁶ Saint Elmo Brady, who was the first African American to earn a doctorate in chemistry, was professor and head of Fisk's chemistry department. Brady felt the books were essential for chemistry students, but Yocom argued that "they should be as indispensable to a medical library as to chemistry students."⁷ To resolve the issue, the Library Committee developed a policy of keeping

⁵ Letter, John J. MULLOWNEY to Thomas E. Jones, December 4, 1933, box 44, folder 20, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Letter, Frances L. Yocom to Thomas E. Jones, May 18, 1934, box 44, folder 20, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

keys to departmental libraries with the librarian and a record of its contents in the general library catalog.⁸

Records concerning the rules the Library Committee developed for library use by the public could only be found in the next librarian's annual report. In short, the committee noted that "the library is one of the show-places of the city" and the stacks were "theoretically closed to the public," but students were permitted to enter the stacks with out-of-town visitors.⁹ An unexpected increase in the use of interlibrary loans, however, became a matter of immense concern in both reports. During the 1933-1934 academic year, the Library Committee had to restrict loans to faculty requests only, and each department was limited to borrowing from one institution at a time. According to Yocom, "the general abuse of interlibrary loans, moreover, is receiving a great deal of attention throughout the country. The larger universities of the East have decided to limit interlibrary loans rigorously. The University of California and Stanford University are, in addition to the usual restrictions, charging a fee for each book loaned."¹⁰

Aside from the increase in interlibrary loans, Yocom's report also noted an increased use and interest in the Negro Collection for the academic year. According to Yocom, the Negro Collection Room had to be opened for a greater number of hours this year "because of special demand."¹¹ Circulation statistics reveal over two thousand five

⁸ "Regulations for Departmental Libraries," 1933-1934.

⁹ Annual Report, Carl M. White to the Presidents of Fisk University and Meharry Medical College, July 5, 1935, box 23, folder 11, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

¹⁰ Letter, Frances L. Yocom to Faculty of Fisk University, November 23, 1933, box 44, folder 20, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

¹¹ Annual Report, Francis L. Yocom to the Presidents of Fisk University and Meharry Medical College, June 30, 1934.

hundred books were used from the collection that year. Although Yocom did not add any new materials to the Negro Collection, the students made considerable use of more than half the collection.¹²

One student who made frequent use of the Negro Collection Room during the 1933-1934 academic year was future African American historian and scholar John Hope Franklin. In his autobiography, *Mirror to America*, Franklin said his relationship with Theodore Currier convinced him to become a historian that year, and he spent a considerable amount of time writing his first research paper for his seminar. The Negro Collection was certainly a readily accessible resource for his research topic – “free Negroes in the antebellum South.”¹³ In fact, Franklin had more access to the collection than the typical Fisk student. On the first page of Yocom’s 1933-1934 report, John Hope Franklin is listed on staff as Secretary and Assistant in Preparations Department.¹⁴

In 1933, Franklin and several other students started working in the library under the Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA). In response to the social and economic hardships of the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created several relief programs including the College Student Aid Program. This program paid students, like Franklin, from ten to twenty dollars per month for “socially desirable” part-time work at

¹² Ibid.

¹³ John Hope Franklin, *Mirror to America: The Autobiography of John Hope Franklin* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 47.

¹⁴ Annual Report, Francis L. Yocom to the Presidents of Fisk University and Meharry Medical College, June 30, 1934.

a college or university. The students could work up to thirty hours a week and up to eight hours a day in the library.¹⁵

Yocom's report attributed the library's ability to finally organize the Fiskiana Collection to the work of students paid under the FERA. In 1928, the name Fiskiana was adopted as the title for a collection of materials by and about Fisk University that had accumulated over the years. The name was also used for "monthly letters which went out to alumni to keep graduates informed about new and old books."¹⁶ In 1932, the library broadened the collection to include information by and about Meharry as well as Fisk students, faculty, alumni, and friends. Most of the Fisk material, however, was still in disarray. According to Yocom's 1933-1934 report, "Due to the Federal Education Relief Administration...a good piece of work was done in listing and arranging Fisk Heralds, Fisk News, clippings, etc., and in bringing our record of bound and unbound periodicals up to date."¹⁷

Yocom was extremely optimistic in the closing of her annual report. She said, "Altogether the year has seen progress in spite of the depression and the lack of a head librarian."¹⁸ It is important to note that, since there was no head librarian, library courses were not offered for the first time in the last five years. Yocom, however, lauded the

¹⁵ Doris Carothers, *Chronology of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, May 12, 1933 to December 31, 1935* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1937), 42.

¹⁶ Annual Report, Louis Shores to the Presidents of Fisk University and Meharry Medical College, July 20, 1932.

¹⁷ Annual Report, Francis L. Yocom to the Presidents of Fisk University and Meharry Medical College, June 30, 1934.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

library's ability to stay "within a budget much smaller than the budgets of the last five years, all in all without serious curtailment of efficient service."¹⁹ I am sure the comptroller, Jesse F. Beals, was also proud of this accomplishment. Finally, Yocom expressed pride in the fact "that the new Librarian can begin his work on the foundation we have laid and build soundly."²⁰

President Jones looked once again to his alma mater, Columbia, to find the new librarian. However, this time he found a trained librarian with a doctorate and experience as a professor and college administrator. In the summer of 1934, Jones appointed Dr. Carl M. White as the next librarian. White attended Oklahoma Baptist University and received a Bachelor of Arts in 1925. For a year, he was as an instructor at Bacone College, a private liberal arts college for Native Americans in Muskogee, Oklahoma, and served as the college's acting president from 1926 to 1927. White left Bacone to pursue and earn a master's degree in 1928 from Mercer University in Atlanta, Georgia. From there he went to Greenville, Texas, to become head of the English Department at Burleson College from 1928 to 1929. White was a fellow in philosophy and library assistant for the philosophy department at the University of Iowa for one year before he left to attend Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. White earned a doctorate in philosophy at Cornell in 1933 and went on to attain a bachelor's degree in library science from Columbia University in 1934.²¹

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Letter, Carl M. White to Thomas E. Jones, May 24, 1934, box 44, folder 18, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

Within the first few months of his employment at Fisk, White fully embraced the library's mission and implemented a strategy to collect and preserve African American newspapers. In a February 1935 letter to P. B. Young, editor of the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, White said "This library wishes to contribute its part toward preserving for all times a record of the achievement of the Negro race."²² To achieve this goal, White asked Young if "adequate provision has already been made for preserving a complete file of the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*."²³ The *Norfolk Journal and Guide* was founded as an African American fraternal order's newspaper in 1900. Young began working as the newspaper plant's foreman in 1907 and purchased the plant for three thousand dollars after the bank holding the lodge's mortgage failed in 1910. By 1934, P. B. Young's *Norfolk Journal and Guide* was one of the nation's most popular African American newspapers. White wanted Young to consider the terms for having a copy of every issue deposited at Fisk. White also complained that there was "no corresponding reference tool among Negro newspapers." He explained how most American libraries subscribed to the *New York Times* mainly because of the *New York Times Index*, and the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* would also be able to secure library subscriptions if it provided a master-key to African American news. White asked Young if he would publish an index as a supplementary issue at the end of each year if Fisk Library staff prepared it.²⁴

²² Letter, Carl M. White to P. B. Young, February 27, 1935, box 44, folder 18, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Henry Lewis Suggs, "P. B. Young of the Norfolk Journal and Guide: A Booker T. Washington Militant, 1904-1928," *The Journal of Negro History* 64, no. 4 (Autumn, 1979): 365-366; Henry Lewis Suggs, *P. B. Young, Newspaperman: Race, Politics, and Journalism in the New South, 1910-1962* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1988), 85.

P. B. Young gladly accepted White's offer. On March 22, 1935, he agreed to send Fisk "complete bound files of the Journal and Guide by years, since 1913."²⁵ According to Young, everything before 1913 was destroyed in a fire; thus, he saw the value of keeping a copy of the remaining twenty-two year-old history of his newspaper at Fisk. Young also agreed to print the index for the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* if Fisk prepared it every year. He even offered to send back issues for the current year, so White could get started immediately.²⁶

White immediately forwarded a copy of Young's letter to President Jones. Along with the letter, White enclosed the following note to the president about the Periodicals Assistant, Margaret Reynolds:

Heretofore, the Periodicals Assistant has had less responsibility than practically any other member of the staff. In January, she was assigned the task of preparing an index to certain Negro periodicals and newspapers. Later, as the accompanying letters, indicate, the Editor of the N. J. & G. became interested in publishing our newspaper index.

This will be a great service to the Negro race and is indicative of the way in which the Periodicals Assistant is being charged with greater responsibility. Incidentally, our Periodicals Assistant is considering a position with a salary of \$1000. I think we are going to lose her.

Reynolds worked in the library for several years before White's arrival. According to the 1932 budget, she was making one thousand seven hundred dollars under Shores, so it is hard to imagine why Reynolds would consider a position with much less pay three years

²⁵ Letter, P. B. Young to Carl M. White, March 22, 1935, box 44, folder 18, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

²⁶ Ibid.

later. Reynolds took over the Negro Collection room after Schomburg's departure in 1932, and the collection showed a significant increase in hours and use under her supervision. In any case, White wanted to find a way to complete his index project. It is unclear whether White was suggesting the president pay Reynolds more money or let her go because she did not want to do the work.²⁷

President Jones quickly observed White's ability to get projects done and asked him to join a committee to complete a task he had asked someone years before to complete. Schomburg left Fisk before he completed the president's request to have the Baldrige Collection framed and matted for display. According to the letter, Fisk received a grant in the summer of 1934 from the GEB to frame and mount the collection of paintings by Baldrige. President Jones asked Charles S. Johnson to chair a committee to finally look after this matter with the following committee members: the president's wife, Esther B. Jones; the comptroller, Jesse F. Beals; and the librarian, Carl M. White. The committee completed the project just in time to feature it during the annual Festival of Fine Arts and Music. According to the *Nashville Banner*, the collection was "said to be one of the finest collections of the sort in the country."²⁸ The committee had the collection hung throughout Cravath Memorial Library and each picture had its own special lighting. The Baldrige Collection is still on display throughout Cravath and other buildings on Fisk's campus.²⁹

²⁷ Louis Shores, "Library Budget," April 8, 1932, box 40, folder 6, Thomas E. Jones Collection; Annual Report, Francis L. Yocom to the Presidents of Fisk University and Meharry Medical College, June 30, 1934.

²⁸ *Nashville Banner*, April 18, 1935.

²⁹ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Carl M. White, January 7, 1935, box 44, folder 1, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

White delayed his own personal project in the Negro Collection room to ensure the Baldrige Collection was hung and displayed as Jones requested. He wanted to protect and preserve the collection by turning the shelves into bookcases. In spring of 1935, the library purchased doors to install over the bookshelves in the room, but in lieu of the Baldrige project, White said he “agreed to let this job wait until school was out.”³⁰ White wanted to protect and preserve the collection, and turning the shelves into bookcases would help prevent dust and deterioration. Although the project was not completed when White returned from summer break, it was completed by the end of the academic year.³¹

White’s annual report for the 1935-1936 academic year reveals considerable work was being done to make the Negro Collection discoverable for students and researchers.

According to White:

Those who wish to use the Negro Collection are handicapped because of a lack of a suitable catalog. In the main catalog, all of the books are listed under the appropriate author entry, but the Library of Congress subject headings have too often not been adapted to local needs. A special catalog for the Negro Collection is now in process of preparation, and its aim is to facilitate quick reference to the contents of the collection. Doubtless we shall not be able to bring the catalog to the state of perfection desired until the collection is placed in charge of a professionally trained person who can devote full time to it, but we shall be able, with the cooperation of the present cataloging staff, to adapt our cataloging more and more to our local needs. And such an adaptation, with a certain amount of extra work, will, in a few years, produce a

³⁰ Letter, Carl M. White to Thomas E. Jones, October 23, 1935, box 44, 3, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

³¹ Annual Report, Carl M. White to the President of Fisk University, June 15, 1936, box 23, folder 11, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

catalog that will fulfill its true reference and bibliographical purposes.³²

In 1936, the Library of Congress subject-headings did not include ethnic qualifiers for library resources. For example, a student or researcher had to know the specific title or author to locate resources on Negro artists.³³

Aside from creating an annual index for an African American newspaper and a special catalog for the Negro Collection, White began preparing a reference work for images of notable African Americans. In his annual report, White said:

The books in the Negro Collection, one by one, are being searched for pictures of Negroes. Full bibliographical information is given for each book, and page references to the pictures are noted. When all checking is completed and the proper form of each name has been determined, the lists will be arranged alphabetically, thus bringing together all references to pictures of Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, etc. The index, when finished, should be worthy of publication.³⁴

Indeed, a publication with bibliographical references to images of notable African American men and women was not only worthy, but also a much-needed library service.

White was also focused on building the Negro Collection to improve the quality of library service Fisk offered. In June 1936, White wrote a letter to President Jones and opened it with the following question: “How can the Fisk Library build up the best Negro

³² Ibid.

³³ Frances L. Yocom, *A List of Subject Headings for Books by and about the Negro* (New York: H.W. Wilson, 1940), 5.

³⁴ Ibid.

Collection in America?"³⁵ White said, after asking himself this question thousands of times, he finally had an answer:

The Negro Collection of the Y.M.C.A. Graduate School and the Fisk Negro Collection have been built up, side by side, care being taken that duplication be avoided wherever possible. The best years and the best thought of Dr. W. D. Weatherford, a specialist in the field of Negro literature, have gone into the building of the neighboring collection. It is a collection which, if combined with our own, would form one of the most distinctive collections of research materials in the land.

And now to the crucial point, The Y.M.C.A. Graduate School collection can be purchased! I do not know the amount, but I do know that the school is in serious financial straits and will sell.

I did not have a chance to see you this morning. Hence this letter. That collection belongs at Fisk. Let's go after it.³⁶

By the summer of 1936, the Y. M. C. A. Graduate School "came to be possessed of a half-million dollar plant of its own, but found the problem of its one hundred thousand dollar annual expenses increasingly difficult, especially when the great depression curtailed the income and activity of most southern Associations that supported it."³⁷

Vanderbilt University, who held the one hundred fifty-five thousand dollar mortgage on the half-million dollar property, foreclosed on the Y. M. C. A. Graduate School after it

³⁵ Letter, Carl M. White to Thomas E. Jones, June 4, 1936, box 44, folder 4, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Charles Howard Hopkins, *The American Y.M.C.A. Movement* (New York: Association Press, 1951), 613-614.

failed to make monthly payments. Ironically, the Vanderbilt School of Religion used the building thereafter.³⁸

On July 1, 1936, White wrote President Jones to report that “we have succeeded in purchasing Dr. Weatherford’s book collection on the Old South and the Negro, together with the furniture and other movable equipment of the YMCA Graduate School.”³⁹ This purchase was a significant acquisition for Fisk and the Negro Collection, especially since the Y. M. C. A. Graduate School was known to have “one of the greatest libraries in the South”⁴⁰ With the purchase of the Southern Y. M. C. A. Graduate School’s collection, the number of volumes in Fisk’s Negro Collection doubled. Four thousand out of the eleven thousand books White purchased were by and about African Americans.⁴¹

This addition brought the Negro Collection to over eight thousand volumes. The only problem was Fisk did not have a way to classify and include many of the new additions into the existing collection. White felt the collection would “be more readily accessible and more extensively used if we prepare a systematic outline and list under each subject all of the relevant material in our library.”⁴² He asked President Jones and

³⁸ Ibid.; Letter, Carl M. White to Thomas E. Jones, July 1, 1936, box 44, folder 4, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

³⁹ Letter, Carl M. White to Thomas E. Jones, July 1, 1936, box 44, folder 4, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁴⁰ Hopkins, *The American Y.M.C.A. Movement*, 613.

⁴¹ Report, “Preparation of a Classified Catalog for the Negro Collection of the Fisk University Library,” n.d., box 23, folder 12, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁴² Ibid.

the Board of Trustees for an additional three thousand six hundred dollars, “as a grant-in-aid,” to hire a professional librarian who would create a new catalog that would provide the following benefits to Fisk:

1. A college library is not a repository of buried treasures. It is a service center. Our library has material of great value in the particular field under discussion, but much of that material is at present somewhat inaccessible. The proposed catalog would aid the library in fulfilling its real mission.
2. As a rule, an alphabetically arranged catalog serves the need of a college community well enough, because the books are brought together in a useful logical order in stacks easily accessible to the scholar. At present, however, as most of us are aware, no satisfactory classification scheme for Negro material exists. At Fisk, as at most other Negro colleges, the books are arranged by the Dewey classification scheme which, however, desirable for general collections, does not bring the books of a large Negro collection together in an order very useful to the scholar. A classified catalog is needed to do for Fisk’s scholars what ideally organized stacks would do for them.
3. A classified catalog of our Negro Collection will place at the disposal of our scholars a bibliography of all material in our library dealing with each subject represented by the outline. Since a first step in any important study is the preparation of a bibliography of the subject, the catalog would mean an enormous saving in the preliminary work to be done by those engaged in research on problems bearing on the Negro.
4. In short, the project represents an effort on the part of the Fisk Library to serve intelligently those scholars we are now equipped to serve at the research level. We do not have research equipment for every department of study at Fisk. We do have such equipment in restricted areas in the field of social science. The scholars in this field use library materials a great deal, despite the difficulties created by our cataloging practices in the

past. The present effort is designed to improve the quality of library service afforded them.

5. Finally, the catalog would be of more than local significance. Other libraries would welcome intelligent aid in organizing Negro material. These libraries would also use the catalog to locate material for their own scholars, available through inter-library loan. Scholars everywhere would welcome a systematic bibliography of Negro material as extensive as that represented by our collection. In the end, Fisk would presumably derive a reflex benefit from the project; for many a student, professor or undergraduate, would be able to envisage at the Fisk Library a collection of materials which would justify a period of residence in Nashville.⁴³

Although White never received a grant for a professional librarian to catalog the Negro Collection, he did receive a grant to begin offering library courses to African American teachers again. The GEB provided a three-year grant to defray the costs for four HBCUs to offer summer courses for African American teachers to make “the libraries of their high schools more effective and thereby improve the whole tone and quality of the teaching in their respective schools.”⁴⁴ The following institutions were selected to participate: Fisk University, Atlanta University, Hampton Institute, and Prairie View State College in Prairie View, Texas. Each institution was limited to twenty-five students who local state agents of Negro education selected. For the next three summers, Fisk offered the following three courses to African American teachers for a six-week

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Annual Report, Carl M. White to the President of Fisk University, June 15, 1936, box 23, folder 11, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

period: Library Science 201s – Reference, Library Science 202s – The School Library, and Library Science 203s – Books and Reading.⁴⁵

White spent the next two years trying to develop the classified catalog for the Negro Collection and a library program for African American teachers. In November 1937, he wrote Raymond Ross Paty, the Director of Fellowships for the Julius Rosenwald Fund, in support of an application for Francis L. Yocom. White wanted Yocom to receive a fellowship to pursue a master's degree in library science and use preparation of the list of subject headings for Fisk as her thesis. The only hesitation from the Rosenwald Fund was the fact that Yocom was white. Traditionally, the Rosenwald Fund enabled African Americans to obtain graduate degrees, not semi-professional Anglo Americans like Yocom. White, however, explained how he tried to get Naomi Rushing, an African American assistant librarian and cataloger at Howard University, to come to Fisk and do the work. Rushing, however, refused to leave Howard, and White could not find another qualified African American librarian for the project.⁴⁶

In the fall of 1937, White met with officials to determine how the summer library school could be developed into regular session courses past its three-year grant period. He successfully secured a commitment that the “Southern Association will accredit schools having teacher-librarians trained in courses such as those Fisk has outlined to be given under the auspices of its Department of Education, despite the fact that the official standards of the Association specify that the training, to be accepted, must be given by an

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Letter, Carl M. White to Raymond Paty, November 29, 1937, box 44, folder 6, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

accredited library school.”⁴⁷ The only question remaining was how could Fisk afford to pay for the additional personnel needed to support the project. President Jones authorized White to make staff adjustments and hire a part-time teacher for library science, but he would not approve an additional full-time teacher for the program.⁴⁸

In March 1938, White announced his acceptance of a position at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). White received other offers to leave Fisk in the past four years, but he never accepted any of them. In the summer of 1935, for example, the Commissioner for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, John Collier, asked President Jones if he would release White for a position working with Project Nineteen Pueblos – a federal educational project for the nineteen Pueblo tribes in New Mexico. Jones left the decision up to White, and White refused to leave Fisk. White also received an offer to take over as head librarian and director of the library school at Hampton Institute two years later. In the summer of 1937, Hampton’s president, Arthur Howe, asked White to come to Hampton and succeed Florence R. Curtis as director of its library school. White spoke fondly of his relationship with President Jones and said, “we have some projects under way which I should not like to leave until we can see them through.”⁴⁹ By spring 1938,

⁴⁷ Letter, Carl M. White to Thomas E. Jones, September 2, 1937, box 44, folder 6, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁴⁸ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Carl M. White, September 17, 1937, box 44, folder 6, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁴⁹ Letter, Carl M. White to Arthur Howe, June 28, 1937, box 44, folder 5, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

nonetheless, White was poised to leave his projects at Fisk behind and become head librarian at UNC the following academic year with a considerable pay increase.⁵⁰

According to White's last annual report, he made considerable progress in developing the library staff, in establishing the teacher-librarian program, and in cataloging the Negro Collection. White granted Yocom leave the second semester of the 1937-1938 academic year to pursue a master's degree in library science from the University of California, Berkeley. White said "she is concentrating her attention on the development of a list of subject headings for use in cataloging books dealing with the Negro."⁵¹ He also reported that William Griffey, a Fisk graduate, and long-time circulation assistant in the library, returned from receiving his master's degree in library science from the University of Michigan. Griffey's temporary replacement, Eliza Atkins, left in the fall of 1937 to pursue a doctorate in library science from the University of Chicago. White believed "her work this year enabled her to win one of the coveted fellowships of the American Library Association in open competition with librarians the country over."⁵²

The ALA sponsored and the GEB financed the second and third year of training teacher-librarians during the summer at Fisk. At the opening of the 1937-1938 academic

⁵⁰ Ibid.; Telegram, John Collier to Thomas E. Jones, August 5, 1935, box 44, folder 2, Thomas E. Jones Collection; Letter, Thomas E. Jones to John Collier, August 8 1935, box 44, folder 2, Thomas E. Jones Collection; Letter, John Collier to Thomas E. Jones, August 10, 1935, box 44, folder 2, Thomas E. Jones Collection; The Columbia Civic Library Association, *A Directory of Negro Graduates of Accredited Library Schools, 1900-1936* (Washington, DC: The Columbia Civic Library Association, 1937), 20; Letter, Carl M. White to Thomas E. Jones, March 1, 1938, box 44, folder 7, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁵¹ Annual Report, Carl M. White to the President of Fisk University and Meharry Medical College, June 15, 1938, box 23, folder 12, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁵² Ibid.

year, Fisk began offering the library courses as a regular part of the university's curriculum and twenty-three students enrolled. Most of the students were funded through scholarships from the National Youth Administration (NYA), a New Deal agency established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1935 to give young people a chance to go to school. To earn the scholarships, the students were assigned part-time work on the portrait index, the Fisk Herald index, and the new catalog for the Negro Collection.⁵³

Although White was unable to successfully complete the classified catalog of the Negro Collection before he left Fisk, he was able to complete an author catalog for it. The new catalog listed alphabetically every author in the Negro Collection with the book title. White sent a tray of these library cards to the Library of Congress "for examination preparatory to making a record in the union catalog there of the books which can be found in the Fisk Library. This record will be of value to scholars in locating material not to be found in the Library of Congress but available at our Library."⁵⁴

As soon as White notified Jones of his imminent departure, the president began a search for his successor. First, he asked Yocom if she would be willing to take a temporary leave from her studies in Berkeley and return to campus as Acting Librarian for the 1938-1939 academic year. President Jones told her "that we might make some arrangement for the Summer School in case you cannot wind up your work in California so as to return by July."⁵⁵ Within a couple of weeks, Jones started conducting interviews

⁵³ Ibid.; United States Government, *Some Facts about Youth and the NYA* (Washington, DC: National Youth Administration, 1937), 2.

⁵⁴ Annual Report, Carl M. White to the President of Fisk University and Meharry Medical College, June 15, 1938, box 23, folder 12, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁵⁵ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Francis L. Yocom, March 17, 1938, box 44, folder 20, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

for the position and expressed interest in yet another candidate from Columbia University, Neil C. Van Deusen. President Jones told Van Deusen:

Since seeing you I have interviewed several candidates for the position and have found some of them very strong people, but on the whole your academic training and experience plus your Library Science work under Dr. Williamson causes me to favor your candidacy in spite of the fact that you are not married and have not actually had the responsibility of administering a college library.⁵⁶

Van Deusen received his doctorate in philosophy from Columbia in 1932, taught philosophy courses at Columbia, and worked under the director of Columbia University Libraries and dean of the Columbia School of Library Service, Charles C. Williamson. Jones flippantly mentioned Van Deusen's marital status because following the Great Depression most employers favored hiring married men with families to feed.⁵⁷

In April 1938, Jones officially offered Van Deusen the position as Librarian at Fisk for the 1938-1939 academic year for twenty-eight hundred dollars. Van Deusen accepted and offered to come down to Nashville as soon as he was free from teaching his courses at Columbia. He wanted to meet White before he left for North Carolina and become familiar with the library, library staff, and the faculty before the summer break. President Jones encouraged his preliminary visit and asked him to take on an additional responsibility for the academic year. He asked if "it will be possible, in addition to the work as Librarian, for you to assist Dr. W. D. Weatherford in directing the sophomore

⁵⁶ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Neil C. Van [Deusen], March 23, 1938, box 42, folder 15, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

introductory course in the humanities.”⁵⁸ According to Jones, it would only be when Weatherford, who was hired as a faculty member in 1936 after the Y. M. C. A. Graduate School closed, was out of town and not available for his lectures.⁵⁹

Van Deusen agreed to fill in for Weatherford throughout the academic year, and he immediately picked up where White left off with many of the library projects. During the 1938-39 academic year, the Negro Collection’s circulation increased by over seventy percent through scheduled conferences between the library assistant in charge of the collection, Scott E. Grinstead, and various instructors who were interested in using the materials for their courses. Van Deusen’s first annual report noted an increased use of the collection by “the general Negro community.”⁶⁰ In December 1938, Van Deusen had Grinstead begin keeping separate statistics for non-Fisk use of the collection. According to his records, the public used six hundred eighty-six books in the Negro Collection room by May 1939. Van Deusen’s annual report made special mention of the Negro Collection’s service to the broader public during the year. He said:

Thirty-five requests for information about the Negro were answered. Many of these required rather extensive bibliographic research. Forty-three short talks were delivered by the assistant in charge of the Negro collection to various religious, school, and social groups. An annotated bibliography of books by and about the Negro published in the past ten years is now being prepared chiefly for distribution to the interested non-academic public. The Library, and especially the Negro collection

⁵⁸ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Neil Van Deusen, April 27, 1938, box 42, folder 15, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*; Letter, Neil Van Deusen to Thomas E. Jones, April 17, 1938, box 42, folder 15, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁶⁰ Neil Van Deusen, “Report of the Librarian, 1938-1939,” July 1939, box 23, folder 13, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

room, is serving an ever-widening public outside the University.⁶¹

Van Deusen also worked to continue serving the African American public through the teacher-librarian training program at Fisk. The summer of 1939 marked the end of financial assistance from the GEB, and it was limited to the students who attended during the summer of 1938. However, Fisk administration agreed to cover the costs of a new group of students to begin the program in June 1939. The immediate enrollment of thirty-two new teachers gave Van Deusen every indication of the need for this type of training. He felt “it would seem obvious that there will be a large demand for this type of training for some time to come and some demand always,” since southern states were raising educational “standards to require at least partially trained school librarians.” Van Deusen persisted throughout the year in search of funding to continue the program beyond the summer of 1939. He even worked with Louis Shores at George Peabody College Library School to develop a joint library training plan for Peabody and Fisk, but it was never approved by the BEL or GEB.⁶²

During the 1938-1939 academic year, Van Deusen became involved with two new projects. The first one was an extensive library reorganization and restructuring project. In November 1938, President Jones asked Van Deusen to review a letter from Meharry Medical College’s new president, Dr. Edward Lewis Turner. As Mallowney’s successor, Turner proposed a new library arrangement with a branch located on

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.; Letter, Louis Shores to S. C. Garrison and Thomas E. Jones, February 23, 1939, box 42, folder 15, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

Meharry's campus. President Jones asked Van Deusen to immediately "prepare an outline of administration of the library, including the Meharry branch."⁶³ Major changes included moving the library to the Meharry plant on Eighteenth Avenue, administering service as a departmental library within the Fisk University Library, and creating a position for an Assistant Librarian of the Meharry Medical College. In February 1939, the Meharry Medical College Library moved from the second floor of Cravath Memorial Library to a dedicated room a block away on Meharry's campus. Alderson Fry, who oversaw the collection at Fisk Library, became the Assistant Librarian of the Meharry Medical College.⁶⁴

Van Deusen's second project involved getting Meharry Medical College Library membership in the Medical Library Association. According to a letter he wrote to President Jones, "Howard and Meharry medical libraries until now have been excluded because of the possibility of Negro librarians attending their meetings. It occurs to me that the position of prestige in the A. L. A. gained for Fisk by two former Fisk librarians may be useful in getting Meharry represented in the Medical Library Association."⁶⁵ Van Deusen said the membership costs several hundred dollars, but the library would benefit

⁶³ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Neil Van Deusen, November 14, 1938, box 42, folder 15, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁶⁴ Neil Van Deusen, "Report of the Librarian, 1938-1939," July 1939, box 23, folder 13, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁶⁵ Letter, Neil Van Deusen to Thomas E. Jones, January 28, 1939, box 42, folder 15, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

from access to exclusive medical periodicals. In June 1939, the Medical Library Association admitted the Meharry Medical College Library into membership.⁶⁶

During the 1939-1940 academic year, Van Deusen began publishing a list arranged by subject of the new books added to the library collection. The list clearly shows a profusion of sociology books added to the general collection, but more importantly for this research, the following list of books added to the Negro Collection between July and November 1939:

Bond, Horace Mann. *Negro Education in Alabama*, 1939.
 Brown, Sterling. *Negro Poetry and Drama*, 1937.
 Dornan, Samuel S. *Pygmies and Bushmen of the Kalahari*, 1925.
 Du Bois, W. E. B. *Black Folk: Then and Now*, 1939.
 Egerton, F. Clement C. *African Majesty*, 1939.
 Gordon, Armistead C. *Maje: A Love Story*, 1914.
 Leahy, Michael. *The Land that Time Forgot*, 1937.
 Lucian. *Mimes of Courtesans*, 1928.
 Marson, Una. *The Moth and the Star*, 1937.
 Powdermaker, Hortense. *After Freedom*, 1939.
 Powell, Adam Clayton. *Against the Tide*, 1938.
 Stayt, Hugh A. *Ba Venda*, 1931.
 Turpin, Waters Edward. *O Canaan!* 1939.⁶⁷

One effect of this publication was an even more dramatic increase in the use and circulation of the Negro Collection. During the 1939-1940 academic year, over seven thousand books in the collection were used, and the library assistant in charge of the collection, Scott Grinstead, received over one hundred requests for information. Furthermore, the non-Fisk public used over one thousand three hundred books in the

⁶⁶ Neil Van Deusen, "Report of the Librarian, 1938-1939," July 1939, box 23, folder 13, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁶⁷ Fisk University, "A Selection of Books Added, July-November 1939," box 42, folder 16, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

Negro Collection that year. Various exhibits on African art, African American poets, and African American life were also placed in the first-floor lobby throughout the year “effectively to direct attention to Negro Collection material.”⁶⁸

That year, aside from purchasing new books and promoting the collection, Van Deusen received a notable donation to enrich the Negro Collection. On Sunday, April 21, 1940, James Carroll Napier, a prominent African American businessman, former president of the National Negro Business League and chair of the Nashville Negro Board of Trade, died. In 1904, Napier founded one of the first African American owned banks in the United States, the One Cent (now Citizens) Savings Bank. He played an important role “in the founding of Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State College for Negroes (now Tennessee State University) and an active supporter of Fisk University and Meharry Medical College.”⁶⁹ The heirs of the J. C. Napier estate presented the library with over one hundred volumes from his personal library to add to the Negro Collection. In addition to the books, the family donated his personal papers which included correspondence, speeches, documents, photographs, newspaper clippings, contracts, and mementos.⁷⁰

Van Deusen made special mention of two new publications by members of the library staff in his 1939-1940 annual report. The first was *A List of Subject Headings for*

⁶⁸ Neil Van Deusen, “Report of the Librarian, 1939-1940,” July 1940, box 23, folder 13, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁶⁹ Herbert Leon Clark, “The Public Career of James Carroll Napier: Businessman, Politician, and Crusader for Racial Justice, 1845-1940” (D. A. dissertation, Middle Tennessee State University, 1980), iii.

⁷⁰ Letter, Neil Van Deusen to Thomas E. Jones, July 9, 1940, box 42, folder 17, Thomas E. Jones Collection; *The Tennessean*, April 22, 1940.

Books by and about the Negro by Frances L. Yocom, the Assistant Librarian. According to Van Deusen, her book was “being financed by the Julius Rosenwald Fund and will be published shortly by the H. W. Wilson Company.”⁷¹ Published in August 1940, Yocom’s master’s thesis provided the first comprehensive list of subject headings for books by and about African Americans. The Library of Congress’s Subject Headings adopted many of her headings for Fisk’s Negro Collection. Yocom admitted the list was not exhaustive and with each passing day a new subject heading could be considered, especially since a new book in the collection could potentially require a new subject heading. As a special feature, her list included headings for “an obscure subject or one about which little has been written...for instance, ‘*Passing*,’ or *Racial inferiority of Negroes (Doctrine)*.”⁷²

The second publication was a mimeographed copy of *A Select, Classified, and Briefly Annotated List of Two Hundred Fifty Books by Or about the Negro: Published during the Past Ten Years* by Scott Edward Grinstead, Assistant in Charge of the Negro Collection. Van Deusen said the list was “designed primarily to save time in making lists of books on various subjects to send to people writing to us for advice.”⁷³ Published in 1939, Grinstead’s list was in high demand. His eighty-four-page book was distributed to libraries throughout the country for twenty-five cents a copy, and most of them used it as a check and order list.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Neil Van Deusen, “Report of the Librarian, 1939-1940,” July 1940, box 23, folder 13, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁷² Yocom, *A List of Subject Headings for Books by and about the Negro*, 6.

⁷³ Neil Van Deusen, “Report of the Librarian, 1939-1940,” July 1940, box 23, folder 13, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Van Deusen expressed considerable concern with the development of the teacher-librarian program and the closing of the Hampton Institute Library School in his 1939-1940 annual report. He felt “the closing of the Hampton Library School in 1939 emphasizes the importance of this type of training,” and “with conditions as they are, the greatest demand in Southern elementary and secondary schools seems to be for the person who can divide his time between teaching and library work.”⁷⁵ Although Fisk did not receive any more financial assistance from the GEB to offer the program after the summer of 1939, the President and Board of Trustees decided to underwrite the cost and offer library courses for teacher librarians through the 1939-1940 academic year. Van Deusen thought Fisk “should concentrate [its] attention upon some of those who have completed our 12 points of work, bring them back for 6 more points, study the problems of their respective school, and give them some training in cataloging, remedial reading methods, and materials of instruction,” especially since state-supported schools like Tennessee A. & I. received approval from the Board of Education in 1940 to offer library courses for full and part-time librarians from the public schools of Tennessee.⁷⁶

During the 1940-1941 academic year, President Jones took a proactive and preventative approach to the impending world war. On September 16, 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Selective Training and Service Act as the first peacetime conscription in American History, and Neil Van Deusen was among the first

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.; Yildiz B. Binkley, “100 Years of Service: History of the Martha M. Brown and Lois H. Daniel Memorial Library, 1912-2012,” *Tennessee Libraries* 62, no. 1 (March 2012): 1.

“16,565,037 registered in the Continental United States.”⁷⁷ In January 1941, President Jones wrote the Local Draft Board “to urge that Dr Van Deusen be placed on the deferred list of draftees called for active training. As head of the Library Staff at Fisk University he is going through a period of re-organization and development, and his services here during the coming year will be practically indispensable.”⁷⁸

Although President Jones considered him an essential employee, Neil Van Deusen did “not believe the University would suffer if [he] were to leave at the end of summer school, July 18.”⁷⁹ Van Deusen did not tell the President where he was going because he had two potential offers; one was definite and in his best interest, and the other offer was still pending, but he was even more inclined to accept it. According to Van Deusen, he had completed everything he planned to do before his vacation except the annual report and a revision to the library staff manual. President Jones accepted his resignation and asked Frances L. Yocom, “would it be possible for you to carry on the work as acting Librarian until further arrangements have been made for a successor to Dr. Van Deusen?”⁸⁰

For the 1941-1942 academic year, Yocom reported a continued increase in the number of students using sources in the Negro Collection. Grinstead, who was now the

⁷⁷ “Chronology of Selective Service,” *Selective Service* 6, no. 9 (September 1946): 1.

⁷⁸ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Local Draft Board No. 1, January 11, 1941, box 42, folder 17, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁷⁹ Letter, Neil Van Deusen to Thomas E. Jones, July 4, 1941, box 42, folder 17, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁸⁰ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Frances L. Yocom, July 14, 1941, box 44, folder 21, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

Curator of the Negro Collection, continued to work one on one with instructors to ensure the materials were used in their courses. The statistics showed undergraduates used over four thousand books, graduate students used over three thousand books, and outsiders used over one thousand books in the Negro Collection. Grinstead planned and implemented several projects including reorganization of the Fiskiana Collection, revision of his annotated bibliography on the Negro, and furthering the use of the collection through the community with forty-eight lectures and twenty-eight exhibits.⁸¹

Yocom continued as Acting Librarian through the 1942-1943 academic year. In the 1941-1942 annual report, she said the “emphasis for next year will be on the continuation of interest and use of the Negro collection and the collateral display.”⁸² In December 1942, the library began publishing and distributing a mimeographed bulletin entitled, *Fisk Comment*. The *Fisk Comment* was an informational sheet with annotated bibliographies of recently released “books and periodical articles dealing with the problems faced by Negroes and other minority groups in a world at war.”⁸³ The monthly bulletin kept educators, librarians, and the public informed and updated on new materials in the Negro Collection.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Francis L. Yocom, “Report of the Librarian, 1941-1942,” July 1940, box 23, folder 13, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Fisk Comment*, December 1942, 1.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*; Letter, A. F. Kuhlman to Thomas E. Jones, December 24, 1942, box 44, folder 22, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

CHAPTER IV

FISK UNIVERSITY LIBRARY'S DEVELOPMENT OF MANUSCRIPTS AND ARCHIVES FOR THE NEGRO COLLECTION, 1943 – 1965

As early as 1939, Arnaud “Arna” Wendell Bontemps, an African American novelist, poet, and noted member of the Harlem Renaissance, began writing President Jones in hopes of securing an appointment at Fisk. Bontemps was eager to fill a proposed position he and President Jones once discussed, Chair of Creative Writing. The position was previously held by James Weldon Johnson who was killed in the summer of 1938 when a train hit him and his wife in their automobile at a crossing while they were on vacation in Maine.¹ Regretfully, Jones let Bontemps know that it was “impossible to contemplate re-establishing the Chair in Creative Literature at the present time,” especially with a reduced budget for the 1939-1940 academic year.²

Correspondence unexpectedly resumed between President Jones and Bontemps in March 1943. In a memorandum, Bontemps explained how he had completed residence work for a doctorate in English at the University of Chicago, but he still needed to complete his dissertation and comprehensive exams. He had also completed a full year in the Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago and was prepared to receive a master’s degree in library science in June of 1943. Although he was just completing graduate school, Bontemps had extensive experience as an educator, school principal, and

¹ Arna Bontemps to Thomas E. Jones, June 2, 1939, box 26, folder 22, Thomas E. Jones Collection; *The Tennessean*, June 28, 1938.

² Letter, Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Arna Bontemps, June 6, 1939, box 26, folder 22, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

librarian. Between 1924 and 1931 he served as an English teacher and later as principal of the Harlem Academy, a kindergarten to twelfth grade school in New York. From 1931 to 1934, he was librarian and English teacher at Oakwood Junior College (now Oakwood University) in Huntsville, Alabama. Beginning in 1935, for three years, he was the principal of Shiloh Academy, a private kindergarten to twelfth grade school in Chicago. At the time of his memorandum, Bontemps was “retained by Dr. Beals, Director of Libraries, University of Chicago, in order to prepare a memorandum of Negro newspapers, past and present, as a basis for extensive studies undertaken through the University Library in the future.”³

President Jones immediately contacted the dean of the University of Chicago’s Graduate Library School, Louis Round Wilson, for a confidential statement on Bontemps and his work. Jones admitted that he received a visit from Bontemps and was “pleased with his personality,” but wanted to know whether he qualified for the position of Librarian at Fisk.⁴ Jones apparently did not know Wilson had retired from the University of Chicago. However, the new dean, Carleton B. Joeckel, responded quickly to his letter and said, “I believe that our faculty would be unanimous in recommending him highly for your consideration.”⁵ Jones also asked the director of the New York Public Library,

³ Memorandum, Arna Bontemps to Thomas E. Jones, March 11, 1943, box 26, folder 22, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁴ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Louis Wilson, March 15, 1943, box 26, folder 22, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁵ Letter, C. B. Joeckel to Thomas E. Jones, March 22, 1943, box 26, folder 22, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

Franklin F. Hopper, what he thought about the idea, and Hopper said, “I do indeed approve your offering Mr. Arna Bontemps the librarianship at Fisk.”⁶

On March 25, 1943, President Jones sent Bontemps a contract for his appointment as Librarian at Fisk University for the 1943-1944 academic year. Jones offered Bontemps thirty-five hundred dollars for the twelve-month period and asked him “to handle at least one course or seminar in the field of Composition and Creative Writing.”⁷ Bontemps gladly accepted the appointment, and said he was “making a tour of Negro collections in Eastern libraries” before returning to complete his studies in Chicago.⁸ During the summer, Bontemps made several visits to arrange housing for his family on campus and attended a Cooperative Workshop in General Education with seven other Fisk faculty members at the University of Chicago. His faculty housing was scheduled to be ready for his family’s arrival on September 1, 1943.⁹

During his first year, Bontemps had to manage several changes in the library staff. The circulation librarian who replaced William Griffey, Catherine C. Golightly, resigned from her position at the end of the previous academic year to pursue a graduate degree in English at the University of Michigan. Bontemps immediately had to conduct a search for her replacement and hired Peggy Brown as the new Circulation Librarian for the 1943-

⁶ Letter, Franklin F. Hopper to Thomas E. Jones, March 19, 1943, box 26, folder 22, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁷ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Arna Bontemps, March 25, 1943, box 26, folder 22, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁸ Letter, Arna Bontemps to Thomas E. Jones, March 30, 1943, box 26, folder 22, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

⁹ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Arna Bontemps, July 24, 1943, box 26, folder 22, Thomas E. Jones Collection; Letter, Arna Bontemps to Thomas E. Jones, July 31, 1943, box 26, folder 22, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

1944 academic year. He also had to shift personnel to cover the reference desk since the reference librarian, Marie Boswell, had to spend three hours teaching library science courses that year. Furthermore, Bontemps lost Corinne Massey in the cataloging department, and most of her work had to be done by the Associate Librarian, Frances L. Yocom.¹⁰

With all these staff adjustments, the most significant change during the 1943-1944 academic year was the departure of Scott Grinstead as curator of the Negro Collection.

Bontemps saw this as a major loss to the library. In his annual report, he said:

Mr. Scott Grinstead's leaving has served to highlight the fact that the Fisk Negro Collection, comparable in size and importance to the Mooreland Foundation at Howard University and the Schomburg collection in the New York Public Library, operates with only a fraction of the help employed to administer these other collections. He deserves credit for what he was able to do within the limitations imposed. His leaving presented the new Librarian with a very real problem, for the Negro Collection is to a large extent the basis for graduate research at Fisk. It serves as a graduate reading room – since most of the dissertations produced at Fisk depend on it for source material. It is the heart of the program of African studies. And it is the part of the library which represents the institution most frequently in interlibrary loans and in other phases of cooperation with the world of scholarship at large. In other words, it is the Fisk Library's point of contact. These individuals and institutions who know the library from afar or by occasional contact know it in most cases through the Negro Collection. This is the area of the Library's greatest strength.¹¹

¹⁰ Annual Report, Arna Bontemps to Thomas E. Jones, July 1944, box 26, folder 22, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

¹¹ Ibid.

Bontemps felt no better person than himself could fill such an important role in the library. According to the annual report, “the curatorship of this valuable and important Collection, including constant enlargement of the book stock and widespread bibliographical work, was assumed by the new Librarian.”¹²

Bontemps immediately began expanding the Negro Collection through gifts of books, manuscripts, and other materials. In his first year, the library received a rare copy of William Wells Brown’s *Clotel*, the first novel ever published by an African American. The book was one of no more than five copies of the unrevised English editions. It was also a special gift from president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Arthur B. Spingarn. The library received another remarkable gift from Rebecca Halley. Halley’s brother happened to be a young employee at the British publishing house, Hodder and Stoughton, in 1874 when they printed the first book about the Jubilee Singers in Great Britain, *The Singing Campaign for Ten Thousand Pounds: The Jubilee Singers in Great Britain*. He had also collected an early album of the Fisk Jubilee Singers and his sister donated it to the library in 1944.¹³

In January 1945, Bontemps established the E. R. Alexander Collection of Negroana. Ernest Raymond Alexander graduated from Pearl High School in 1910 and Fisk University in 1914. Five years later, he was the only black graduate of the University of Vermont and received top honors as a medical student. Dr. Alexander was a dermatologist and worked at Harlem Hospital for many years before becoming a member of the Fisk Board of Trustees. His wife, Lillian Alexander, had served on the NAACP

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

board of directors since 1924 and was a charter and life member of the National Association of College Women.¹⁴

In a formal ceremony during the 1945 spring arts festival, Lillian Alexander donated a collection of rare books, autographs, manuscripts, and sheet music by African American artists and composers to Fisk Library, in honor of her husband, an active member of the class of 1914. Mrs. Alexander also established a fund in her husband's name for the library to purchase more African American music and rare books. In her statement of presentation, she said:

The Library of a University is its heartbeat, its guide, its information bureau, its content of knowledge, its inspiration to seek for knowledge, its cultural laboratory through which to build men. Therefore, the Library is an ever-growing, ever-extending, source of facts, from the most distant past into which we may penetrate into the farthest promise of the future....

We are not collecting books rare only in age, but books that reflect their times, so that Fisk students may learn, as our small collection has already proven, that there has been no time (especially in America) when the Negro has not kept pace, culturally, with the culture of the times....¹⁵

After years of service in her various roles as the Acting Librarian, Assistant Librarian, and now Associate Librarian, Frances L. Yocom announced her departure in the spring of 1945. In February, President Jones received a letter from Arthur S. Gist, president of Humboldt State College in Arcata, California. Gist said Yocom was recommended for a position as a cataloguer and reference librarian, but he wanted

¹⁴ Ibid.; *The New York Age*, April 28, 1945; *The New York Daily News*, September 15, 1957; *The New York Age*, September 21, 1957.

¹⁵ Press Release, April 30, 1945, box 51, folder 1, Arna Bontemps Collection.

approval to negotiate with her for an effective start date of July 1, 1945. He also asked Jones for a formal statement about her personality and qualifications. More importantly, Gist wanted to make sure Yocom was the right fit for Humboldt State. He shamelessly said, “We are assuming that she is a white woman. Are we correct in this?”¹⁶ Jones ignored his racist question and said, “Our opinion is so high of her that we will do all that we can to keep her.”¹⁷ Jones admitted, however, that Yocom had the right to improve her situation, and he would not stand in her way if she decided to leave. By the start of the 1945-1946 academic year, Yocom was a member of Humboldt State’s all-white faculty and Bontemps hired Minnie R. Bowles as her replacement.¹⁸

Yocom was not the only person to resign from Fisk that year. After twenty-years as president, Thomas E. Jones submitted his resignation to the board of trustees in 1945 to be effective July 1, 1946. This was not the first time he had done so. The start of World War II had a tremendous ethical and moral impact on Jones and his presidency, so he submitted his resignation back in 1940 to be effective January 1, 1941. As a member of the Society of Friends, Jones could not and would not officially support the war effort; yet hundreds of Fisk students were enlisting and planning to go fight in the war. Jones

¹⁶ Letter, Arthur S. Gist to Thomas E. Jones, February 19, 1945, box 44, folder 22, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

¹⁷ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Arthur S. Gist, March 3, 1945, box 44, folder 22, Thomas E. Jones Collection.

¹⁸ Ibid.; William R. Tanner, *A View from the Hill: A History of Humboldt State University* (Arcata, CA: University Graphic Services, Humboldt State University, 1993), 65-66.

received an offer to accept a position as director of the Civilian Public Service (CPS), American Friends Service Committee, and he could not refuse the opportunity.¹⁹

The CPS was a unique organization developed by the federal government in collaboration with pacifist churches like the Society of Friends (Quakers), Church of the Brethren, and the Mennonites (Amish) as an alternative to the Selective Service and Training Act of 1940. Conscientious objectors, like Jones, could work on farms, in hospitals, and on various federal projects instead of going off to fight in the war. The board of trustees, however, refused to accept his resignation and suggested he take a leave of absence for a year to assume the position as director of the CPS. Although Jones maintained communication with faculty and staff from Philadelphia, Dean A. A. Taylor handled most of the administrative duties at the University.²⁰

Less than four years later, Jones was ready to resign again. He had accepted a position as president of his alma mater, Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana. This time, the board accepted Jones's resignation and appointed a three-member interim administration committee to run the university: A. A. Taylor, dean of the college; Isaiah T. Creswell, the controller; and, William Hume, a Fisk trustee and chairman of the Nashville Board of Education. The board of trustees conducted a search and appointed

¹⁹ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Alrutheus A. Taylor, January 14, 1941, box 41, folder 19, Thomas E. Jones Collection; Richardson, *A History of Fisk University*, 132.

²⁰ Richardson, *A History of Fisk University*, 132; Mitchell L. Robinson, "Men of Peace in a World at War: Civilian Public Service in New York State, 1941-1946," *New York History* 78, no. 2 (April 1997): 174.

Charles S. Johnson as the first African American president of Fisk University in October 1946. In fact, he was the first African American president of any HBCU in the country.²¹

Encouraged by the elevation of Johnson as Fisk President, Bontemps continued to expand the Negro Collection through gifts of books, manuscripts, and other materials. During the 1946-1947 academic year, Bontemps convinced the American Missionary Association (AMA) to designate Fisk “as the repository for its valuable early files.”²² In addition, longtime AMA secretary Fred L. Brownlee donated the organization’s private collection of the magazine, *The American Missionary*. His gift made Fisk the best existing collection of information on and about the AMA. Fisk had every volume of the magazine, except three, and Bontemps had “hopes of obtaining those.”²³

Bontemps also continued to serve the greater public through the Negro Collection. The following paragraph from his annual report clearly demonstrates the impact of this collection on the outside community:

Many requests for reference service come into the library from persons outside the college and local communities across the year. Several recent requests indicate the nature of this service: the archivist of the Peace Collection at Swarthmore College wrote the librarian asking aid in assembling tools of value to the bibliographer and cataloger of Negro materials. This was followed by a request for further information and materials. A research assistant at the University of California Medical Center wished to know the number of people, the number of women and the percentage of Negroes in the United States engaged in the study of practice of medicine and dentistry. A University of

²¹ Richardson, *A History of Fisk University*, 135; *The Tennessean*, February 2, 1945.

²² Annual Report, Arna Bontemps to Charles S. Johnson, July 1947, box 53, folder 1, Arna Bontemps Collection.

²³ Ibid.

California student requested a bibliography on the Negro in the United Automobile Workers. It may be interesting to note that requests for bibliographies on the Negro for classroom use have come from young people judged to be of elementary and high school grade in states as far away as California and Oregon.²⁴

These requests further illustrate how the University Library was a trusted source for information by and about African Americans to not only the Fisk community, but to other libraries, to medical professionals, to other higher education institutions, and to the general public from Pennsylvania to California.²⁵

The next year, the library received the largest single gift of materials it had received in years. Bontemps acquired the library and pamphlet collection of the Julius Rosenwald Fund (JRF). The JRF was established in 1917 by and named in honor of Sears, Roebuck and Company owner, president, and business mogul Julius Rosenwald. The Fund evolved out of a philanthropy program Rosenwald began in 1912 with Booker T. Washington at Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama. Rosenwald and Washington set out to build schools for African Americans throughout the rural South on a matching funds basis, and by 1932 the JRF had provided grants toward the construction of almost five thousand schools as well as teachers' homes and vocational buildings.²⁶

The JRF restructured its program in 1928 to include not only funding for African American rural schools, but also to include funding for African American higher

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Annual Report, Arna Bontemps to Charles S. Johnson, July 1948, box 53, folder 1, Arna Bontemps Collection; Louis R. Harlan and Raymond W. Smock, eds., *Booker T. Washington Papers, Volume 11: 1911-1912* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 562; Mary S. Hoffschwelle, *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), 1.

education institutions, fellowships, hospitals, health studies, bus transportation, and libraries. The organization also established a scheduled twenty-year dissolution date, June 30, 1948. Immediately preceding its dissolution, Bontemps acquired “several thousand books, all of solid value” that “were concentrated in the fields of the Fund’s activities and of the special interests of its officers: southern education, Negro life and history, Negro health, Indians of the Americas, races of mankind, the history of the Jews, etc.”²⁷ The library also received the organization’s pamphlet collection which was so large that it filled four large filing cabinets and dozens of boxes, but Bontemps expected to receive more. According to his annual report, the organization still planned to send its entire archival collection to Fisk. This collection of primary sources and photographs about the Rosenwald School Building Program, in time, became of great interest to historic preservationists in the twenty-first century.²⁸

Fisk also received the Scott Joplin collection during the 1947-1948 academic year. Sanford Brunson Campbell, a noted Anglo-American composer and pianist who Joplin taught as a young boy, donated the published works of the African American king of ragtime. Campbell dedicated his last years to Joplin lore and “made records of the composer’s compositions, written articles about him for *Esquire* and for musical magazines and prepared reminiscences of his own association with Joplin.”²⁹ Campbell

²⁷ Annual Report, Arna Bontemps to Charles S. Johnson, July 1948, box 53, folder 1, Arna Bontemps Collection.

²⁸ Ibid.; Julius Rosenwald Fund, *Julius Rosenwald Fund: A Review* (Chicago: Julius Rosenwald Fund, 1936), 4, 15-16.

²⁹ Annual Report, Arna Bontemps to Charles S. Johnson, July 1948, box 53, folder 1, Arna Bontemps Collection.

gave Bontemps the records and articles, plus a collection of photographs and mementos.³⁰

Bontemps continuously stressed library acquisitions during his administration of the library, but for the year 1948-1949 he placed more emphasis on processing the new materials, absorbing them into the library collection, and promoting their use. His annual report, however, only briefly mentioned the activities in the periodicals, reference, circulation, and processing departments for the year. Bontemps quickly closed his report with a list of needs for the library including the purchase of Library of Congress Catalog cards, additional staff, and equipment for its growing collection of microfilm. It is apparent from Bontemps' writing, especially in comparison to previous reports, that he was rushed to submit this one. He later admitted that he simply resubmitted his preliminary report from April since he was scheduled and approved for a leave beginning July 1.³¹

Bontemps took a one-year sabbatical to write *Chariot in the Sky: A Story of the Jubilee Singers*. Published in 1951, the book is a teenage novel based on a fictional character named Caleb – a boy who grew up enslaved in South Carolina, travelled to Nashville after the Civil War, and enrolled as a student at Fisk. Caleb joins the original Fisk Jubilee Singers and travels with the group on their American and European campaigns. Bontemps eloquently tells the story of the Jubilee Singers while illustrating

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Annual Report, Arna Bontemps to Charles S. Johnson, June 30, 1949, box 53, folder 1, Arna Bontemps Collection; Letter, Arna Bontemps to Charles S. Johnson, December 18, 1949, box 53, folder 1, Arna Bontemps Collection.

Caleb's transformation from an illiterate slave boy to an educated free man. The book was part of the Winston Publishing Company's *Land of the Free* series – a series of children's books about people who brought the gifts of their culture to America. Although he finished the book in a year, Bontemps would spend another six months editing and revising the book for the publisher while he worked at Fisk.³²

Minnie R. Bowles, the Assistant Librarian, served as Acting Librarian for the year and submitted the 1949-1950 annual report on behalf of Bontemps. Although Bowles did not acquire any additional manuscripts and archives during the year, she did add books to the Negro Collection. She listed the following titles to show the value and variety of materials she purchased for the collection during the year:

Alain, T. T. *Addresses of Honorable T. T. Alain of the Iberville Parish, Louisiana at the commencement of Tuskegee Normal Institute . . . May 28th, 1891*. New Orleans, 1891.

Alexis, Stephen. *Histoire d'Haiti*. Port au Prince, 1947.

Gruile, M. *Arts de l'Afrique Noir*. Paris, 1947.

Horrego, Estuch, L. *Maceo Heroe y character*. Habana, 1946.

Perlham, M. *The protectorates of South Africa: the question of their transfer to the Union*. London, 1935.

Thompson, E. T. *Race and region*. Chapel Hill, 1949.

Universal Race Congress. *Papers on International Problems*. London, 1911.

Three studies published by Catholic University:

³² Charles H. Nichols, ed., *Arna Bontemps – Langston Hughes Letters, 1925-1967* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1980), 260, 262, 268, 271, 273; *Poughkeepsie Journal*, July 15, 1951; *The Press Democrat*, December 2, 1951.

Dabney, Lillian. *History of schools for Negroes in the District of Columbia, 1807-1947*. 1949.

Harte, T. J. *Catholic organizations promoting Negro-white relations in the United States*. 1947.

Roche, R. J. *Catholic Colleges and the Negro student*. 1948.³³

As an accession to the E. R. Alexander collection, Bowles also purchased a collection of two hundred and five songs written by African Americans dating back to 1874. She used funds from the endowment to purchase the compositions which included songs by James A. Bland, Sam Lucas, Bert Williams, James Weldon and Rosamond Johnson and others.³⁴

As soon as Bontemps returned from leave, he reverted to leveraging his personal and professional relationships to expand the Negro Collection again. During the 1950-1951 academic year, one major collection of manuscripts and archival materials were gifted to the Negro Collection, and another collection was forthcoming. Ida Mae Cullen, widow of noted poet and member of the Harlem Renaissance Countee Cullen, visited the Bontemps family in Nashville for a week and a half. During her stay, Bontemps said she “made up her mind to leave Countee’s literary effects in our collection of Negroana: letters, manuscripts, the books of his library, everything that was still with him at his death.”³⁵

³³ Annual Report, Minnie R. Bowles to Charles S. Johnson, June 30, 1950, box 53, folder 2, Arna Bontemps Collection.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Nichols, *Arna Bontemps – Langston Hughes Letters*, 282.

Upon receipt of the Countee Cullen collection, Bontemps anticipated placing it next to the Charles Waddell Chesnutt collection. During the 1951-1952 academic year, Fisk received the Chesnutt Collection, and Bontemps proudly said it was “the crowning gift of a truly bounteous year.”³⁶ Chesnutt was ranked with the literary genius of Frederick Douglass and considered an ardent champion for civil rights during his lifetime. Born the son of a free colored woman and a young pilgrim on June 20, 1858, in Cleveland, Ohio, Chesnutt later taught in the public schools of North Carolina and became the principal of State Colored Normal School (now Fayetteville State University) in Fayetteville, North Carolina. He returned to Ohio in 1887, passed the bar, and practiced law in Cleveland until his death. Chesnutt was also a noted author who published magazine articles, short stories and books including *The Conjure Woman* (1899), *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories* (1899), and the *Life of Frederick Douglas* (1899). In 1928, Chesnutt won the Spingarn Medal from the NAACP for distinguished achievement in his field. His daughter, Helen M. Chesnutt, donated his entire collection of correspondence, manuscripts, papers, photographs, and memorabilia to Fisk after she completed her biography, *Charles Waddell Chesnutt: Pioneer of the Color Line* (1952). In the acknowledgements, she thanked both Arna Bontemps and Charles S. Johnson for reading the manuscript, offering her encouragement, and giving

³⁶ Annual Report, Arna Bontemps to Charles S. Johnson, July 1, 1952, box 23, folder 9, Charles S. Johnson Presidential Papers.

good advice. Once again, the library had played an important role in encouraging invaluable scholarship on African American history.³⁷

At the beginning of the 1952-1953 academic year, President Charles S. Johnson wrote and asked Bontemps if they should both use their personal relationships with W. E. B. Du Bois to secure his collection. President Johnson said he spoke with a Fisk alumna at a meeting in New York who was a close friend of Du Bois, and “she felt that it was worth intimating that he is looking around for an institution to which to donate his library. She thought that he might be encouraged to give it to Fisk if he were asked by someone whom he regarded as a friend.”³⁸ Johnson also mentioned how Du Bois had exempted him in a book paragraph when he denounced other African American college presidents, reminded Bontemps that he was working with him on his biography, and suggested he bring it up in conversation.³⁹

Three days later, Bontemps wrote Du Bois a letter and opened it with a comment about the slow progress of the biography and followed by asking for one more face-to-face session with him and his papers. Then, he casually said:

It has just occurred to me that you did not comment when I broached the question of establishing a permanent Du Bois collection in the Fisk University Library. However, I want you to know of my continued interest in this proposal and that I would consider it a high point in my librarianship if I could initiate something of this sort, establishing your

³⁷ Ibid.; Helen M. Chesnutt, *Charles Waddell Chesnutt: Pioneer of the Color Line* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1952), vi, 2-3, 15; *The Pittsburgh Courier*, November 26, 1932.

³⁸ Letter, Charles S. Johnson to Arna Bontemps, October 24, 1952, box 23, folder 10, Charles S. Johnson Presidential Papers.

³⁹ Ibid.

personal library and papers as a monument to Fisk's most illustrious alumnus.⁴⁰

In a letter to his best friend, Langston Hughes, Bontemps revealed his frustration with Du Bois and asked for help in the acquisition:

I'm trying tell Shirley Graham and Dr. WEBD that Fisk is the place for his library and papers, that we can do a better job on them than this 'foundation' they are trying to organize – have you seen how poorly the Douglass home in Anacostia is kept? The library there is of no use to scholars or writers, but people come from far and wide to use our AMA, Langston and Chesnutt papers. I'm negotiating with at least half a dozen *right now*, arranging time and hours, etc. All working on doctoral dissertations or books. Would appreciate if you could at some time have a phone conversation with Shirley about it, listening to the pro and con, and asking her opinion of the argument I tried to advance. Evidently Du Bois has left it up to her to decide.⁴¹

Bontemps would spend nearly a decade of his career in pursuit of the Du Bois collection.

As he stated, its acquisition would be the highlight of his career as a librarian, and he never gave up.⁴²

Because of their close friendship, Bontemps had no problem acquiring the Langston Hughes Collection. Hughes and Bontemps first met in 1924 at an NAACP gala in New York City, and they became lifelong friends and colleagues. By the time Bontemps came to Fisk in 1943, they had already coauthored a children's book titled *Popo and Fifina: Children of Haiti* (1932). The two continued to exchange ideas, letters,

⁴⁰ Letter, Arna Bontemps to W. E. B. Du Bois, October 27, 1952, box 23, folder 10, Charles S. Johnson Presidential Papers.

⁴¹ Nichols, *Arna Bontemps – Langston Hughes Letters*, 298.

⁴² Arna Bontemps, "The Private Library and Personal Papers of W. E. B. Du Bois," September 20, 1961, box 56, folder 6, Arna Bontemps Collection.

and partner on books, plays, and other literary works throughout the years. Hughes was best known for his poetry, essays, plays, and short stories, and he began sending materials for Bontemps to add to the library's collection as early as 1949. By 1953, the collection consisted of five hundred and twelve pieces including a movie script, books, invitations, letters, newspaper articles, pictures, poetry, programs, radio scripts, songs, souvenirs, and speeches.⁴³

A long-time friend of the university, Agnes B. Cravath, daughter-in-law of Fisk's first president Erastus Milo Cravath and wife of its former chairman of the board Paul D. Cravath, died in March 1953. President Johnson wrote former President Thomas E. Jones with a question about the library building. Johnson said someone is of the opinion that, more than any other person, the library should be named in honor of Erastus Milo Cravath. He said someone else vaguely remembered it was supposed to be named after Wallace Butterick, former chairman of the General Education Board. Johnson had searched the Board of Trustee Meeting Minutes and could not find any reference to the discussion. Within a week, Jones replied that "it was named the University Library in the hope that Meharry and Fisk could unite in its use, thereby making it the real center of the University."⁴⁴ Jones also said Butterick was once mentioned by one of the trustees, but he saw nothing wrong with naming it after the first president. During the spring 1953

⁴³ Steven C. Tracy, ed., *A Historical Guide to Langston Hughes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 30; Letter, Arna Bontemps to Langston Hughes, January 25, 1949, box 8, folder 5, Arna Bontemps Collection; "List of manuscript collections," n.d., box 56, folder 11.

⁴⁴ Letter, Thomas E. Jones to Charles S. Johnson, May 23, 1953, box 23, folder 10, Charles S. Johnson Presidential Papers.

meeting of the board, Fisk officially changed the library's name to the Erastus Milo Cravath Memorial Library.⁴⁵

During the 1953-1954 academic year, President Johnson received several gifts for Bontemps to add to the Negro Collection. Mildred M. Fisher of Nashville presented Johnson with an 1885 leather-bound volume of *Myrtilla Miner: A Memoir*. Myrtilla Miner was an abolitionist, educator, and founder of the first Normal School for Colored Girls in the city of Washington, District of Columbia. Founded in 1851 to educate free African American girls, the institution was absorbed by Howard University in 1871, and later accredited by the Board of Education as Miner Teachers College in 1929. Fisher told Johnson the book was a family heirloom, since Miner was her father's aunt.⁴⁶

In June 1955, President Johnson received yet another gift of rare books to add to the Negro Collection.⁴⁷ Earlier in the year, he hosted His Excellence, General Paul E. Magloire, President of the Republic of Haiti on campus for a week. In appreciation, he sent a collection of sixty first edition books as a gift for Fisk's eighty-second commencement exercises. The following extract from a news article provides a summary of its contents:

Written either in French or Creole, the collection contains:
reports on the International Conference of 1890; Annals of

⁴⁵ Ibid.; Letter, Charles S. Johnson to I. T. Creswell, March 14, 1953, box 14, folder 11, Charles S. Johnson Presidential Papers; *Alabama Tribune*, May 8, 1953; Letter, Charles S. Johnson to Thomas E. Jones, May 18, 1953, box 23, folder 10, Charles S. Johnson Presidential Papers.

⁴⁶ Letter, Charles S. Johnson to Arna Bontemps, April 22, 1954, box 23, folder 11, Charles S. Johnson Presidential Papers; Ellen M. O'Connor, *Myrtilla Miner: A Memoir* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1885), 20; Vishnu V. Oak, ed., "Miner Teachers College," *Negro College Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (June 1947): 38-40.

⁴⁷ See Appendix A for a Directory of the Manuscripts in the Erastus Milo Cravath Memorial Library of Fisk University, 1954 – 1955.

the Haitian Legislature; trial accounts; Folk Legends; histories of Haiti and the Dominican Republic; scientific literary journals' biographies of Toussaint L' Overture and other famous Haitian Negroes: bound newspaper volumes; socio-psychological studies of the republic; voodoo; a Haitian bibliography; first editions of poetry by Durand, Villaire and Camille; the Fables of La Fontaine (translated into Creole); sonnets by Colcon; Haitian medicine and popular science; personal journals and diaries; scientific descriptions of the flora and geography of Haiti; Haitian and Creole comedy; and Langston Hughes' "A New Song," with an introduction by Fisk Librarian Arna Bontemps (translated into Creole French).

Each volume of the collection is bound in handsome leather carving of Haitian scenery, people or events.⁴⁸

Bontemps received a small donation for the Negro Collection and established a new departmental library during the 1955-1956 academic year. He received a rare copy of *Jubilee Songs: As Sung by the Jubilee Singers of Fisk University*. This was the first publication of the Fisk Jubilee Singers songs done under the auspices of the American Missionary Association in 1872. Bontemps spent most of the year setting up the Charles S. Johnson Research Library in the newly constructed Park Hall. This branch served as a departmental library for the Social Sciences. Although the library was opened and available to students, Bontemps admitted it still needed a catalog and periodical resources. Among the gifts for the year, the Negro Collection received a rare copy of *Jubilee Songs: As Sung by the Jubilee Singers of Fisk University*. This book was the first

⁴⁸ *Alabama Tribune*, June 10, 1955.

publication of their songs done under the auspices of the American Missionary Association in 1872.⁴⁹

Within a year of establishing the Charles S. Johnson Research Library, President Johnson died suddenly on his way to a quarterly board meeting in New York. On the morning of October 27, 1956, he boarded a train from Nashville and stopped in Louisville later that afternoon. Johnson got off to get a newspaper and had a heart attack as he reboarded the train. The Fisk family mourned his loss and celebrated his legacy throughout the 1956-1957 academic year. The cover of the December 1956 issue of *Fisk News* featured a picture of the late Charles S. Johnson in front of his own portrait in oil painted by Betsy Reyneau for an exhibit on famous African Americans in 1953. Several programs and memorial services were held, and the new Park Hall became Park-Johnson Hall, better known as P-J among Fiskites.⁵⁰

In April 1957, the Fisk Board of Trustees unanimously chose Stephen J. Wright, Jr. out of forty candidates as the seventh president of Fisk University. At the time of his appointment, Wright was president of Fisk's football rival Bluefield College in Bluefield, West Virginia. He received a bachelor's degree from Hampton Institute in 1934, a master's degree from Howard University in 1939, and a doctorate from New York University in 1943. Wright was a teacher and principal in Maryland before he entered the academic field as an education professor and director of student teaching at North

⁴⁹ Annual Report, Arna Bontemps to Charles S. Johnson, July 24, 1956, box 53, folder 2, Arna Bontemps Collection.

⁵⁰ Patrick Gilpin and Marybeth Gasman, *Charles S. Johnson: Leadership Beyond the Veil in the Age of Jim Crow* (Albany: State University of New York, 2003), 257-258; *Fisk News*, December 1956; *Nashville Banner*, January 6, 1960.

Carolina College in Durham (now North Carolina Central University). In 1944, he returned to his alma mater, Hampton, as a professor of education and later dean of the faculty. Wright left in 1953 to accept the presidency at Bluefield and became Fisk president effective July 1, 1957.⁵¹

Two weeks later, Bontemps dedicated his 1956-1957 annual report to President Johnson and gave the new president a history lesson on the library. The introduction said, "Since this year may be said to mark the end of an era in Fisk's history, perhaps a backward glance is appropriate."⁵² Bontemps briefly traced the development of the library from George L. White's bookcase in 1867 to the current state of the Erastus Milo Cravath Memorial Library and explained his role as a head librarian with four departments reporting to him. He said, "It is traditional in such institutions for the director or head librarian to retain a direct interest in at least one of these areas. The Fisk Library operates on this more or less standard plan with the Head Librarian assuming direct control of Acquisitions"⁵³ Bontemps also fleetingly explained how the library's special focus is African American history, literature, music, and art. This report, however, was his first in years with no additions or accessions for the Negro Collection. Most of the accessions were to the music and art collections; the George Gershwin Memorial

⁵¹ *The Tennessean*, April 27, 1957.

⁵² Annual Report, Arna Bontemps to Stephen J. Wright, July 16, 1957, box 53, folder 2, Arna Bontemps Collection.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Collection of Music established by Carl Van Vechten and the Florine Stettheimer Memorial Collection of Books about the Fine Arts.⁵⁴

From 1957 to 1960, the library received a few accession items and some small gifts as donations, but no extensive manuscript collections or archives were added to the Negro Collection. Bontemps spent those years executing a grant to process a manuscript collection with personal significance. In December 1957, Bontemps received a one thousand five-hundred-dollar grant from the John Hay Whitney Foundation to process former president Charles S. Johnson's papers. He hired a part-time clerk, Dorothy Oden, to assist with the project, purchased a thermo-fax copy machine, archival boxes, binding services, and reams of thermo-fax paper, and spent the next two years arranging, describing, and processing the collection.⁵⁵

In October 1961, W. E. B. Du Bois boarded a plane and moved to Africa to work on an Encyclopedia Africana at the behest of Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana. Before leaving the country, Du Bois arranged for Fisk to receive his entire library and collection of papers except for the materials related to Africa, which he planned to take with him for the project. It took the library a year and a half just to process and catalog all the books Du Bois donated. Three hundred and twenty-three books were received and one hundred sixty-eight were added to the Negro Collection. On February 1,

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ "Charles S. Johnson Papers," March 13, 1959, box 56, folder 8, Arna Bontemps Collection; "Expenditures," John Hay Whitney Grant, March 19, 1959, box 56, folder 8, Arna Bontemps Collection; Letter, Arna Bontemps to the New York Public Library, July 20, 1959, box 56, folder 8, Arna Bontemps Collection.

1963, Bontemps provided President Wright with a list of the duplicates he was prepared to sell or trade, but admitted that the pamphlets were still unprocessed.⁵⁶

After years of accessions and acquisitions, Bontemps began to persistently complain about the problem of space in the library. By 1962, the book tower in Cravath was completely full. In March, Bontemps asked President Wright if he would consider “solving this problem by means of creating a storage area in a suitable campus building for library books and possibly other materials (such as the files of various offices now stored in library carrels).”⁵⁷ Again in April, he submitted a detailed list of various departments and projects taking up space in the study carrels of the book tower, and said, “space has become a pressing problem in the Main Library Building.”⁵⁸ A year later, he gave the following list of needs to the president in preparation for the upcoming centennial celebration of the University’s founding:

- (1) Air conditioning
- (2) Increased stack space
- (3) Display and exhibition rooms on first floor
- (4) A new elevator and stack renovations
- (5) Restoration of murals
- (6) Overhaul of lighting system
- (7) Provision of a staff lounge and rest room⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Arna Bontemps, “The Private Library and Personal Papers of W. E. B. Du Bois,” September 20, 1961, box 56, folder 6, Arna Bontemps Collection; Aptheker, Herbert, “On Du Bois’s move to Africa,” *Monthly Review* 45, no. 7 (December 1993): 36; Nichols, *Arna Bontemps – Langston Hughes Letters*, 431; “Du Bois Collection,” January 16, 1962, box 56, folder 6, Arna Bontemps Collection; Letter, Arna Bontemps to Stephen J. Wright, February 1, 1963, box 21, folder 3, Arna Bontemps Collection.

⁵⁷ Letter, Arna Bontemps to Stephen J. Wright, March 7, 1962, box 21, folder 3, Arna Bontemps Collection.

⁵⁸ Letter, Arna Bontemps to Stephen J. Wright, April 24, 1962, box 21, folder 3, Arna Bontemps Collection.

⁵⁹ Letter, Arna Bontemps to Stephen J. Wright, May 27, 1963, box 21, folder 3, Arna Bontemps Collection.

President Wright finally took these complaints and recommendations into consideration. In October 1963, he asked Bontemps to find an affordable consultant on library buildings in the United States. Bontemps quickly listed the following as capable consultants in the region and recommended them to the President:

- (1) Dr. A. F. Kuhlman, 1908 Blakemore, former Librarian at Vanderbilt.
- (2) Dr. David Kaser, present Librarian at JUL (Vanderbilt).
- (3) Dr. William Jesse, Librarian, University of Tennessee.
- (4) Dr. Guy Lyle (who served as consultant on the new library at South Western in Memphis).
- (5) Mr. Robert Severance, Air University in Alabama, who consulted with Le Moyne on their new library.⁶⁰

Bontemps also recommended Ralph Ellsworth and Keyes Metcalf for the assignment, but Ellsworth was sick, and both were expensive. Metcalf was the former Director of the Harvard University Library and Bontemps expected him to charge a minimum of one-hundred fifty dollars a day compared to seventy-five dollars a day for the regional consultants.⁶¹

By the 1963-1964 academic year, President Wright began to increasingly ask Bontemps for his recommendations, for his descriptive statements, and his presence at important meetings with philanthropic organizations. In August 1963, Wright thanked Bontemps for his recommendation of the Encyclopedia International, congratulated him on his contribution to it, and said “you are by far our most prolific writer.”⁶² Two months later, Wright asked Bontemps to write the best descriptive statement possible concerning

⁶⁰ Letter, Arna Bontemps to Stephen J. Wright, October 2, 1963, box 21, folder 3, Arna Bontemps Collection.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Letter, Stephen J. Wright to Arna Bontemps, August 23, 1963, box 21, folder 3, Arna Bontemps Collection.

the Fisk exchange program in preparation for an on-campus visit from a Ford Foundation representative. Wright personally asked Bontemps to attend luncheons with him to meet representatives from the Ford and Rockefeller Foundation on October 14, and the executive associate of the Carnegie Corporation of New York on November 12. By 1964-1965, Wright was ready for Bontemps to appoint a successor for the library and accept a new position as Director of Public Relations at Fisk.⁶³

⁶³ Letter, Stephen J. Wright to Arna Bontemps, October 2, October 14, November 7, 1963, box 21, folder 3, Arna Bontemps Collection; Letter, Arna Bontemps to Aubrey Barwell, January 3, 1965, box 2, folder 9, Stephen J. Wright Collection.

CHAPTER V

FISK UNIVERSITY LIBRARY'S ROLE IN AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLIC HISTORY AND CULTURE, 1965 – 2016

Fisk did not have to look long or far for his successor. Down the street from Fisk, at Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State University Library, a former Fisk Library clerk-typist had recently become the first African American to graduate with a doctorate in library science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Jessie Carney Smith attended the Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina (now North Carolina A&T State University), where her classmates crowned her Miss A. and T., and she received a bachelor's degree in home economics in 1950. Smith left North Carolina to study textiles and clothing at Cornell University, but marriage and a newborn son interrupted her studies. She later enrolled at Michigan State University and in 1956 received a master's degree in child development.¹

After graduation, the Smith family moved to Nashville where she searched for a teaching position. Unable to find employment, Smith began working as a clerk-typist for the English and religion departments at Fisk. At first, she assisted Robert Hayden, professor of English and the first African American appointed to serve as a poetry consultant to the Library of Congress (now Poet Laureate), and William J. Faulkner, dean of men and dean of the chapel at Fisk. Smith was later transferred to the library and became the administrative assistant to Arna Bontemps after his secretary, Alva Johnson,

¹ Negro Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina, "The Ayantee 1950," *North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University Yearbooks*, 20, 70; Jessie Carney Smith, interview by author, Nashville, TN, October 15, 2020.

left on maternity leave. During the nine months, Bontemps and other librarians encouraged Smith to pursue a career as a librarian and in 1957, she received a master's degree in library science from George Peabody College. Since no library positions were open at Fisk, Smith began working as a catalog librarian and instructor at Tennessee State. After three years of working in the library and teaching, she received a grant-in-aid from the State of Tennessee to pursue the doctorate at University of Illinois. Smith returned to Tennessee State in 1963, completed her dissertation on "Patterns of Growth in Library Resources in Certain Land-Grant Universities," and received her doctorate in 1964.²

On July 1, 1965, Jessie Carney Smith not only became the first African American woman to hold the position as head librarian at Fisk, but she also became the first African American librarian with a doctorate at Fisk. Under her leadership, the library continued to acquire new African American manuscript collections, artifacts, and memorabilia, but it also began to play a major role in every area and aspect of public history. For the next fifty years, Smith pursued numerous grants and developed various partnerships and programs around the Negro Collection to teach both academic and non-academic audiences about African and African American history and culture. Her first major undertaking, however, involved helping design and plan for a new one million four hundred-thousand-dollar library.³

² Annual Report, Arna Bontemps to Stephen J. Wright, July 16, 1957, box 53, folder 2, Arna Bontemps Collection; Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State University, "The Tennessean 1964," *Tennessee State University Yearbooks*, 44; Jessie Carney Smith, "Patterns of Growth in Library Resources in Certain Land-grant Universities," (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois, 1964), 2; Jessie Carney Smith, interview by author, Nashville, TN, October 15, 2020.

³ "Preparation of an Application for a Grant under the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963," March 12, 1965, box 2, folder 9, Stephen J. Wright Collection.

In March 1965, President Wright applied for a grant under the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963 to provide one-third of the cost of the new library. The Rockefeller Foundation provided the remainder of the funds to build a 74,610 square foot library building that could accommodate up to 600,000 volumes and 2,000 students. Smith was responsible for this two-year project beginning in 1967. She also had to coordinate moving the library's entire collection of one-hundred-ninety thousand volumes from its second library building and its various campus departmental libraries to its third and present location. Once the new Fisk library opened for service, administrators turned the Erastus Milo Cravath Memorial Library into an office building for the University.⁴

The new Fisk University Library opened to students in the spring semester of 1970. The impressive library consisted of three floors and a part basement with heating and air conditioning throughout. The reference collection was housed on the main floor with the card catalog, a charging desk, outside and inside book returns, a reserve reading collection, and a copy machine. The main floor also housed offices for library administration and the technical processing department. The general collection was shelved on the second and third floors. The second floor of the library also featured a Special Collections room that housed "the Negro Collection, listening facilities, a micro-reader-printer, books, manuscripts, periodicals, newspapers, microfilm, and other materials," with a librarian on duty for reference and research assistance.⁵

⁴ "Preparation of an Application for a Grant under the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963," March 12, 1965, box 2, folder 9, Stephen J. Wright Collection.

⁵ "Fisk University Library Guide," January 1970, Fiskiana Collection.

The December 1969 issue of *Library Journal* featured the new Fisk University Library in a series of articles about the architecture and design of newly constructed public and academic libraries across the country. The following paragraph from the article titled “Library and Media Center for Fisk’s Future” provides a detailed description of the Special Collections Room:

On approaching the second floor, the attention of library patrons is immediately drawn to the elaborate Special Collections Room. An African influence is suggested by the selection of colors, use of patterned fabrics and floor coverings, and the items displayed. The Special Collections are separated from the general reading and stack areas by a wall of glass. The reading area of the room is surrounded on three sides by custom cabinets with grilled fronts extending from floor to ceiling. Beneath the outside windows are window seats which are upholstered in velvet fabric of colorful African prints. The two supporting columns which are in the room are completely hidden by custom units which contain display cases and slanting shelves for periodicals. Furnishings and custom work are constructed of oak. Provision has been made for microreading and for listening. The parquet floor is covered with a dark stain giving the appearance of ebony. An area rug of African design maintains the African décor.⁶

Although it was not as elaborate as the murals painted by Aaron Douglass in Cravath Library, this sketch illustrates Fisk’s continued desire to acknowledge and celebrate the African descent and American progress of its student body in the library.⁷

In 1969, Smith hired Ann Allen Shockley as Associate Librarian and Head of Special Collections. Shockley was a 1948 graduate of Fisk who received her master’s in library science from Case Western Reserve University in 1959. Prior to returning to her

⁶ “Library and Media Center for Fisk’s Future,” *Library Journal* 94 (December 1969): 4405.

⁷ *Ibid.*

alma mater, she held library positions at Delaware State College in Dover, Delaware, and Maryland State College (now the University of Maryland Eastern Shore), in Prince Anne, Maryland. Shockley was also an accomplished writer with books she coauthored on library science and fiction books she authored on her own. As Associate Librarian and Head of Special Collections, her duties included assisting with foundation grant projects, writing press releases, planning library programs, and creating exhibits. Shockley's first grant project and program began Fisk University Library and Smith's long journey through every area and aspect of public history: oral history, library/archival science, historic preservation, public programming, museum curatorship, documentary films, and digital humanities.⁸

Oral History

In 1970, Ann Shockley founded the Fisk University Library Black Oral History Program. A grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) funded the project to fill the gaps in African American history and culture through recorded interviews of people from every walk of life who could provide a fresh view or perspective on different issues, circumstances, and events related to the African American experience. Shockley made sure the project was a cooperative enterprise that included various academic departments in the University as well as Nashville's African American community. Although Shockley called the program "the most recent technique

⁸ Rita B. Dandridge, *Ann Allen Shockley: An Annotated and Primary and Secondary Bibliography* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), xv-xvi; Delaware State College, "The Statesman 1960," *Delaware State University Yearbooks*, 12; Memorandum, Ann Allen Shockley to Jessie Carney Smith, April 20, 1970, Fiskiana Collection.

in historical research,” it was not the first time the library benefited from an African American oral history program.⁹

In 1929, Charles S. Johnson began a systematic collection of slave narratives at Fisk. As head of the Social Science Institute and co-chair of the Library Committee, he supervised students and researchers who gathered stories from formerly enslaved African Americans in and around Fisk, and eventually the entire city of Nashville. Johnson reviewed the stories and saw the historical value of these first-hand accounts and expanded the effort even farther to include both rural Tennessee and Kentucky. The results were added to the Negro Collection in the library, and thirty-seven of the interviews were later published as an *Unwritten History of Slavery* in 1945.¹⁰

Shockley outlined and published her procedures for conducting the interviews in *A Manual for the Black Oral History Program* in 1971. The manual served as a best practice guide to oral history work and its public history applications. According to Shockley, the interviewer should prepare for the interview, conduct research before the interview, and develop a series of questions to guide the interview. She listed steps for each stage of the process with a reminder that the oral history program “is to augment black history, not repeat it.”¹¹ As a result, she warned interviewers not to dwell on information that could already be found in published articles and books. Shockley also

⁹ Brochure, “The Black Oral History Program,” *Fisk University Library*, Fiskiana Collection.

¹⁰ Martia Graham Goodson, “An Introductory Essay and Subject Index to Selected Interviews from the Slave Narrative Collection,” (PhD dissertation, Union Graduate School, 1977), 10-11; Ophelia Settle Egypt, *Unwritten History of Slavery: Autobiographical Account of Negro Ex-Slaves* (Nashville, TN: Fisk University, Social Science Institute, 1945); xii.

¹¹ Ann Allen Shockley, *A Manual for the Black Oral History Program* (Nashville, TN: Fisk University Library, 1971), 8.

made recommendations for the proper equipment and the appropriate etiquette for oral history interviews. She even suggested “a drink, cigarette or social talk” to “put the narrator at ease” first!¹² Shockley also offered another technique to help interviewers overcome the challenge of people with “mike-fright;” she instructed them to hide the recorder or microphone “out of sight or under a table or chair.”¹³

From 1970 to 1973, the Black Oral History Program conducted over three hundred interviews with both notable and lesser known African Americans. The list of notable African Americans included: Shirley Graham Du Bois, wife of W. E. B. Du Bois; Ida Mae Cullen, wife of Harlem Renaissance poet Countee Cullen; Aaron Douglas, prolific and renowned artist of the Harlem Renaissance and Fisk art professor; Henry “Hank” Aaron, most valuable baseball player of the National League in 1957; John Hope Franklin, a Fisk graduate and eminent African American historian and scholar; Arna Bontemps, prominent Harlem Renaissance figure, former Fisk librarian, and former Director of Public Relations at Fisk (Bontemps retired from Director of Public Relations in 1966); David Levering Lewis, Fisk alum and noted historian, biographer of W. E. B. Du Bois, and critic of Martin Luther King, Jr.; Fannie Lou Hamer, civil rights luminary; and Shirley Chisholm, first black female in United States Congress. Among the not so famous, yet still noteworthy interviewees were Dorothy Maynor, a concert artist, and Executive Director of Harlem School of Arts; Z. Alexander Looby, a prominent civil rights lawyer, former faculty member, and activist in Nashville, Tennessee; Pamela E.

¹² Ibid., 10.

¹³ Ibid.

Ice, one of the first African American television news hosts in Nashville; and Deberry McKissack, an African American architect who gave a complete history of the McKissack and McKissack family's role in Nashville's architectural history.¹⁴

Library/Archival Science

The summer before the new building opened, the library in collaboration with the dean of the college, George N. Redd, hosted a "Workshop on the Incorporation of Materials about the Negro in the Curriculum of the Liberal Arts College." Held from August 4 to August 15, 1969, this two-week workshop was designed to educate social science and humanities professors about African American history and how to incorporate it into their curriculum. Thirty-two scholars and professors from nineteen states, the Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia experienced a course outlined by the following four objectives:

1. To identify the major sources about the contributions of the Negro to American and world civilizations.
2. To familiarize participants with representative materials through lectures by experts, artists, and writers, through community contacts, forums, and discussions, and through concentrated independent and group study.
3. To devise procedures for utilizing these materials for the broadening and the enrichment of existing courses in the social sciences and the humanities.
4. To devise criteria and procedures for the development of new courses and programs dealing with Negro Life

¹⁴ Veronica Tucker, *An Annotated Bibliography of the Fisk University Library's Black Oral History Collection* (Nashville, TN: Fisk University, 1974), 1-2.

and Culture, and to develop representative outlines and syllabi for such courses.¹⁵

Redd achieved all four objectives through lectures and group projects. Jessie Carney Smith opened the conference with a lecture on the “Great Research Collections on Negro Life and Culture” to satisfy the first objective. Arna Bontemps lectured on the “Contributions of the Negro to American Culture,” and Aaron Douglas on “Negro Artists and Their Works,” to help realize objective two. The group projects helped Redd achieve the third and fourth objectives. Participants were broken up into four groups to present reports on one of the following projects:

1. A selected Bibliography for the study of the Harlem Renaissance;
2. An outline for a course in Afro-American History;
3. Criteria for revision and addition of courses in Negro Culture in the Liberal Arts curriculum; and
4. Criteria for developing programs of black studies.¹⁶

Redd noted that the group projects and the overall experience also achieved one unforeseen objective; “the development of wholesome human relations and warm friendships through living and eating together; exchanging viewpoints and sharing common understandings and problems.”¹⁷ More than half of the participants in attendance were from predominately white institutions (PWIs) across all sections of the country.¹⁸

¹⁵ George N. Redd, *Workshop on the Incorporation of Materials about the Negro in the Curriculum of the Liberal Arts College, August 4 – August 15, 1969* (Nashville, TN: Fisk University, 1970), 9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

The next summer, Smith introduced the Institute on the Selection, Organization, and Use of Materials by and About the Negro in the new library building. Sponsored by a grant under the Higher Education Act, the library hosted librarians from academic, public, and special libraries on campus from June 15 to July 24, 1970. For six weeks, participants were taught everything involved with the administration and management of Special Negro Collections. Handbooks and manuals were furnished to guide “those who have recently become curators or librarians in charge of black collections.”¹⁹ According to *A Handbook for the Administration of Special Negro Collections* written by Shockley, “this segment of library science [was] relatively new.”²⁰ She noted that very little had been written about Special Negro Collections and “unfortunately, the conservative library school programs have not yet foreseen the ultimate need for such a course of study in their programs.”²¹

Shockley, however, understood how these collections could assist in helping African Americans, and white Americans, to better understand the multiple contributions from African American history and culture. The following two paragraphs from Shockley’s manual clearly illustrates the pressing need for this type of institute at the time:

The Negroes’ revolutionary role in American society as a minority group challenging old established political, social, economic, and ethnic concepts has focused an intensely

¹⁹ Ann Allen Shockley, *A Handbook for the Administration of Special Negro Collections* (Nashville, TN: Fisk University, 1970), i.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

concentrated interest in black research. The field of research is dependent upon libraries.

Predominately white colleges and universities, which previously had only a minimum amount of information on the Negro, are now hastily attempting to organize Afro-American libraries. These are being established to coincide with black studies programs, to cool militant black students who are angrily aware that their black writers, leaders, and scholars, should too have an equally honorable place on library shelves, and to aid the young white researchers who have found the black role in society a lucrative field for quick scholarly recognition.²²

Shockley also explored the problems linked to the fact many of the collections were being developed by people who had little to no knowledge about African American history, literature, and culture.²³

The following summer, Smith designed another library institute, funded by the Higher Education Act. The Institute in Black Studies Librarianship was held for academic, public, and special research librarians from June 28 to August 6, 1971, with a theme titled “Building Collections of Black Literature.” Twenty-five participants were selected from applications around the country to learn how “to develop collections of Black literature, evaluate Black media, interpret such materials to users, and coordinate the services of the library with the requirements of the new curricular and research programs in Black studies and related areas.”²⁴ Applicants had to meet the following requirements for eligibility to attend the institute:

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Brochure, “Institute in Black Studies Librarianship,” June 28-August 6, 1971, Fiskiana Collection.

(a) possess a master's degree in library science, or the equivalent; (b) offer evidence from an appropriate administrative officer that he can benefit from the specialized instruction of the Institute and that he can immediately apply his new experience to the library; (c) show evidence of continuing employment as a librarian or archivist in an academic, public, or special research library.²⁵

According to the brochure, special attention was given to applicants who were from institutions actively building collections to strengthen Black studies programs, from libraries for the disabled and disadvantaged, and from libraries with large Special Black Collections already, or from libraries in the process of creating one. The brochure made sure to note that Fisk was “in compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color or national origin.”²⁶

Smith gathered a dynamic and diverse group of staff members, lecturers, and consultants for this institute. Her staff of librarians and scholars, besides herself and Shockley, included: Jean Elder Cazort, assistant librarian for technical services and an assistant professor of library science at Fisk; Leslie M. Collins, longtime Fisk professor of English and friend of the Harlem Renaissance; David Driskell, professor and chair of the art department; Casper Jordan, an assistant professor of library service at Atlanta University; and Daniel Williams, archivist at Tuskegee Institute. Smith's lecturers and consultants included: Ernest Kaiser, a cataloger for the Schomburg Collection at the New York Public Library; Dorothy B. Porter, librarian for the Moorland Foundation at Howard University; Rose Agree, a children's librarian for Valley Stream Public Schools

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

in Valley Stream New Jersey; Vincent Harding, the director for the Institute for the Black World in Atlanta, Georgia; Erin K. Welsch, a social studies librarian from the University of Wisconsin, Madison; Nikki Giovanni, a Fisk alumna and famous poet and author; and Arna Bontemps, who had retired from Public Relations and was now a writer-in-residence at Fisk.²⁷

Smith hosted the Institute in Black Studies Librarianship in a similar way with various themes for four consecutive summers (1971-1974), but during the 1972-1973 academic year, she experimented with a pilot project “designed to implement and test the concept of in-service training for librarians, using Black Studies Librarianship as the testing ground.”²⁸ Funded by a Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) grant, Smith selected eight interns to work in Fisk University Library from September 5 to December 15, 1972. To assess the results, interns received pre-testing for subject competencies, in-service training, counseling, and on-the-job experience for fifteen weeks with post-testing and an evaluation at the end. Smith felt librarians would best gain knowledge of how to provide a wide variety of service needs in Black Studies Librarianship through day-to-day routine operations. She involved the interns in specific subject areas or stations in the library including Acquisitions, Cataloging and Processing, Special Collections, Ephemera, Manuscripts and Archives, Reference, Music Resource Center, Race Relations Information Center, Black Oral History, and Black Art and Graphics.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Brochure, “An Internship in Black Studies Librarianship,” September 5 – December 15, 1972, Fiskiana Collection.

²⁹ Jessie Carney Smith, *Narrative Evaluation Report on the Program: Internship in Black Studies Librarianship* (Nashville, TN: Fisk University, 1972), 1-3.

To give interns additional exposure to various African American collections, field trips were taken to Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama, Atlanta University in Georgia, Howard University, the National Archives and the Library of Congress in Washington, District of Columbia, and the 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library. The interns also attended an annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History held in Cincinnati, Ohio, that year. They were also expected to have a capstone trip to examine various library collections and cultural centers in Africa, but the trip had to be cancelled. Overall, a variety of learning experiences were provided through field trips, processing manuscript collections, interviewing people for the Black Oral History program, cataloging ephemera, and preparing exhibits. The workshops and institutes of the 1970s had an invaluable impact on the emergence of African American studies as a viable and rich area of academic life and served as models for workshops in what would become acknowledged as “public history” in the years to come.³⁰

Historic Preservation

During the summer of 1970, the National Park Service in collaboration with the Tennessee Historical Commission and the Historic Sites Federation of Tennessee conducted a Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) for Jubilee Hall and added it to the public record of surveys “studying architecture of historic importance and a notable collection of drawings, photographs, and documents which preserve and proclaim the heritage of our manmade environment.”³¹ Under the direction of James C. Massey, the

³⁰ Ibid., 6; Jessie Carney Smith, interview by author, Nashville, TN, October 15, 2020.

³¹ Harley J. McKee, *The Historic American Buildings Survey: Recording Historic Buildings* (Washington, DC: U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1970), 1.

Chief of HABS, and Roy C. Pledger, the project supervisor from Texas A&M University, a team consisting of a historian, student architects, and a photographer from the HABS field office at Vanderbilt University arrived on campus to measure and record Fisk's oldest building and the South's first permanent building constructed exclusively for the education of African Americans.³²

The HABS team relied heavily on input from Smith and the librarians at Fisk for primary and secondary sources to complete the survey. According to the HABS handbook, the history of a building, "whether brief or extensive, is always important; it forms an essential part of the survey records. The physical history of a structure, its ownership, associated people and events – all should be related accurately, on the basis of documented evidence."³³ Based on the survey, the library provided the following primary and secondary sources for the survey's historical information:

"After Forty Years: The Jubilee Singers," *Fisk University News*, II, no. 5 (October 1911). Entire issue.

Catalogue of Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee, 1876-1880, inclusive.

Collins, Leslie, editor. "Fisk University. An Informal History of a People in Transition, in News and Views, 1866-1954." Nashville, 1954. On deposit at the Fisk University Main Library.

Eaton, James N. "The Life of Erastus Milo Cravath." Unpublished Master's thesis, Fisk University, 1959.

³² Roy C. Pledger, *Historic American Buildings Survey, Fisk University, Jubilee Hall* (Washington, DC: U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1970), 9.

³³ McKee, *The Historic American Buildings Survey: Recording Historic Buildings*, 17.

Fisk University. History, Building and Site, and Services of Dedication at Nashville, Tennessee, January 1st, 1876. New York: Trustees of Fisk University, 1876.³⁴

In 1974, the library also helped James W. Sheire, historian for the National Park Service, research, write, and prepare a successful individual National Register of Historic Places nomination for Jubilee Hall. The National Park Service designated the hall as a National Historic Landmark in 1975. The library recommended the following papers and books to Sheire as major bibliographical references for the nomination:

Bond, Horace Mann, "The American Missionary Association Colleges and the Great Society," *Inauguration of Herman Lodge Long as Ninth President at Talladega College*, 1965.

Bullock, Henry Allen, *A History of Negro Education in the South* (New York, 1967).

Fisk University History Building and Site, and Services of Dedication at Nashville, Tennessee, January 1, 1876 (New York: Trustees of Fisk University, 1876).

Holmes, Dwight O. W., *The Evaluation of the Negro College* (New York, 1969).³⁵

Three years later, in 1977, Smith and the librarians provided reference services for a successful nomination to designate the entire campus as a National Historic District. Although the nomination form states it was prepared by Fisk architect, Berle Pilsk, and Percy Looney, assistant to Fisk's new president, Walter Leonard, Fisk librarians played an important role in describing how the property met the criteria for historic

³⁴ Pledger, *Historic American Buildings Survey, Fisk University, Jubilee Hall*, 6-7.

³⁵ James Sheire, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, Jubilee Hall*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1970), 3.

designation.³⁶ According to Smith, the library had to provide information related to all sixty-seven structures listed as contributing to the character of the district.³⁷

Aside from historic property surveys and nominations, the library has also provided research and reference assistance for the Historical Markers Program of the Tennessee Historical Commission. Since the “Tennessee Historical Commission has aggressively expanded its historical marker program to include significant places and people in African American history,” Fisk University Library has researched and provided resources to write the historical text for several markers.³⁸ The library contributed to the following historical markers around campus and the city of Nashville: Academic Building at Fisk University, Arna Wendell Bontemps, Bombing of the Z. Alexander Looby Home, Carl Van Vechten Art Gallery, Cravath Hall, Ella Sheppard (Moore), Fisk Memorial Chapel, The Harris Music Building, James Weldon Johnson Home, The John Wesley Work Home, Jubilee Hall, The Little Theatre, the Nashville Sit-Ins, Richardson House, Samuel Allen McElwee, Talley-Brady Hall, and Thomas W.

³⁶ Walter Leonard was named the ninth president of Fisk University in 1976. Stephen J. Wright resigned in 1966 to become president of the United Negro College Fund. Wright’s vice-president, James Lawson, a Fisk alumnus and professor of physics, became acting president in 1966 and was formally inaugurated as president in 1968. Lawson led the University until his health began to fail, and he retired in 1975. See *Jackson Sun*, May 10, 1966; *The Tennessean*, October 7, 1968; *The Tennessean*, November 4, 1976.

³⁷ Berle Pilsck and Percy Looney, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, Fisk University Historic District*, (Nashville, TN: October 1977), item 8, 2-6; Jessie Carney Smith, interview by author, Nashville, TN, October 15, 2020.

³⁸ Carroll Van West, *Tennessee’s Historic Landscapes: A Traveler’s Guide* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 434.

Talley. More recently, the library assisted with the text for a historical marker for Smith's former boss and former dean of the Fisk chapel, William J. Faulkner.³⁹

Public Programming

In February 1981, Smith began offering monthly public programs to “Nashville’s out-of-school adult public and to students and faculty in local educational institutions.”⁴⁰ These programs gave the local community an opportunity to examine various themes in the African American experience. Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and entitled “Themes in the Black American Experience,” this Learning Library Program helped attendees understand the humanistic values of the African American experience through lectures, multimedia presentations, exhibits, and books. Smith designed the two-and-a-half-year program to extend the University and its library collection to the community.⁴¹

The first year of public programs were focused on the sub-theme “The Harlem Renaissance Remembered.” Smith chose this theme in honor of former Fisk librarian Arna Bontemps who had published *The Harlem Renaissance Remembered: Essays* only a short time before his death in 1973. In celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Harlem Renaissance, the program kicked off with a by-invitation-only “Harlem Renaissance Party.” Special guests were invited to dress in the fashion of the twenties

³⁹ Jessie Carney Smith, interview by author, Nashville, TN, October 15, 2020; *The Daily Herald*, March 27, 2019.

⁴⁰ Brochure, “Themes in the Black American Experience: A Learning Library Program,” (Nashville, TN: Fisk University, 1981), 3.

⁴¹ Ibid.

and enjoy good food, drinks, and entertainment. The public was invited to a “program on ‘Precursors of the Renaissance’ . . . presented by Dr. Arlene Clift and Dr. Betty Overton of Fisk’s English faculty and Gloria C. Johnson of the English faculty at Tennessee State University.”⁴² The next month Smith had Hugh Gloster, president of Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, lecture in the Appleton Room of Jubilee Hall one night and at Green Hills Public Library the next night. Both of his lectures titled “A Langston Hughes Evening” were open and free to the public after traditional work hours to ensure the program reached as many people as possible.⁴³

Smith also made sure the program reached the public through various forms of mass media. *The Tennessean* featured articles inviting the public to the programs throughout the two years. More than a dozen articles about the Learning Library Program appeared in the newspaper between 1981 and 1983. On February 23, 1981, the headline on the first page of the “Living” section read “Fisk Resurrects Harlem Renaissance.” The full-page article opened with a qualitative comparison of Anglo-American and Irish writers to the African American writers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance. According to the reporter:

During the 1920s, while the likes of young Ernest Hemingway, James Joyce and others were frolicking and fretting on Paris’ Left Bank, writers and artist like W. E. B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, Aaron Douglas and others were giving vitality to the Harlem Renaissance, the greatest fusion blast of writing and artwork by black Americans the U. S. had known until that time.⁴⁴

⁴² *The Tennessean*, February 23, 1981.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Smith also had the programs videotaped and audiotaped for distribution and replay later. She sent local public libraries a copy of the videotape and the audio tapes were later aired on two public radio stations; WPLN-FM (90.3 on the dial) and the Fisk station at the time, WRFN-FM (88 on the dial).⁴⁵

Smith's second year of public programming focused on "Perspectives in Black Music." From 1982 to 1983, her second series of lectures, exhibits, and presentations explored African American hymns, spirituals, gospel music, and secular music, including ragtime, blues, and jazz. Smith opened the second year's programming in a similar way. She hosted a by-invitation-only black-tie party titled "An Evening of Black Music" and a public lecture on the Fisk Jubilee Singers. The next month, on Wednesday, March 10, 1982, Georgia Ryder of Norfolk State University gave a public lecture on "Negro Spirituals: Story and Song," and the audience was entertained by the Fisk Jubilee Singers, directed by Matthew Kennedy.⁴⁶

Smith closed the series of Learning Library Programs with a special three-week-long exhibit titled "Of Minnie the Moocher and Me" from Monday, February 28 to Friday, March 18, 1983. The exhibit of one hundred and four personal items highlighted the life and career of America's legendary entertainer Cab Calloway. Calloway was a regular performer in the Cotton Club of Harlem, New York, and gained national popularity in the 1930s and 1940s as an actor, band leader, dancer, and jazz singer. To close the exhibit, Smith hosted a public program on Sunday, March 13, 1983, with a

⁴⁵ *The Tennessean*, February 23, 1981.

⁴⁶ *The Tennessean*, March 7, 1982.

lecture from none other than Cab Calloway. Known for his zoot suits and popular songs like “Minnie the Moocher” and Hi-De-Ho, Calloway charmed the audience with his words and voice. He even got the entire audience, including President Walter Leonard, to engage in “his trademark call-and-response, ‘hi-de-hi-de-hi-de-ho!’”⁴⁷ Calloway admitted he was not an elegant speaker, but he would be happy to meet and greet everyone.⁴⁸

In 1983, Smith launched a new state-wide program to promote black folk culture. Funded in part by a grant from NEH, the Folk Arts Program, and the Tennessee Arts Commission, an annual Black Folklife Festival and a program titled “Making Do: Black Folk Arts in Tennessee” reflected the common practice in the African American community, where historically quilters, woodcarvers, sculptors and other traditional artisans have taken what they had to create what they wanted or needed. The project, including the annual Festival, enlightened Tennesseans about the folk arts of African American people in the state and showed the influence of African, Caribbean, and other cultures in their work. Smith and the library staff also solicited the names and addresses of African American folk artisans throughout the state to “preserve important traditional elements in Tennessee culture which already have potential benefits to family life, to the general public, and to Homecoming activities.”⁴⁹ For three years, the Black Folklife Festival gave the artisans they found an opportunity to make their finished works available to the public as a demonstration of the depth of traditional arts in Tennessee,

⁴⁷ *The Tennessean*, March 14, 1983.

⁴⁸ Program, “Perspectives in Black Music: A Learning Library Program,” March 13, 1983, Fiskiana Collection; George R. Coverdale, Jr., *Cab Calloway, Me, and Minnie the Moocher* (Pittsburgh, PA: Dorrance Publishing Co, 2017), 17.

⁴⁹ Program, “Introduction: Third Annual Folklife Festival,” 1986, Fiskiana Collection.

and their work encouraged younger generations to learn those skills, thereby preserving African American folk arts and culture in Tennessee.⁵⁰

Museum Curatorship

Although Shores, Schomburg, Yocum, and Bontemps set up countless exhibits in the Negro Collection room and lobby of Cravath, and both Shockley and Howse curated numerous exhibits for the Special Collections room in the new building, the library never had a dedicated room or gallery to display its priceless collections of African American art, artifacts, music, and literature. In collaboration with the art department, a brand-new art gallery opened on the third floor of the Fisk University Library in 1992. The new gallery, named in honor of Aaron Douglas, opened for “public perusal of African art and African American art” in celebration of Black History Month on February 18.⁵¹ The first exhibit featured African “masks, musical instruments, textiles and art from the Liff collection.”⁵² The Aaron Douglas Gallery became a regular listing on *The Tennessean’s* “Calendar of Events” and “Arts Calendar” from 1992 to 1999. In April 1992, the gallery presented another exhibition open and free to the public featuring the work of Fisk art faculty members and the University Librarian, Jessie Carney Smith. This exhibit included “outdoor scenery and landscapes on canvas by LiFran Fort and photography by Earl

⁵⁰ Ibid.; *The Tennessean*, October 12, 1984; *The Tennessean*, October 5, 1986; Jessie Carney Smith, interview by author, Nashville, TN, October 15, 2020.

⁵¹ *The Tennessean*, November 14, 1991.

⁵² Ibid.

Hooks.”⁵³ Smith curated a special section of the gallery and related the photographs, paintings, and sculptures to her book, *Notable Black American Women* (1992).⁵⁴

In 1994, Smith invited the public to the Aaron Douglas Gallery for a February 8 opening and indefinite closing of an exhibit featuring the Cyrus L. Baldrige collection donated to the library in 1929. In 1997, again, “a dozen of pieces from the University’s renowned collection of African art and 1920s drawings by American artist Cyrus L. Baldrige” were on display in the Aaron Douglas gallery and open to the public. At the same time, the library opened the “first public display of abstractions based on African masks by Gregory Ridley, adjunct professor of art” in the Staff Lounge, later renamed the “Bontemps Room,” on the lower level of the library. On display on the first floor, was a “donated group of pastel portraits of African Americans by F. Winold Reiss, inventor of Art Deco style.”⁵⁵ Many of his portraits include Fisk graduates, faculty members, and friends including Roland Hayes, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, W. E. B. Du Bois, Charles S. Johnson, and Jean Toomer, and they are still on display in the library today.⁵⁶

In 1998, Ann Allen Shockley retired from Fisk. Her assistant in Special Collections at the time, Beth Madison Howse, became the new Special Collections Librarian at Fisk University. Howse was a fourth-generation graduate of Fisk. Her maternal great grandmother, Ella Sheppard, enrolled in 1868 and became one of the original nine Jubilee Singers. Howse followed in her mother, grandmother, and great

⁵³ *The Tennessean*, April 12, 1992.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *The Tennessean*, November 2, 1997.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

grandmother's footsteps and graduated with a bachelor's degree from Fisk in 1965. She later received a master's degree in library science from George Peabody Library School and began working in Special Collections at her alma mater under the direction of Shockley in 1970. By 1998, Howse had intimate knowledge of the entire collection; according to one historian, "she knew the location of everything everyone was seeking."⁵⁷ Over the years, she received recognition from countless historians and researchers in their book acknowledgements and footnotes. The list is endless, but here are just a few: Richard H. Brodhead's *The Journals of Charles W. Chesnut* (1993), David Levering Lewis's *When Harlem was in Vogue* (1997), Jessie Carney Smith's *Notable Black American Men* (1999), Susan F. Rossen's *African Americans in Art: Selections from the Art Institute of Chicago* (1999), and Mary S. Hoffschwelle's *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South* (2006).⁵⁸

Documentary Films

In 2000, Howse led an effort to help the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) present not only her great grandmother's history, but the institution's history to a national audience on television for the first time. *Jubilee Singers: Sacrifice and Glory* aired as part

⁵⁷ Crystal A. deGregory, "Beth Howse: The Pricelessness of an Archivist," Association of Black Women Historians: Black Women Making History, <http://abwh.org/2020/04/22/beth-howse-the-pricelessness-of-an-archivist/> (accessed October 15, 2020).

⁵⁸ Jessie Carney Smith, interview by author, Nashville, TN, October 15, 2020; *The Rutherford Courier*, February 3, 1994; Richard H. Brodhead, ed., *The Journals of Charles W. Chesnut* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), i; David L. Lewis, *When Harlem was in Vogue* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), xiii; Jessie Carney Smith, *Notable Black American Men* (Detroit, MI: Gale Publishing, 1999), x; Susan F. Rossen, ed., *African Americans in Art: Selections from the Art Institute of Chicago* (Chicago, IL: Art Institute of Chicago, 1999), 267; Hoffschwelle, *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South*, xvi. Also see Appendix B for list of "Researchers Using Special Collections, August 2001 – May 2002," Fiskiana Collection.

of *The American Experience* series of documentaries on PBS at 8 p.m. on Monday, May 1, 2000. PBS replayed the documentary on Tuesday at 1 a.m. and 3 a.m., Wednesday at 11 p.m., and again on Sunday at 10 p.m. PBS has re-aired the documentary numerous times since 2000. Although the documentary features “stunning recreations of their historic performances and a rich spiritual score” by actors and actresses, the entire story line was drawn “on letters and diaries” from the Jubilee Singers in the library’s Special Collections.⁵⁹ Most of the original imagery displayed throughout the documentary were photographs and letters from the library’s “Jubilee Singers Archives (1858-1924).” Listed in the credits for the documentary were Beth Howse, Fisk University Archivist; Fisk University Archives; Fisk University Galleries; and the 1998/1999 Fisk Jubilee Singers, with Paul Kwami as director. Longtime Fisk history professor Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr. and Fisk alumnus and historian John Hope Franklin were also listed as advisors on the film.⁶⁰

Fisk University officially changed the name of the library the same year *Jubilee Singers: Sacrifice and Glory* aired on national television. “Since 2000, it has been named in honor of prominent Fisk alumnus and world-renown historian John Hope Franklin and his wife Aurelia, who was his Fisk classmate and later a librarian.”⁶¹ Before PBS aired *Jubilee Singers: Sacrifice and Glory*, it aired a documentary in 1997 titled *First Person Singular: John Hope Franklin*. John Hope Franklin, former Secretary and Assistant in

⁵⁹ PBS Home Video, *Jubilee Singers: Sacrifice and Glory*, VHS, directed by Liewellyn Smith (Alexandria, VA: PBS Home Video, 2000).

⁶⁰ Ibid.; *The Tennessean*, April 27, 2000.

⁶¹ Jessie Carney Smith, “From Andrew Carnegie to John Hope Franklin: Library Development at Fisk University,” *Tennessee Libraries* 59, no 4 (2009): 2.

Fisk Library's Preparations Department, 1935 Fisk graduate, former chairman of the Fisk Board of Trustees, and leading African American historian and scholar, discussed his seminal work *From Slavery to Freedom* (1947), and his personal challenges growing up as an African American in America. Ten years later, when PBS Home Video released this documentary on DVD, the jacket cover said Franklin was "the historian who rewrote U.S. history."⁶² No more appropriate name could have been chosen for an academic library that has served as a primary source for accurate and complete information on the African American experience in America than the John Hope and Aurelia Elizabeth Franklin Library.⁶³

Digital Humanities

In 2004, Smith partnered with the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) and the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation to host a two-day conference sponsored by its "Rosenwald Schools Initiative." The National Trust formed the initiative in 2002 after it received a growing number of financial appeals for assistance and requests for information on Rosenwald Schools throughout the South. Likewise, the Franklin Library began to see an increased interest and number of requests from Rosenwald school graduates, historical societies, preservationists, and historical commissions for information about schools listed in the Julius Rosenwald Fund Collection. From Friday, May 21 to Saturday, May 22, Fisk and the NTHP invited

⁶² PBS Home Video, *First Person Singular: John Hope Franklin*, DVD, directed by Dick Young, (Alexandria, VA: PBS Home Video, 2007).

⁶³ *Ibid.*; *The Tennessean*, August 31, 1997.

preservationists, community activists, and scholars on campus to focus on the preservation and recognition of these schools in a conference titled “Reclaiming Rosenwald Schools: Preserving a Legacy.”⁶⁴

The conference opened with registration and a continental breakfast in the Franklin Library. Guests were also invited to view exhibits displayed on the second floor of the library from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the first day and from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. on the second day. According to the program, the exhibitors included, but were not limited to, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Alabama Historical Commission and Catawba Trace Commission, The Brevard Rosenwald School, and the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). The opening session, held in the Fisk Memorial Chapel, featured presentations from John Hildreth, director of the Southern Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Charles Fuget, Interim President of Fisk University, and members of Julius Rosenwald’s family.⁶⁵

During the first group of concurrent educational sessions, MTSU professors of history, Mary S. Hoffschwelle and Adonijah Bakari discussed the origin and concept of the rural school building program by Booker T. Washington and Julius Rosenwald. They also examined the issues surrounding Rosenwald Schools and their ties to self-help strategies and community activism. Smith and Howse concurrently presented an introduction to the “Resources of Fisk University Library” as “an overview of the holdings of the John Hope and Aurelia Elizabeth Franklin Library, specifically the

⁶⁴ Program, “Reclaiming Rosenwald Schools: Preserving a Legacy,” May 21-22, 2004, Fiskiana Collection.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Rosenwald collection in the archives.”⁶⁶ Hoffschwelle and Bakari repeated their presentation during the second group of concurrent sessions, and Carroll Van West, director of the Center for Historic Preservation at MTSU, served as one of three experts who ran a concurrent workshop on how to nominate Rosenwald Schools to the National Register of Historic Places.⁶⁷

The “Reclaiming Rosenwald Schools: Preserving a Legacy” conference quickly led to the Franklin Library’s development of the first database to support digital scholarship and research on the Rosenwald Schools. A few months later, in October 2004, Smith officially received one of the few grants made possible nationally by the Save America’s Treasures program. In the grant application Smith said:

Many of the buildings have disappeared, but there is considerable interest in identifying and preserving the surviving buildings. For example, the state historic preservation offices of North Carolina and Arkansas are attempting statewide surveys of Rosenwald schools. In 2001 Mississippi placed the Rosenwald Schools on its list of 10 Most Endangered Historic Places, and in 2002 the National Trust for Historic Preservation placed them on the list of America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. Current interest will be stimulated even more by a two-day conference “Reclaiming Rosenwald Schools: Preserving a Legacy,” cosponsored by the National Trust’s Rosenwald Schools Initiative, held in Nashville, Tennessee, May 21-22, 2004, on the historic campus of Fisk University.

The primary central source for documentation of the Rosenwald Negro Rural Schools project is the Julius

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Rosenwald fund Archives processed and housed in the Special Collections of Fisk.⁶⁸

The Franklin Library received sixty-five thousand dollars to digitize and preserve images of African American schools in the Julius Rosenwald Fund Collection. The grant also funded development of a database that would allow users to search the library's Rosenwald Fund Card Files for images and data related to specific schools in the collection. Over five thousand images of Rosenwald Schools were digitized in both high and low resolution and descriptive data were manipulated to give users the ability to find a school by state, county, year, building type, building plans, and/or name. Although the grant was scheduled to expire in December 2006, Smith received a one-year extension, and the database was finally ready for public access and posted on the Franklin Library's website in 2008.⁶⁹

Semicentennial and Sesquicentennial Celebrations

On December 4, 2015, Fisk University held a special program for Jessie Carney Smith titled "Celebrating 50 Years of Service to the Library at Fisk University." As the University Librarian and later Dean of the John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library and Camille Cosby Distinguished Chair in the Humanities, Smith collected and preserved African American history and culture at Fisk for fifty years. She also wrote or edited over

⁶⁸ Application, Save America's Treasures: FY 2004 Historic Preservation Fund Grants to Preserve Nationally Significant Intellectual and Cultural Artifacts and Historic Structures and Sites, May 17, 2004, Fiskiana Collection.

⁶⁹ Letter, Joseph T. Wallis to Charles R. Fuget, October 12, 2004, Fiskiana Collection; Letter, Jessie C. Smith to Amanda Fowler, June 7, 2006, Fiskiana Collection; Final Project Report, *Federal Save America's Treasures Grant, Final Grant Report for the Period January 1, 2005-December 31, 2007*, March 26, 2008, Fiskiana Collection.

thirty books during her career, including *Black Academic Libraries and Research Collections: An Historical Survey* (1977), *Black Heroes of the 20th Century* (1997), *Epic Lives: One Hundred Black Women Who Made a Difference* (1992), *Ethnic Genealogy: A Research Guide* (1983), *Freedom Facts and Firsts* (2009), four volumes of *Black Firsts*, four volumes of the *Encyclopedia of African American Popular Culture*, three volumes of *Black American Women*, and two volumes of *Notable Black American Men*, *Black Women of the Harlem Renaissance* (2014), and the *Encyclopedia of African American Business* (2006). She did all this while securing multiple grants to host programs and conferences, serving on various university committees, and developing special workshops on African American art, civil rights, folklore, genealogy, history, library and archival science, music, and other topics.⁷⁰

The semicentennial celebration included tributes to Smith, remarks from faculty members, remarks from the library staff, and a presentation of gifts. Among those who paid tribute to Smith were Carroll Van West, Tennessee State Historian, MTSU history professor, and director of the Center for Historic Preservation at MTSU; Steve Eberhardt, HBCU Preservation Project Coordinator for LYRASIS; Andrea Jackson, former Fisk archivist and head of Atlanta University's Archives Research Center; Margaret Turner, former assistant director for the Learning Library Program and Senior Development Officer for the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture; and Christa Hardy, who completed her doctoral dissertation on Smith, titled "Piecing a Quilt: Jessie Carney Smith and the making of African American Women's

⁷⁰ Program, "Jessie Carney Smith: Celebrating 50 Years of Service to the Library at Fisk University," December 4, 2015, Fiskiana Collection.

History,” in 2010. Shortly after the celebration, Smith announced her retirement, but the Provost and Vice-President of Academic Affairs asked her to stay until the University found a successor.⁷¹

The next year, in commemoration of Jubilee Day and as part of the University’s one-hundred fifty-year celebration, a Fisk Jubilee Singers exhibit opened to the public in the Special Collections room. DeLisa Minor Harris, a Fisk alumna who completed her master’s degree in library science at the University of North Texas, curated the exhibit and became the reference librarian for Special Collections earlier that year. Sadly, Beth Howse passed away on September 26, 2012, and two librarians served as Head of Special Collections after her death: Aisha Johnson (2103-2014) and Chantel Clark (2014-2016). On Thursday, October 6, 2016, the sesquicentennial exhibit opened with a song from the Fisk Jubilee Singers as they stood on the spiral staircase leading to Special Collections. The exhibit featured interactive activities, the Singers original steamer trunks, George L. White’s violin, and other never displayed articles from the library’s collection.⁷²

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² *The Tennessean*, October 28, 2016; Jessie Carney Smith, interview by author, Nashville, TN, October 15, 2020; DeLisa Minor Harris, interview by author, Nashville, TN, October 18, 2020.

CONCLUSION

FISK UNIVERSITY LIBRARY'S POWER AND PRODUCTION OF HISTORY

A history of the Fisk University Library reflects the historical agency of one historically black college and university and its desire to construct an accurate historical narrative for African Americans, both inside and outside of the academy. This research also demonstrates the positive effects of empowering a marginalized community to tell their own story, encouraging collaboration within a beloved community, and embracing inclusion to challenge Anglo-American dominance. This history clearly shows the need for underrepresented and under-studied groups to create their own historical and cultural institutions to include themselves in a shared national history and identity. Over the course of one hundred fifty years, Fisk University Library progressed through each of Michel-Rolph Trouillot's four moments of historical production. In various stages, the library used its power to deconstruct a false historical narrative by producing a new narrative based on African and African American contributions to local, state, national, and global societies.

Stage I: The Moment of Fact Assembly (The Making of Archives)

The moment of fact assembly began with George L. White's bookshelf in the old U. S. Army barracks. In the wake of the Civil War, White introduced newly freed slaves to books about Africa, its tribes and traditions, and its kings and queens, when most were still impoverished and barely literate. Although the Jubilee Singers and various donors played a critical role in the library's early development of primary sources, Fisk

sociologists George Edmund Haynes and Charles S. Johnson were instrumental in directing the library's focus on sources by and about Africans and African Americans. As African American sociologists, they needed these sources for academic research, but they also knew these sources would challenge racist and inferior belief systems. In 1923, as editor-in-chief of *Opportunity*, Charles S. Johnson asserted that "accurate and dependable facts can correct inaccurate and slanderous assertions that have gone unchallenged," but more importantly they would "inculcate a disposition to see enough of interest and beauty of their own lives to rid themselves of the inferior feeling of being a Negro."¹ Johnson and Louis Shores brought Schomburg to Fisk for a specific purpose; to assemble a large collection of books with facts about the African and African American experience. After Schomburg assembled a core collection of four thousand books, Carl White doubled this number with a wise acquisition from the Y.M.C.A. Graduate School, and Arna Bontemps amassed one of the world's finest collections of manuscripts and archives related to African American history and culture.

Stage II: The Moment of Fact Creation (The Making of Sources)

The moment of fact creation and the making of sources began as early as 1929 with Charles S. Johnson's compilation of slave narratives. Like Alrutheus A. Taylor with *Reconstruction*, Johnson sought to change prevailing paternalistic historical interpretations of slavery. During the Progressive Era (1880s to 1920s), white scholars "revived the fundamentals of the old proslavery argument – interpreting slavery as a

¹ Charles S. Johnson, ed. *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life*, 1, no. 1 (January 1923): n.p.

benign school in which blacks fared better than as freedmen.”² Johnson set out to collect first-hand accounts from the slaves themselves to create a historical record of authentic facts concerning the African American experience during slavery. Although the project was initiated under the auspices of the sociology department, it continues to serve the library as an original source of information. Shockley’s Black Oral History Program was another important moment of fact creation and the making of sources for the library. Her project was specifically created “for the purpose of collecting and preserving unwritten history that [had] been lost or ignored, and to document the black experience.”³ With over three hundred interviews conducted in a three year period, the program succeeded in creating a wealth of primary sources for scholarly research.

Stage III: The Moment of Fact Retrieval (The Making of Narratives)

The moment of fact retrieval and the making of narratives can clearly be seen in the library’s effort to make the Negro Collection discoverable to students, scholars, and researchers across the country. Carl White’s development of an index for the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* was the first moment of this type of historical production. His systematic process of producing indexed lists, headings, and bibliographies for the collection helped historians, researchers, and scholars find the facts needed to write new narratives about African and African American history. White’s reference work for images of notable African Americans extended the practice to include African American

² John David Smith, “A Different View of Slavery: Black Historians Attack the Proslavery Argument, 1890-1920,” *The Journal of Negro History* 65, no. 4 (Autumn, 1980): 298.

³ Tucker, *An Annotated Bibliography of the Fisk University Library’s Black Oral History Collection*, 1.

culture. Neil Van Deusen continued White's method by publishing new book lists with annotated and unannotated bibliographies, but Frances L. Yocum had the most profound impact on scholarly African American research. *A List of Subject Headings for Books by and about the Negro* enabled researchers to easily find and retrieve various facts about African Americans for the first time. Many of her subject headings were applied by the Library of Congress to African American materials. Likewise, when the Franklin Library launched its online Rosenwald Fund Database in 2008 it created another important moment of fact retrieval by giving preservationists, historical societies, and historical commissions direct access to the information they needed to research and write grants and historical narratives for extant Rosenwald Schools.

Stage IV: The Moment of Reflective Significance (The Making of History in the Final Instance)

The moments of reflective significance and the making of history in the final instance occurred during the writing of thousands of articles, books, collection descriptions, exhibits, grant proposals, press releases, programs, general handouts, and brochures using the Special Collections and Archives at Fisk. Aside from the historical narratives produced by Fisk students, faculty, external researchers, and scholars, Fisk librarians also made history in the final product by taking a moment to reflect on the significance of African Americans. Louis Shores began the scholarly conversation in 1932 with an article published in *The Journal of Negro Education* titled "Library Service and the Negro," and Bontemps authored a teenage novel based on the Jubilee Singers collection. In a 1988 issue of *The Library Quarterly*, Ann Allen Shockley, assessed the

library's special collections area and identified it as a "major resource center on the Black experience for scholars, researchers, students, and lay persons."⁴ Jessie Carney Smith produced more than a few monographs and reference works highlighting the contributions of African Americans using the resources in the library's collection, and under her direction, the library continuously produced history in the form of historic preservation efforts, public programming, exhibits, and documentary films.

Fisk University Library and African American Public History and Culture

As an institution on a mission to change public misconceptions about race, and a wealth of materials documenting African American progress to do it, Fisk University Library engaged in a broad range of public history activities long before the term public history was coined or the public history movement even began. According to Thomas Cauvin, author of *Public History: A Textbook of Practice*, the term was not coined until 1975, and only after "new approaches and new fields emerged in history and other social sciences in the 1950s and 1960s" such as black history, which, in turn, taught "history could be used to address injustice."⁵ George Edmund Haynes started teaching African American history at Fisk in 1910, thereby giving the library a forty-year head start. As a form of social justice, Fisk University Library quickly evolved from providing service to a community denied access to public library service to a premier historical organization with deep-rooted connections to every sub-field of African American public history.

⁴ Ann Allen Shockley, "Special Collections, Fisk University Library." *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 58, no. 2, (1988): 151.

⁵ Thomas Cauvin, *Public History: A Textbook of Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 7-9.

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APPENDICES

A Directory of the Manuscripts
in the
Erastus Milo Cravath Memorial Library of Fisk University
1954 - 1955

Charles Waddell Chesnutt Collection (1858 - 1932)

Manuscripts - 128
Journals or dairies - 12
Letters by the author - 403
Letters to the author - 1,280
Documents - 169
Mg - 1
X - 6
Scrapbooks - 5 (containing written and printed works and reviews
of books)

Total - 3,205

Countee Cullen Collection (1903 - 1946)

Manuscripts - 37
Journals or dairies - 1
Letters by the author - 4
Letters to the author - 50
Documents - 25
Mg - 1
X - 1
Scrapbooks - 4 (containing reviews of books)

Total - 123

Langston Hughes Collection (1902 -

Manuscripts - 130
Letters by the author - 18
Letters to the author - 88
Documents - 105
X - 1

Total - 342

John Mercer Langston Collection (1829 - 1897)

Manuscripts - 27
 J - 12
 Letters to the author - 80
 Letters by the author - 12
 X - 1
 Documents - 731
 Scrapbooks - 3 (containing Miscellaneous items)

Total 866

James Carroll Napier Collection (1845 -

Manuscripts - 20
 Letters to the author - 82
 Letters by the author - 7
 Journals - 8
 Documents - 124
 Scrapbooks - 9

Total - 250

Slavery Manuscripts 1688 - 1867

Cashbooks of overseers - 4
 Map (illustrative of the impolicy of slavery) - 1
 Slavery documents (discussing slaves and abolition of slavery, includes printed speeches, broadsides, bills, resolutions of societies promoting abolition of slavery, treaties suppressing slavery) - 30
 Map (showing the aggressions and possessions of the slave power) - 1
 Bills of sale of slaves - 3
 Documents of Emancipation of slaves - 1
 Receipt showing amount paid in "schooling" of slave - 1
 Microfilm copy of letter by Thomas Jefferson discussing "Toussaint's arrest" - 1
 Letters of slaveholders - 9
 Antislavery almanacs - 2
 Antislavery newspapers - 1
 Chain gang receipts (for slaves to labor in the chain gang) - 5
 Affidavits (sworn against escaped slaves) - 1

Total - 60

Miscellaneous

Description of the charge on Fort Wagner, July 18, 1863 - by unknown soldiers - 1

3.

William Edward Burghardt DuBois (1868 -
 Manuscripts - 82
 Letters by the author - 13
 Letters to the author - 5
 Documents - 1
 Total - 101

George Washington Washington Cable (1844 - 1925)
 Letters by the author - 28
 Letters to the author - 11
 Documents - 1

Total - 40

Alexander Dumas, Fils. (1824 - 1895)
 Letters by the author - 13
 Letters to the author - 1

Total 14

James Weldon Johnson (1871 - 1938)
 Letters by the author - 9
 Letters to the author - 2

Total - 11

Joel Elias Spingarn (1875 - 1939)
 Letter by the author - 1
 Letter to the author - 1

Total - 2

Harriet Elizabeth Beecher Stowe (1811 - 1896)
 Letter by the author - 1

Total - 1

Booker Taliferro Washington (1859? - 1915)
 Letters by the author - 54
 Letters to the author - 24

Total - 78

Addenda (Miscellaneous)

Frederick Douglass (1817? - 1895)
 Letters by the author - 3 (1 microfilm copy)

Total - 3

Arhtur B. Spingarn (1878 -
 Letter to the author - 1
 Letter by the author - 1

Total - 2

Abbreviations

Mg - Books containing marginalia by the author.

X - Manuscript material attributed to the author, but of uncertain authenticity.

Documents of authors include playbills, handbills, tickets, advertisements, bills and invoices, checks, short personal notes, photographs, newspaper clippings, and etc., in general, all manuscript items relating to the author which are not covered by one of the other categories and fugitive printed items which are of significance to the study of the author.

Manuscripts of authors include only creative works.

Numbers denote separate and distinct items not number of pages.

Researchers Using Special Collections
August 2001 - May 2002

Appendix B

Collection (s) Used	Institution or State Represented	Purpose
Julius Rosenwald	Tuskegee, AL	Research
Julius Rosenwald	Bethesda, MD	Thesis
Julius Rosenwald	University in Tennessee	Book
Julius Rosenwald	University in Tennessee	Book
Julius Rosenwald	Atlanta, GA	Paper
Julius Rosenwald	Jackson, TN	Personal Research
Julius Rosenwald	Charleston, SC	Personal Research
Julius Rosenwald, Charles S. Johnson	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	Book
Julius Rosenwald, Charles S. Johnson	University in Rhode Island	Book
Langston Hughes	University in Michigan	Play Direction
Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity	Oakland, CA	Article
Southern Education Reporting Service	Newport, AR	Book
Special Collection- African American Newspaper	Nashville, TN	Article
Special Collections- Black Theater	Chattanooga, TN	Professional Development
Special Collections- Fisk Herald	University in Virginia	Article & Book
Special Collections- Jefferson Street	University in Tennessee	Documentary
Special Collections- Pearl High School	University in Tennessee	National Register Nomination
Special Collections- Ray Francis Brown	Providence, Rhode Island	Book
Special Collections-Pearl High School	Nashville, TN	Paper
Special Collections-Sit-In Movement	Providence, Rhode Island	Thesis
Special Collections - Slave Bible	University in New York	Book
W.E.B. DuBois	Atlanta, GA	Paper
W.E.B. DuBois	Military Academy	Book
William L. Dawson	Fort Worth, TX	Personal Research
Z. Alexander Looby	University in Nashville	Book

Researchers Using Special Collections
August 2001 - May 2002

Collection (s) Used	Institution or State Represented	Purpose
Aaron Douglas	University in New Jersey	Book
Amy Jacques Garvey	University in New York	Thesis
Charles S. Johnson	University in Georgia	Book
Charles S. Johnson	University in Alabama	Article
Charles S. Johnson	University in Illinois	Article
Charles S. Johnson	University in Pennsylvania	Book
Charles S. Johnson	University in Pennsylvania	Article & Book
Charles S. Johnson	University in Tennessee	Ph.D. Research
Charles S. Johnson, Thomas E. Jones	University in Nashville	Research
Charles W. Chesnut	University in France	Ph.D. Research
Charles W. Chesnut	University in New York	Ph.D. Research
Charles W. Chesnut	University in Pennsylvania	Book
Charles W. Chesnut/Langston Hughes	College in Tennessee	Research
Fayette A. McKenzie	Berkeley, CA	PBS-TV Series
I. Wesley Elliott	Nashville, TN	Personal Research
J.A. Rogers	University in California	Ph.D. Research
James C. Napier	University in Nashville	Ph.D. Research
James Weldon Johnson	Salina Beach, CA	Ph.D. Research
John M. Langston	University in Michigan	Book
John M. Langston	University in Nashville	Article
John W. Work	University in California	Book
John W. Work	Memphis, TN	Book
John W. Work	Louisville, KY	Personal Interests
John W. Work	University in New Orleans	Thesis
Juanita Kidd Stout	Nashville, TN	Article
Jubilee Singers	University in Georgia	Book
Jubilee Singers	University in Ohio	Thesis
Jubilee Singers	Bremen, Germany	Personal Research
Jubilee Singers	Madison, TN	Personal Research
Jubilee Singers	University in Nashville	CD Production
Julius Rosenwald	Pawley Island, SC	Research
Julius Rosenwald	Atlanta, GA	Article
Julius Rosenwald	University in Michigan	Paper
Julius Rosenwald	University in Washington, DC	Article