**SOCIETY OF AMERICAN ARCHIVISTS 2010 ANNUAL MEETING
PANEL 509: WORKING FOR FREEDOM:
DOCUMENTING THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

[Note: Edited Transcription]

1. INTRODUCTION [CHERYL]:

Panelists:

Cheryl Oestreicher is a Project Archivist processing the Andrew J. Young Papers and NAACP Atlanta Branch Records at the Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History in Atlanta. [cheryl.oestreicher@fultoncountyga.gov]

Sarah Quigley is a Project Archivist processing the Southern Christian Leadership Conference Records at Emory University in Atlanta. [squigle@emory.edu]

Courtney Chartier is the Assistant Head of the Archives Research Center at the Atlanta University Center Woodruff Library and is processing the Voter Education Project Records. [cchartier@auctr.edu]

Chris Harter is the Director of Library and Reference Services at the Amistad Research Center at Tulane University in New Orleans. [charter@tulane.edu]

The four institutions are collaborating to process "hidden" Civil Rights collections through a grant from the Council on Library and Information Resources. Three separate grants were submitted to CLIR, with the Auburn Avenue Research Library and Emory submitting a joint grant. Because all were about processing Civil Rights hidden collections, CLIR approached the institutions and offered to provide one large grant as a collaborative project. Each are administered separately, for example, each manages their own budget and reporting to CLIR. We are excited about being part of CLIR's grant program and we thank them for this opportunity. If you are interested in the other CLIR projects, please visit the CLIR website Hidden Collections section.

Our panelists are going to talk briefly about the challenges, opportunities, the collections, and our future plans. We will then open for questions.

2. CHALLENGES [COURTNEY]:

The collaborative format of the grant does come with some challenges.

Geographical distance is a factor. Meetings are limited, and this session is the first time that all participants have met in person. There are also limited travel funds for us to use to get together.

The structure of the projects themselves is also a challenge. The projects are actually three different grants joined together by the granting agency based on subject. The projects all have

different processing needs (two grants are using MPLP, others are doing more traditional description); different technology needs (one institution is using Archivist's Toolkit, another is using Archon); and varied start times based on staffing and each grant has a different timeline. The Woodruff staff started earlier, which means that all of us are at different stages in processing.

Although the group did discuss as many collaborative options as possible up front, the group never set shared guidelines for approaches, techniques, or reporting, other than regular group discussion meetings/calls and updates. We generally meet as a group in Atlanta with Amistad Research Center calling in.

Some of our ideas for collaboration were successful, and will be discussed in the next section. Some ideas, like a traveling exhibition using materials from all of the projects, did not work. Financially, that may be prohibitive. Others, like a Civil Rights Archives Wiki, are still possibilities. The wiki would be a user guided wiki for institutions with archival civil rights related collections for another way of exposing hidden civil rights collections throughout the country.

In retrospect, there are a few items on our "wish list." The group would have been well served to create shared guidelines for MPLP implementation to compare our processes and how it worked out. And a clear rubric for technology comparison so that as one institution implemented Archivists Toolkit and one did Archon, we could have had a standard for comparing those experiences.

3. OPPORTUNITIES [SARAH]:

The collaborative nature of this grant has presented us with many opportunities. One specific element of the grant is that we explore ways we can use Web 2.0 technology to promote our projects and facilitate collaboration. In the first year, we implemented several web pages. The first was a Facebook profile for the Emory/Auburn Avenue Research Library collaboration *Archives from Atlanta: Cradle of the Civil Rights Movement.* We post at least once a week, with Cheryl and I alternating weeks. We use the Facebook page to post updates on our progress with the collections and interesting stories about the collections, as well as links to other Civil Rights Movement web resources and civil rights related events in Atlanta. We currently have 370 followers, including the son of a former president of SCLC, a couple of Georgia state politicians and judges, and a number of fellow archivists and scholars. So far, we've had good responses from our followers, with several "likes" and comments on each post. We've tried to use the "Discussion" feature to generate more interaction with our fans, but have had little success so far. We are currently thinking of ideas to increase discussion on the page and encourage interaction among our followers. You can access the Facebook page by clicking this link: http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/pages/Archives-from-Atlanta-the-Cradle-of-the-Civil-Rights-Movement/109881807862?ref=ts

In January 2010, we launched a blog involving all four members of the collaborative. We post once each week, with each institution alternating weeks. We've tried to orient the blog so that it reaches out to potential researchers, as well as professionals with content about the collections

but also about archival practices and procedures. We've had posts about Amistad's use of Archon, Atlanta University Center's use of Archivist's Toolkit, and Amistad's student intern program. It has also been a good way for our student workers to get involved. They write posts regularly, either about the collections or about their experiences working on the projects. The blog itself is interesting in that it's actually part of the Emory Libraries blog. We've experienced a bit of confusion because of this, with people sometimes not understanding that some of the collections are not part of MARBL's holdings. We've tried to mitigate this as much as possible by including a descriptive blurb at the beginning of each post describing the collaborative elements of the grant. Ultimately, though, we feel that the decision to be part of the Emory Libraries blog is more beneficial than not. This will ensure a more stable home long after the grant project ends, and we will also be able to take advantage of the analytics the library is gathering. You can access the blog by clicking this link: http://web.library.emory.edu/blog/category/blog-terms/hidden-collections

We are also using Google group to facilitate our collaboration. We use this tool primarily to share documents and information with each other. It was especially useful in the beginning, when we were first getting to know each other and discussing our goals for the collaboration. We used it for many conversations while planning the blog, and also while designing our poster for the CLIR Hidden Collections Symposium in March, which brought all the funded projects from 2008 and 2009 together. We use it as a central location for meeting minutes and agendas and to share drafts of things like our SAA 2010 program proposal.

Another specific collaborative element of the grant is that we explore innovative ways to link related finding aids in separate institutions. We aren't to this point yet because the majority of the collections aren't finished, but possibilities already exist. For example, Emory's grant is to process the records of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, while the Auburn Avenue Research Library is processing the Andrew Young papers. Young worked for SCLC for many years, including as the organizations Vice President and Executive Director. Ultimately, we hope that the finding aids we produce for these two collections will reference each other in some way, either with actual hyper links or through a "see also" reference. Likewise, the papers of Daisy Young, Andrew Young's mother, have been processed as part of Amistad's grant and will be another opportunity for linking between institutions.

Ultimately, the collaboration established by CLIR has afforded us the opportunity to come together and learn from each other. We've been able to share and compare how we manage project, how we've implemented technologies like AT/Archon, and how we utilize student employees. Emory has been enthusiastic about sharing with the other institutions our methods for project management and team processing. As part of the Emory/Auburn Avenue Research Library collaborative, Cheryl is using Emory's work plan template to plan her processing projects. She has also implemented the team processing method that Emory uses. Our work plan helps us manage projects by giving us a single place to record all arrangement and description decisions down to the series or sub-series level of each collection. It also centralizes provenance information, copyright and restriction information and all other relevant facts. Our processing teams consist of one professional archivist supervising 2-3 graduate student assistants. The grad students are trained by us, and are responsible for processing portions of the

collections. Likewise, Chris has shared with us their student intern training manual, so we have had an opportunity to explore and think about their methods.

Finally, CLIR also provided us with an additional opportunity to gather and talk with the other funded projects. The CLIR Hidden Collections Symposium brought us together in March 2010. I presented Emory's work plans and team processing method as part of a panel on project management innovation. Cheryl led a break out session on minimal processing methods, and Courtney also led a break out session discussing issues in processing organizational records. It was wonderful to see how the other projects were faring and learn about the unique work they're all doing. We were also pleased to see the response to our work. I shared our work plan template with several of the other CLIR projects. In the wake of that meeting, Kelly Miller, a CLIR post-doctoral fellow, introduced us to Petrina Jackson at the Carter G. Woodson Institute at the University of Virginia. The Woodson Institute holds the papers of Julian Bond, and though we haven't had any subsequent discussions, in my mind, this new connection opens up many opportunities for cross institutional linking of finding aids, and contributions to the Civil Rights archives wiki. As our plans expand and develop over the next two years of this grant, who knows what new opportunities might arise.

4. COLLECTIONS AND CONNECTIONS [CHRIS]:

These individual projects came together under the rubric of a shared theme within the collections that we are processing. While some of those connections between the connections have brought about some of the collaboration.

When we talk about exposing hidden collections the emphasis is often put on what can this do for the researcher which is as it should be. This collaboration has brought about is beginning to think about the idea that hidden collections are not only hidden from researchers but hidden from the institutions that house them and what opportunities can be gained from exposing these collections. Certainly as collections are processed and made available, that gives us an opportunity to communicate and collaborate with our researchers and our users. But also it gives us a chance to look at collaboration with institutions. If we also take a look at hidden collections as an opportunity for donor relations, which we focused on at Amistad, reaching out to donors and providing them information on collections.

It also provides an opportunity for revenue. As collections are processed institutions learn about what they have which gives an opportunity for duplication, use in publications and productions and such. Hidden collections beget hidden collections beget hidden collections. At Amistad, we purposely put a double twist on the idea of hidden collections. What we did was take 9 collections of personal papers of individuals who were officers in state and local civil rights organizations. Specifically because those individuals' papers also included records of those organizations. If you take a look at a national organization they are more likely to have their records centralized in one place. More localized organizations, those records often follow the president or the secretary as they go off. And that is something that we have found researchers requesting, wanting those local and state chapter records that we were often finding hidden in individuals papers.

As fellow panelists have found, in processing they have been able to find these and draw them out. At Auburn Avenue a substantial amount of Jean Childs Young's papers were found within the Andrew Young Papers and those have been processed as a separate collection. Emory University the SCLC Foundation records have come out of the SCLC Records. As we've delved into these collections, we've even found material that was hidden even from us.

At Amistad in addition to civil rights collections, the CLIR project allowed us to implement some policies and software to all our collections as a whole. We've also been able to draw out some interesting materials that we had no idea were at the institutions.

From the institutional standpoint, taking a look at the idea of collaboration and exposing hidden collections, and being able to use the idea of linking finding aids. We have finished the Daisy Young Papers and have a link to the Andrew Young Papers in the finding aid. It gives us an opportunity not just for institutions but for researchers to provide a trail of additional resources.

The connections between institutions and collections have also aided us in processing. In the Daisy Young Papers I came across a publication of CEP News which was published by the Citizenship Education Program of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and published in cooperation with the American Missionary Association. This particularly struck me because the American Missionary Association is the founding organization of the Amistad Research Center. When I was trying to learn a little bit more about this there were no holdings recorded in OCLC but I was able to go to the fellow panelists to get more information. So that has been an example in how we've been able to aid each other in the processing of collections.

Certainly this is going to bring about collaboration with institutions outside of this collaboration. The NAACP records at Library of Congress, material at the King Center as well. As we proceed with this collaboration and this project these opportunities for further collaboration are going to open up as we go along.

As these types of materials become available and become well-known it will open up opportunities for new scholarly directions. Material that had not been available to researchers in the past there will be resources for new scholarship. Even a topic such as the civil rights movement, various groups and individuals like Andrew Young there may be aspects that haven't been known. But by providing these primary sources we're providing more information to the researchers and more potential.

And advertising these collections as a group through the social networking such as the blog, the linking of the finding aids, and also conferences like SAA. Reaching out to not only to colleagues in the archival world but also last February Amistad participated in a scholarly conference in Jackson, MS and we've been discussing examples to further that and as our collections and collaboration comes along to be able to reach out more and more.

5. [ALL] What are the next steps and future plans (besides finishing the collections)?

Plans for the future:

[CHERYL] At the Auburn Avenue Research Library, I am the first to utilize MPLP practices and I will create MPLP guidelines for AARL. We have talked about public programming, not just in Atlanta but with all of us, possibly a symposium, bringing in scholars. I've also written three forthcoming articles for the "New Georgia Encyclopedia" based upon material found in the Jean Childs Young Papers and a women's history encyclopedia.

[COURTNEY] CLIR does not support digitization in their grants, but AUC has a strong in-house digitization program and we plan to move forward with a digital exhibition that reflects the VEP in Atlanta.

[SARAH] MARBL is very excited about the new opportunities for scholarship that the opening of the SCLC records will provide. Not only have the records post-1968 been virtually inaccessible for decades, there's a wealth of material in the collection that one wouldn't necessarily expect to find. We have the administrative records and tapes for their radio program Martin Luther King Speaks. The program began in 1967 while King was still living and featured broadcasts of various King speeches. Following the assassination, the format expanded to include Movement figures such as Joseph Lowery and Andrew Young discussing their involvement in civil rights issues as well as current events. More surprisingly, however, are episodes like one that aired in 1971 featuring Florence Kennedy and Dianne Schulder discussing women's reproductive rights. There are many episodes like that, offering perspectives from many different areas of the human rights arena.

Processing is on schedule and we're hoping that the collection will open to researchers in 2012, with a major exhibit of material from the collection to follow in 2013.

[CHRIS] We're going to be looking to digitization of the material through the Louisiana Digital Library and Civil Rights Digital Library.

6. CONCLUSION [CHERYL]:

Through all our challenges and opportunities, we have enjoyed our collaboration and appreciate the opportunity from CLIR to process these "hidden" Civil Rights collections. Overall, we've found this to be a really great experience.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Q: How will we link our finding aids of collections that are connected and to what level.
A: **[CHERYL]** We will include at least a specific reference to the collection and institution. Until we have actual links to finding aids we're not sure to what level we will do that. [CHRIS] In Archon there is a related materials field where you can include a link directly to a website's finding aid outside the institution.
COMMENT: A member of the audience suggested using new resources to show the connections beyond the finding aids. NEH's grants to digitize whole collections and other ways to branch out and explore these new ways. Library federated search.
[COURTNEY] This is kind of the concept behind the Civil Rights Archive Wiki which would not be the place to aggregate information on a civil rights figure or organization but a place to

aggregate information on the collections about that figure. It would be different than the Civil Rights Digital Library which links out to the institutions but would be a place to actually have a place to have an article on Andrew Young and it would include that there are resources about his collections and about his mother at the Amistad Research Center, or wherever he appears. The problem with that idea is that we were looking at that the four of us would be a pilot and then open it up to the archival community once we had established guidelines and then invite institutions we know to have large civil rights collections to contribute. And that's where things fall apart is that you can send out the invitations and you have to get the buy in. But the idea is that it would be to aggregate collection information and that you could look at one page about Martin Luther King Jr. and see the disparate pieces that are all across the country.

Q: Strengths and weaknesses about using Web 2.0 throughout the project.
A: **[SARAH]** When we were first doing research to decide which blogging platform we were going to use we had a lot of concerns about how we would be able to set up administrative access for four different institutions and how we would be able to preserve the document going forward. Luckily, the Emory libraries blog fell into our lap at just the right time however that actually complicated the administrative access because I am the only one who can post to that blog, so everyone has to send me their entries and I edit the photos and do the HTML and I post it. It doesn't take a lot of time to do, however we all agree that if we had a platform that we could all administer and post then it would not be quite so onerous on one of us. But it's worked out okay and we're quite pleased with the setup.
[CHRIS] We want to publicly thank Sarah for taking that on.
[CHERYL] What Sarah and I have done with our Facebook page is not just focus on our collections but try to educate our fans about other resources that we know about and make it broader than Auburn Avenue's and Emory's and Atlanta's walls.
[COURTNEY] Speaking about the wiki, picking a platform is actually the hardest part. Speaking about the blog, when Sarah first approached us about using the Emory blog I was happy about it and still am, and I don't want to badmouth Emory but I had never considered that I'd have to go through administration of an institution that was not my own and there was one situation where there was material that I deemed appropriate but that at higher up than Sarah it was deemed inappropriate. I had a flier from a civil rights organization in Alabama that had some language on it that was deemed inappropriate for the Emory blog.
[SARAH] To be clear, there was some concern about how our readership would feel about that language, and what we ended up doing was that the entry and photo is there but we did a bit of creative thumbnail creation so that we focused in on a very small portion of the image that did not include the language but then you can click on it and see the entire image. It's not edited in any way and we were all quite happy to put it up, it's just other members of the blog committee were worried that we would get some heat if we put it out there with no preparation.
[COURTNEY] But it's a challenge when you have four different institutions and even though Emory and Auburn Avenue are on the same grant, that we all have different administrations and we all approach things differently in that respect.

Q: Utilizing graduate students to process large and unorganized collections and how subject expertise contributes to that.
A: **[CHERYL]** Sarah and I use graduate students in history and both of my students are focusing on civil rights students. My one student who is processing what I estimate to be about 30,000

photographs in the Andrew Young collection has done a great job of identifying a lot of people, as most of the photographs are unlabeled. And not just people but places and other countries, as Andy traveled across the globe she was able to identify places like Jamaica and other countries to identify at least where something happened. My other student is focusing on post-1968 which is what a lot of Andrew's material is, so I talk to him about the content. Not that I can't identify what it is, but ensuring that I can make it available in the best, easiest and most accessible way. Knowing that he's going to use this collection when it's all over, he and I have a lot of discussions about "if you were a researcher, how would you use this collection," which is something I always think about anyway, but it's always nice to have that other opinion.

[SARAH] I've had a lot of great fortune with my graduate students because they do have a really high level of responsibility for the decision making at Emory. And even though they sit at the desk next to me and I'm readily available to ask them questions, I've been out of town for several days and leave them on their own, and I trust them and they have demonstrated quite a bit of talent. I have one student in a Ph.D. in history and one former student working on a Ph.D. in women's studies who was writing about beauty pageants in her dissertation so she didn't have a lot of subject expertise, however her grandparents were great friends with the Abernathys during the civil rights movement so she actually knew a lot having grown up in a family who participated in a lot of events that we have documentation of and she was able to identify a lot of photographs as well and if we maybe saw a name that we didn't recognize she on a couple of occasions called relatives to say "do you know this person." Our biggest challenge with using graduate students is actually with description more than arrangement or being able to identify material is that they are uncertain as to what is the best way to convey what is in that folder, so we have a lot of discussions about standards and getting them to step back and think about what is the best way to represent the material they are working with.

[CHRIS] The papers of Ronnie Moore included a lot of photographs of a civil rights demonstrations that were conducted by an organization called the Deacons for Defense and Justice which was an armed civil rights organization and there were some photos of their demonstrations. We've actually been in touch with the son and daughter of the found of the chapter and they were able to come in and identify some of the photographs, not taking the subject expertise of students but use the participants.

Q: Through this collaboration, what have we learned from each other and learned from other institutions and then reapplied or rethought at our institutions.
A: **[COURTNEY]** At AUC, we have used forms created by Sarah for surveying large collections, not for VEP but for the department in general. We've outright taken things already. We've also within my own institution we've started using AT as a tool for our students to directly interact and use it as a guide for our students to understand hierarchy and follow it along and that's been very successful and it's something we've shared.

[CHERYL] I've also used the workplans and such from Emory and used at AARL. They haven't used these exact things before and it's been an experiment for them too, and they will have the record and be able to adapt it to their needs in the future.

Q: Will we continue our collaboration after the grant is over.
A: **[CHERYL]** Our grant is over in 2012 and we were just talking last night about trying to take our collections and themes and topics and continuing to present about them at scholarly conferences and other conferences. We've talked about a symposium someday, which we can't

do until the collections are processed and available to researchers because we don't want them banging on our doors until we're ready. We've all found these connections that we wouldn't have known existed if we hadn't collaborated. It's also a way to open the dialogue on how we can connect not just collections but institutions. We're the first to have this big collaboration in CLIR and to show it as an example to other institutions that it does work, and that geography does not have to be a problem.

[COURTNEY] CLIR has made it clear that they are interested in seeing collaboration from more of their grantees and one of our biggest challenges was getting a white sheet of paper from them on how we were to collaborate. It's still problematic when you're still processing to write papers for a scholarly presentation when you're still in the middle of the work. My grant ends in March and I'll be the first done but I'm a permanent staff member at AUC so I can still contribute to the collaboration in whatever we do going forward.

Q: How did you four institutions decide to collaborate.
A: **[CHERYL]** We decided to collaborate because CLIR told us to. Auburn Avenue and Emory and submitted a grant together, and then AUC and Amistad submitted individual grants and they were all on civil rights collections so CLIR said they would give us the money if we collaborate.

Q: Since travel money was not provided, what would meet about and could we use Web 2.0 technology to do that.
A: **[CHERYL]** One thing it would have been nice to do is meet each other. We all met Chris last night for the first time even though we've all emailed and talked many times, and we've been working on this grant for over a year. So to actually physically be together to talk about things, like some of the challenges we talked about like establishing processes or guidelines, perhaps AT and Archon, processing guidelines, things like that.

[COURTNEY] It's also a challenge for all of us to present together about our hidden collections. I think we're all looking at presenting out to the scholarly community, especially about civil rights history, and at a certain point it will be hard for all of us to appear together so we all need to lean on each other for information about our collections to be able to cover that.

[CHERYL] We have a conference call at least once a quarter with not just the four of us but others involved in the grant and we do have email discussions.

[SARAH] It would have been really nice when we were putting that poster together to have at least one representative from each project in the room while we were deciding on various design elements and working with the software and making last minute decisions. It's very difficult when you realize you have more white space on a three foot tall poster than you thought you would to have to wait on an email from someone to tell you what to put in that space. However the conference calls and the emailing have been wonderful ways for us to discuss other things.

Q: Do we use Webex or any other technologies.
A: **[CHERYL]** Because we mostly just do discussions or just have conversations we haven't really talked about utilizing those sources. But it's something we can think about if we do need to.

[SARAH] I don't know that Emory has anything like that. Our meeting room that would support the three Atlanta institutions actually being in the room together doesn't have the computer technology in it.

[CHERYL] Auburn Avenue actually doesn't have anything like that.

[COURTNEY] We actually could support at AUC we just haven't as a group needed it.

Q: With SAA having the diversity statement front and center right now what are we doing to address that and bring in other people.

A: **[COURTNEY]** I have three students that work for me. AUC is a consortium library for four HBCUs and I am the minority on the staff. All our students come from Morehouse, Clark Atlanta, Spelman, the Interdenominational Theological Center, so we at AUC archives have had great luck to recruiting student workers into the profession. We were involved in the Mellon library recruitment program and currently at Simmons there are a few students who came out of AUC schools. This is the first time I don't have students from history or African-American studies. One of my graduate students is in the masters in environmental public policy and has a background in biology and he's great at labeling things and he can refolder 20 feet in a day, as labeling speaks to him. I'm also the new junior co-chair of the Archives and Archivists of Color Roundtable.

[CHRIS] At Amistad we began putting a focus on developing a more formalized intern and volunteer program with specifically to bringing in students from underrepresented institutions in New Orleans and the area, which goes hand in hand with these collections. Following Hurricane Katrina, we lost 70 percent of our staff. With such a small staff in place we've had to rely on bringing in additional help and we've really worked with local colleges and high schools to have students come in and introduce them to the archival profession.

[CHERYL] At Auburn Avenue, and not necessarily specific to the CLIR grant, one of my colleagues has started an aggressive internship program and we get them from all over Atlanta. And located on Auburn Avenue, just down the street from the King Center we get students from the HBCUs and other local colleges and so it's a wide variety of people coming in.