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John B. Coleman Library Receives Grant From The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation To Preserve Historic Photographs

Friday, December 21, 2007



PRAIRIE VIEW, Texas--(Nov. 20)-- The John B. Coleman Library at Prairie View A&M University has been recently selected as one of 11 Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs) to participate in a \$1.2 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

The grant was awarded to the Art Conservation Department at the University of Delaware and Southeastern Library Network (SOLINET) an Atlanta based organization, which maintains a partnership with the HBCU Library Alliance and the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA) in Philadelphia.

Funded through the grant will be a 30-month, four-phase initiative to improve the preservation of significant photographic collections held within the archives and special collections of selected HBCU libraries.

The John B. Coleman Library will benefit from the grant along with the following other 10 participating schools: Fisk University (Tenn.), Delaware State University, Fayetteville State University (N.C.), Hampton University (Va.), Kentucky State University, Lincoln University (Mo.), Tennessee State University, Tuskegee University (Ala.), Virginia State University and the Atlanta University Center (Ga.), which includes Clark-Atlanta University, Morehouse College and Spelman College.

Each school will be eligible for up to \$60,000 of the Mellon Grant to further preserve selected collections from their respective photographic holdings.

The John B. Coleman Library currently holds nearly 15,000 historical photographic images in the Special Collections & Archives Department, many of which will benefit from the grant.

Kate Nevins, executive director of SOLINET states "These collections document the visual and institutional history and legacy of HBCUs and form a core of primary research materials for the study of African-American history."

Dr. Rosie L. Albritton, director of Library Services at PVAMU reports that SOLINET officials selected the John B. Coleman Library to participate in the grant award process because of its qualified staff in preservation and archives and for its collection of important historical photographs.

Earlier this fall, Albritton along with Phyllis Earles, the university's archivist and head of Special Collections & Archives and Helen Yeh, assistant director for technical services, recently participated in the first phase of the project by attending the "HBCU Library Alliance Photographic Preservation" summit held at the University of Delaware and the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts.

The grant project entered phase two of the award process Nov. 12 with an on-site assessment of the historical photographic collections held in Special Collections & Archives, in the John B. Coleman Library. The review was conducted by Rachel Wetzel, with the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts and the grant project consultant for the John B. Coleman Library. Wetzel was assisted by Sara Bisi, a graduate student at the Williamstown Art Conservation Center, in Williamstown, Mass.

Other phases of this important project include funding for implementing local preservation projects and provisions for special equipment for environmental monitoring of archival facilities at all 11 participating HBCU libraries.

Long-term, the project will promote opportunities for sharing resources and conservation knowledge within the broader HBCU network and introduce HBCU undergraduates to graduate studies and careers in conservation and preservation, as well as other professional opportunities within libraries, archives and museums.

About The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation:

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation is a private foundation that makes grants on a selective basis in the areas of higher education, museums and art conservation, performing arts and conservation of the environment. Information about the foundation, including its annual reports, please visit www.mellon.org.

About The HBCU Library Alliance:

HBCU libraries serve as unique and indispensable gatekeepers of history, culture and the African-American

experience. Created by the deans and directors of these libraries in 2002, the HBCU Library Alliance seeks to ensure excellence in HBCU libraries through the development, coordination and promotion of programs and activities to enhance member collections and services. For more information, please visit www.hbculibraries.org.

About SOLINET:

Founded in 1973, SOLINET is a not-for-profit membership organization serving more than 2,700 libraries of all types and sizes in ten Southeastern states and the Caribbean. Primary programs include Member Outreach, OCLC Services, Preservation & Access, Electronic Resources, Library Products, Digital Services, Educational Services and Consulting. For more information, please visit www.solinet.net.

About The Art Conservation Department at the University of Delaware:

The Art Conservation Department at the University of Delaware administers both undergraduate and graduate programs. The department's faculty includes leading scientists and conservators in the treatment and preservation of paintings, works of art on paper, photographic materials, furniture, textiles, decorative, archeological and ethnographic objects and architectural surfaces. For more information, please visit www.artcon.udel.edu.

About The Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts:

The Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA) has grown to be one of the largest regional conservation laboratories in the U.S. Its wide array of services, sophisticated treatment facilities, innovative approaches, and highly trained and experienced staff have earned it a prominent and respected place in the conservation field. A non-profit organization, CCAHA's organizational structure includes a board of directors composed of representatives of cultural institutions and leaders in business and in the community; an executive director; and an expertly trained staff. For more information, please visit www.ccaha.org.

About The John B. Coleman Library – Prairie View A&M University:

The John B. Coleman Library currently holds more than 350,000 print volumes, including more than 800 periodical titles, and provides access to several thousand electronic full-text scholarly online journals and other resources. The Library provides several public service contact points, including the Reference Desk, the Circulation Desk, the Periodicals Desk and the Information Desk. The Library is fully automated with terminals available for public use, and maintains a fully integrated library technology system to support all library operations and technical services. The Library is also responsible for providing Distance Library Services for Nursing Program located in the Houston Medical Center, and for Graduate Programs offered at the university's Northwest Center in Spring, Texas and in Dallas, Texas. The Library is a member of the statewide database-sharing program, TexShare, the Houston Area Research Libraries Consortium (HARLIC), the Texas Library Association (TLA), the American Library Association (ALA), the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA), and the HBCU Library Alliance.

About The Williamstown Art Conservation Center:

The Williamstown Art Conservation Center (WACC) is a nonprofit organization located on the grounds of the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Mass. The center treats objects ranging from family photographs, antiques and heirlooms to some of the most important paintings, sculpture and furniture in the U.S. Founded in 1977 to address the needs of a small consortium of collecting institutions in the Northeast, the center now serves more than 50 member museums and historical societies in New England, New York, the U.S. mid-atlantic and the U.S. southeast.

About Prairie View A&M University:

Ranked the only Texas school on Black Enterprise magazine's 2006 list of "Top 50 Colleges and Universities for African-Americans," Prairie View A&M University was founded in 1876 and is the second-oldest public institution of higher education in Texas. With an established reputation for producing engineers, nurses and educators, PVAMU offers baccalaureate degrees in 50 academic majors, 37 master's degrees and four doctoral degree programs through nine colleges and schools. A member of the Texas A&M University System, the university is dedicated to fulfilling its land-grant mission of achieving excellence in teaching, research and service. During the university's 131-year history, nearly 48,000 academic degrees have been awarded. For more information regarding PVAMU, visit www.pvamu.edu.

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