

GPO Teammates Begin FDLP Outreach to HBCUs at National Conference



Fisk University – The John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library in Nashville, Tennessee joined the FDLP in 1965.

There is no doubt that libraries across the country are an important part of our institutions and community. The valuable resources and services they offer create opportunities for learning, education, and more. In March 2020, just before the start of the pandemic, Library Services and Content Management (LSCM) began a pilot project to identify resources and services that the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) could provide to Federal depository libraries at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). To help with this effort, GPO attended its first National HBCU Week Conference, which was held virtually with approximately 1,500 participants, in September of last year. The annual conference, which is planned under the leadership of the White House Initiative on HBCUs, was free and open to the public.

The five-day gathering

began on September 21st, which is the start of National HBCU Week, and was titled, “The Perfect Decade to Accelerate HBCU Competitiveness,” bringing public and private partners together with HBCU thought leaders to best strategize on how to grow these institutions over the next ten years. The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, defines an HBCU as: “...any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans, and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association.” HBCUs offer all students, regardless of race, an opportunity to develop their skills and talents. The conference is a convening of HBCU presidents, senior administrators, students, financial aid executives, higher education advocates, corporations, foundations,



2020: The Perfect Decade to Accelerate HBCU Competitiveness

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government agencies, like GPO, and a cross section of professionals from across disciplines.

When the opportunity came to work on this pilot project with HBCUs, Technical Services Librarian Celeste Welch, who has been at GPO for a little over two years, jumped at the opportunity and began researching ways on how we could provide better access to these institutions. Prior to GPO, Welch worked at the Library of Congress as a library technician for ten years. It was through her research on this project that she discovered there was an HBCU Library Alliance and National HBCU Week Conference. “When I attended the virtual conference, it was my first effort at reaching out to the HBCU community,” says Welch. “GPO had a virtual exhibition space that was set up at the conference. With the space, we had a raffle where we gave away FDLP masks and a pocket constitution to those expressing an interest in the FDLP. We had about 79 hits on the site right after the conference and three people who won the raffle prize,” she says. “It has been real challenging to do outreach with the pandemic going on, but I think what my next steps will be is to get more in contact with the Library Alliance.” The HBCU Library Alliance is a consortium that supports the collaboration of information professionals dedicated to providing an array of resources designed to strengthen HBCUs and their constituents.

“Some of the things I

thought would come out of this more directly for HBCUs is if we could do LibGuides (or library guides) for them,” says Welch. “The guides would help students access resources that are in the collection or for public libraries in the surrounding areas to be able to access or know what is in the HBCU collection, because they have a wealth of material.”

To date, there are 30 HBCU libraries that are part of the Federal Depository Library Program. GPO works closely with 14 of them and is currently reaching out to others. Outreach Librarian Jaime Hays, who has been at GPO for 7 years, has visited several of these libraries. “I see the outreach as being really positive, especially for the HBCUs. They are so underfunded and wear so many hats at these institutions that they may not always have the time to contact us to get help. So being able to go there and have someone there to do training and answer their questions is really helpful,” says Hays. “The school that I have the most contact with is North Carolina Central University (NCCU), because that’s where I went to school to get my Master’s degree. They have two depository libraries there. I already knew some of the people on the staff from going to school there, and I keep in contact with them fairly regularly,” says Hays, who also attended the National HBCU Week Conference.

The way libraries are brought into the Federal Depository Program depends



Tuskegee University - The Ford Motor Company Library in Tuskegee, Alabama joined the FDLP in 1907.



Morgan State University – The Earl S. Richardson Library joined the FDLP in 1940.

on several factors. For the school itself, it depends on if there is an opening for a program. Schools can be nominated two per senator or two per representative. If it's a law school, like NCCU School of Law, they can come in through the by-law designation. If they are a land-grant institution, they can come in that way. "Within the LSCM and FDL Support Staff, if we are looking at a state to work with and see there is an opening and one of the HBCUs can fill that position, we try to set up a meeting to get them to join the program like we do with our Tribal Colleges and Universities," says Hays. "I've been on trips to Montana,

and I visited different Tribal institutions that are not a part of our program to see if they are interested in joining the FDLP. We just started this effort to focus on HBCUs, and it started right when the pandemic began. We are trying to figure out how we can better assist these libraries and bring more of them into the program."

HBCUs have been a part of the FDLP for a long time. GPO has three libraries that were designated in 1907: Ford Motor Company Library at Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, AL; Drain-Jordan Library at West Virginia State University in Institute, WV; and Johnston Memorial



Depository Coordinator Jan Whitfield and GPO Outreach Librarian Jaime Hays at Fayetteville State University (August 2016). The Charles W. Chesnut Library in Fayetteville, North Carolina joined the FDLP in 1971.



Former GPO Director Davita Vance-Cooks attended Tennessee State University's Brown-Daniel Library 45th FDLP Anniversary and served as the keynote speaker. The program was attended by library staff, former Government Document Librarians, political representatives, and the University President Dr. Glenda Glover and hosted by Dr. Murle Kenerson, Interim Dean of Libraries and Media Centers, and Ms. Angel Sloss, Government Documents Librarian.

Brown-Daniel Library in Nashville, Tennessee joined the FDLP in 1972.



Alabama A&M University - The Joseph F. Drake Memorial Learning Resources Center in Huntsville, Alabama joined the FDLP in 1963.



University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff - The John Brown Watson Memorial Library in Pine Bluff, Arkansas joined the FDLP in 1976.

Library at Virginia State University in Petersburg, VA. These are the HBCU libraries that have been in the FDLP the longest. There are three HBCU academic law libraries: Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University in Houston, TX; North Carolina Central University, School of Law Library in Durham, NC; and Howard University School of Law in Washington, D.C. The newest HBCU library is J.C. Oliver Library at Arkansas Baptist College in Little Rock, AR, which joined on April 12, 2016. All are selective depositories, which means they can choose what they want to receive from GPO.

As one of the oldest libraries in the program, the library at Tuskegee University, has been a part of its institution since it was founded in 1881. Dr. Booker T. Washington, founder, and first president of Tuskegee Normal and

Industrial Institute (now Tuskegee University) was aware at the very beginning of the importance of the library in one's educational development. In 1900, the library began sending to rural areas boxes of books to be furthered used by students and teachers. In 1907, the library was designated a depository for government publications, being the first black library to attain this status. "Since the Federal Government was providing the information for free, I think Mr. Washington took advantage of this opportunity," says former Government Documents Librarian E. Gail Samuel, now Head of Reference Services, who has worked at Tuskegee's library for 30 years. "Not only did it expand the libraries resources, it also provided access to information for people in the community. He was well aware, I believe, of the importance of having



Pictured from left to right: Director of Library Services/Professor Dr. Willie Hardin, Library Assistant Jacqueline Eldridge, and GPO Outreach Librarian Kathy Bayer at Arkansas Baptist College (April 2017). The J.C. Oliver Library in Little Rock, Arkansas was designated as a Federal depository library in 2016. This is GPO's most recent HBCU to join the FDLP.



Delaware State University – The William C. Jason Library in Dover, Delaware joined the FDLP in 1962.

access to information. Because of lack of funding, he took advantage of the opportunity of other resources available to the University that would help to support the programs that were being offered," she adds.

GPO issues materials in so many areas. With this partnership, libraries are able to select and invest in resources that help the community at large. "The materials are very current," says Government Documents Librarian Asteria Ndulute, who has been with Tuskegee for nine years. "The training webinars and conferences really help us, keep us in

touch, and keep us up-to-date with the other libraries in the Federal Depository Library Program. We learn from each other too," she adds.

"Overall, I've been to 250 libraries, and each one is so different and so unique. They all have so many amazing stories about how they have helped people," says Hays. Both Hays and Welch look forward to attending the Annual National HBCU Week Conference in person in the future and to recruiting more libraries to let them know about the resources we have at GPO.