

The African-American Materials Project - OEG-0-71-3890

by **Geraldine O. Matthews**
Associate Director
African-American Materials Project
North Carolina Central University

In June 1971 the U. S. Office of Education awarded a grant of \$53,265 to North Carolina Central University School of Library Science to identify and coordinate African-American materials in six southeastern states. Phase II of the project began on July 1, 1972 with an additional grant of \$74,679. The cumulative amount for 1971-1973 is \$127,944. The purpose of AAMP is to locate, describe and coordinate newspapers, periodicals, bibliographies, manuscripts, pre-1950 imprints, theses and oral history. During Phase I, the emphasis was placed on newspapers, periodicals and bibliographies. AAMP has continued to work on these forms of materials during Phase II in addition to manuscripts, pre-1950 imprints, theses and oral history.

The six states participating in the project are Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia. The state coordinators who are conducting the state searches are Mr. Casper L. Jordan — Atlanta University, Georgia; Dr. Jessie C. Smith — Fisk University, Tennessee; Mr. Jason Grant III — Hampton Institute, Virginia; Mrs. Sadie Hughley — North Carolina Central University; Mrs. Lillie Walker — South Carolina State College; Mrs. Annie King — Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. AAMP headquarters are located in the James E. Shepard Memorial Library, North Carolina Central University. The staff consists of the Director — Dr. Annette L. Phinazee; Associate Director — Miss Geraldine O. Matthews and Library

Assistant — Mrs. Edythe B. Jones. They are assisted by two student workers.

Planning sessions are held at intervals to establish and discuss field objectives, search techniques, problems and progress. The group decided to contact libraries, archives and private collectors and ask them to report their holdings in specific areas to the state coordinators. Concise questionnaires, accompanied by cover letters are used to gather data within the six states. Each of the six participating institutions has received allocations from the project's funds to defray miscellaneous costs. The major costs incurred are for personnel, field trips and materials needed to implement the project. Reports of holdings on cards, statistical data and narrative reports are forwarded to headquarters according to standardized reporting procedures and dates.

Results of activities are as follow:

AAMP compiled a finding list of over 1000 retrospective and current black periodicals and newspapers.

AAMP compiled a 414-page checklist of pre-1950 authors. The list includes over 16,000 authors from many countries. These lists were distributed to the state coordinators.

Many cards have been received from the six states in the areas of newspapers, periodicals, bibliographies, pre-1950 imprints, manuscripts and theses. Most have complete bibliographical information and location symbols. They are organized by form as received.

Several manuscripts and private collections have been located that have not been previously identified in published sources. Some have been placed in libraries and plans are being made to organize them.

AAMP received a \$25,000 Special Purpose Grant under Higher Education Act, Title II-A (prepared by Pennie E. Perry of North Carolina Central University in consortium with Fisk University, Hampton Institute, South Carolina State and Tuskegee Institute). Each library received \$5,000 to acquire expensive and infrequently used black materials in specific areas. This part of the project represents a beginning toward cooperative acquisitions.

The presidents of the six institutions were sent letters stressing the need for archival programs. Hampton has an especially strong program and has offered to share with others.

Efforts are made to identify similar projects and whenever possible to co-ordinate activities. Fisk has established a Black Oral History Program funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Alabama Center for Higher Education, a consortium of black colleges in the state, is sponsoring CEMBA — The Collection and Education of Materials by Black Americans and an Oral History Project.

The major problems encountered by the participants are insufficient time and personnel. The state coordinators have had to send follow-up letters, make telephone calls and visits.

Some librarians who received questionnaires have stated that they do not have the time or staff to check their holdings. In addition, some will not permit the cards to be removed by AAMP assistants and reproduced.

Many of the libraries within the region do not have special collections, therefore identification of material dispersed throughout the catalog has been difficult. This type of search is especially important in

SINGLE SOURCE SINGULAR SERVICE

ALL desired titles, periodicals and irregulars, foreign or domestic, available from one source . . . simplifies your work. Regional offices assure exceptional, decentralized service. Next time, give us a call . . . we'd like to be of service.

EBSCO SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

P. O. Box 1943
Birmingham, Ala. 35201
(205) 871-3529

division of **EBSCO**
Industries, Inc. 

some of the rich collections of the large libraries and state archives where valuable material has been obscured for many years.

It appears that this project is the first formal effort to coordinate African-American materials on a regional basis. The participants have benefited from exchanges of information, discussion of common problems and professional association in a specialized area. National coordination is the ultimate goal.

The opportunity to locate materials is also an important feature of this project. The public has not usually been aware of these activities by librarians in the past and it has not been possible to provide financial assistance for field searches. The financial resources are limited, but this project does represent an initial thrust toward making the public appreciate and preserve the materials of a segment of the U. S. population whose history is in danger of being lost if steps are not taken to collect and maintain these sources.