

# Indiana builds three African American special collections

By Grace Jackson-Brown

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## *An overview of important resources*

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Indiana University (IU) is building three special collections in the humanities with emphasis on the history and culture of African Americans. The collection trio includes the Black Culture Center Library, the Black Film Center/Archives, and the Archives of African-American Music, History, and Culture.

The IU Black Culture Center Library was born out of the Office of Afro-American Affairs, under the administration of then vice-chancellor Herman Hudson, in 1970. Hudson took notice of a reading room organized primarily by students, and transformed it in 1972 into a Multi-Media Resource Center with upgraded facilities in a renovated sorority house. The Black Culture Center remains in this facility today, but its collection has more than tripled in size. It includes 3,500 monographs on African-American history and culture; a collection of about 300 audiotape cassettes of speeches, poetry, and music; 70 popular and scholarly journal titles; an information file with more than 1,000 subject headings; and a biography file containing more than 950 biographies. IU Libraries made the Black Culture Center Library its fifteenth branch library in 1991. For more information about the Black Culture Center Library contact the author at (812) 855-3237.

### **Film Center/Archives**

The Black Film Center/Archives is a unique repository of African-American films and related material which began in 1979. The latest addition to the archives, donated in 1993, is the

Peter Davis Collection of outtakes, stills, photographs, and manuscripts. The Davis Collection includes such films as *Winnie Mandela*, *South Africa: The White Laager*, *Generations of Resistance*, and *Anatomy of Violence* which was made in conjunction with Stokely Carmichael and Allen Ginsburg. The archive owns films spanning the century of independent filmmakers such as Oscar Micheaux, Spencer Williams, and Julie Dash. The archive also has holdings of many contemporary Hollywood films, as well as Blaxploitation-era films. In addition to films, the archive owns movie posters, interviews on videotapes, a computerized filmography, and a vertical file of critical articles, stills, film advertisements, and other memorabilia. The Black Film Center/Archives is a part of the IU Department of Afro-American Studies. For more information about the Black Film Center/Archives contact Phyllis Klotman at (812) 855-6041.

### **Music, history, and culture**

The IU Archives of African-American Music, History, and Culture (AAAMHC) was founded in 1991 with grant assistance from the Ford Foundation. The AAAMHC is a collection with unique materials on African-American popular music and ethnomusicology. Radio producer Lee Bailey donated the tapes from his program "Radioscope," a digest of 1980s and 1990s interviews and hip hop music. The AAAMHC also owns historical materials on blues and gospel music, photos, manuscripts, and other paper artifacts. Portia Maultsby, director of AAA, is a renowned ethnomusicologist specializing in African-American popular and gospel music and its ties to West Africa. The AAAMHC is a part  
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The graphic designs we used worked very well for brochures, bookmarks, and buttons, but were not effective for communicating our message on posters. The messages "Don't eat or drink in the library" and "Don't make noise in the library" appeared in small print at the bottom of the posters. The small print was intended to provoke interest and encourage the viewer to take a closer look. One reason that people were not drawn to read the small print may have been because of the height at which many posters had to be hung.

## Recommendations

The group recommends the following actions to others who want to institute a similar campaign in their library:

- 1) Have a code of conduct in place before you begin the campaign. Both patrons and employees must know what is expected of them.
- 2) Closely examine the kinds of problems most common in your library and where they occur.
- 3) Devise a plan to sell your campaign. Calculate your costs and explore free sources of assistance. Check to see if a class can help.
- 4) Time the campaign so that things are in place at the beginning of the fall semester.
- 5) Be prepared to rethink your position on food, drink, and noise issues. Achieving group consensus requires some compromise.
- 6) Gain administrative and staff commitment to the campaign. Signs alone won't change behavior. ■

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of the IU Department of Afro-American Studies. For more information call (812) 855-8547.

Although the aforementioned African American Studies collections are each housed in three different locations on the IU Bloomington campus, fundraising efforts are underway to build a new facility which could accommodate all three archives. About \$2.5 million in private donations must be raised to match state funding for the new building which will be named the Neal Marshall Black Culture Center. The new center is named after the first African American alumnus of IU, Marcellus Neal, 1895, and the first African American alumna of IU, Frances Marshall, 1919. To make a donation to the Neal Marshall Center, write to the IU Foundation, P.O. Box 500, Showalter House, Bloomington, IN 47402, or call (812) 855-8311. ■

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heightened awareness of the importance of preparation for a censorship challenge. The whole process took one and a half months, but it seemed to drag out longer, perhaps prolonged by a sense of insecurity or not knowing what to expect next.

Censorship incidents can take a tremendous toll on a community, as evidenced in Cumberland County, North Carolina, where the presence of *Daddy's Roommate* and *Heather Has Two Mommies* (Alyson, 1989) on library shelves has delayed the construction of five library branches.<sup>2</sup> As academic librarians we hadn't been lulled into complacency, but nonetheless were surprised when it happened to us. The groundwork of the past (the library's "Collection Policy Statement," and the affirmation of the concept of intellectual freedom) proved to be invaluable. Six months after we received the initial letter of complaint, we are in the midst of revising and updating our collection development statement. This experience will make us examine more closely the section on censorship and intellectual freedom, so routinely included in collection development policies, but never really expected to be used.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Mary Jo Godwin, "Conservative Groups Continue Their Fight to Ban *Daddy's Roommate*," *American Libraries* 23 (December 1992): 968.

<sup>2</sup>Michael J. Sadowski, "Book Controversy Delays New Branches," *School Library Journal* 39 (May 1993): 12. ■

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ography, medieval French philology as well as medieval French philological bibliography. Why should a university bother to hire faculty in medieval French philology, or in chemistry, or in philosophy, if its librarians can teach and perform worldly research in these and all other subjects (as McKinzie seems to claim)?

What librarians teach is (best called) BI, or (a bit less well called) documentation, or (even less well called) library skills. But to teach research *simpliciter*, of both kinds and in all subjects—such a suggestion is on the face of it unaware both of what such researchers *do* and of the meaning of the words with which we describe them and their products.—*J. M. Perreault, head of special collections, the University of Alabama in Huntsville* ■