



## **Museum Grants for African American History and Culture**

Sample Application MH-00-17-0031-17  
Funding Level: \$25,001-\$150,000

**David C. Driskell Center for the Study of the Visual Arts and  
Culture of African Americans and the African Diaspora  
College Park, MD**

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$144,450
Amount of cost share:	\$153,718

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Abstract
- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

## ABSTRACT

The David C. Driskell Center for the Study of the Visual Arts and Culture of African Americans and the African Diaspora at the University of Maryland proposes the “Driskell Center Digitization Project” with the objectives to preserve and increase access to the Center’s Art Collection and to selected objects from the David C. Driskell Papers. Additionally, the Center will increase professional development by training its staff as well as students while also producing Digitization Management Policies to sustain knowledge at the Center for future professionals.

The David C. Driskell Papers, a collection of 50,000 objects documenting the development of the field of African American art, was donated to the Center in 2009, and since then has been fully cataloged. Among the unique materials are some fragile, aging, and discolored objects: 150 audio tapes, 90 visual reels, 1,500 photographs, and 3,500 slides. To preserve these unique materials, the Center proposes to reformat and digitize them, as well as more than 1,550 art objects in the Center’s Art Collection that, like the Papers, are inventoried and well recorded, but are lacking high resolution digitized images to provide a visual record for the public.

This project addresses the need to fully document, preserve, acknowledge, and have access to the contributions of African American artists; more specifically, by preserving, reformatting, and digitizing its Art Collection and portions of the Driskell’s Papers, the Driskell Center will broaden the Nation’s body of knowledge and improve preservation of the Nation’s content and collections pertaining to crucial aspects of African American art. The urgent need to permanently preserve archival materials results from the materials rapidly aging, disintegrating, fading (slides and photos), and becoming nearly too fragile to use. Secondly, the Center’s Art Collection is only partially photographed and images are not available to share with other institutions, researchers, and the general public. Creating digital files will insure preservation of the collection records for future generations. Thirdly, digitizing the selected materials from the Driskell Papers and the Center’s Art Collection addresses the need to increase resources in order to enhance accessibility to these unique collections. Finally, addressing the Center’s staff’s need for professional development, especially in digitization, will result in the creation of Digitization Management Policies (both for the Archive and art collection), ensure sustainability, and provide learning opportunities for students.

To address those needs and achieve our objectives, the Center will: meet with consultants and advisers from the University’s Maryland Institute of Technology in the Humanities and Office of Information Technology as well as with Professor Driskell; select and hire students and interns, as well as contractors (photographer, art registrar, and audio/video reformatting vendor); purchase equipment (camera and scanners); identify at-risk material from the Driskell Papers; develop a process for photographing the art collection; develop metadata; transfer material to outside contractor/s; scan photos and slides; update all records in PastPerfect museum software with images and copyrights information; and finally develop the Driskell Center’s Digitization Management Policies. Most of the tasks are on-going and will overlap during the two-year project except for identifying the material from the Papers, purchasing equipment, hiring contractors, and developing procedures to photograph the art which will happen during the first four months of the project.

The project will benefit students, scholars, museum professionals, and the general public by increasing the quantity and quality of resources provided by the Center; it will also provide sustainability in museum practices for the Center’s current and future staff. The project outcomes are to: a) increase the number of preserved and digitized archival materials about, and art works by, African American artists; b) increase accessibility for unique resources; c) create a Digitization Management Policies document for sustaining the knowledge for the Center’s current and future museum professionals; and d) provide educational and working opportunities for students who are interested in future careers in the field of museums, libraries, and/or African American art. Success will be measured by completely achieving all those outcomes.

## 1. Project Justification

The David C. Driskell Center for the Study of Visual Arts and Culture of African Americans and the African Diaspora at the University of Maryland proposes to digitize more than 1,550 art works from the Driskell Center's Art Collection as well as digitize and reformat 1,500 photographs, 3,500 slides, 150 audio recordings, and 90 videos, selected from The David C. Driskell Papers (The Driskell Papers), the unique personal archive of Prof. David C. Driskell, containing 50,000 objects, and donated to the Center in 2009. This project, titled "The Driskell Center Digitization Project", will build upon three previous successful grants awarded to the Center between 2011-2015; an IMLS grant (MH-00-10-0001-10) which provided funding to catalog Professor Driskell's one-of-a-kind Papers; a National Endowment for the Arts (1144007079) grant supported the cataloging of the art collection; and moreover, recognizing the importance of the Driskell Papers, the Mellon Foundation's "Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives" grant which provide support for the final stages of cataloging the Driskell Papers and resulted in the creation of a permanent position for an Archivist at the Center. With both of these major Archive and Art collections now fully cataloged, and with collections management policies in place, the Driskell Center is now in the position to further preserve its Art Collection and some of its more fragile archive materials while moving forward to increase accessibility to digitized material on the Center's website.

This project will include digitizing photographs, slides, audio, and video materials, the formats of which are under threat of obsolescence and damage from aging; the project will also include photographing the Art Collection and producing high-resolution digital files as well as organizing, describing, storing, and making those files available to the public and to researchers through the Driskell Center's website and in-person at the Driskell Center. The archival materials to be digitized pertain mainly to the history and development of African American art, including rare material such as research material for "Two Centuries of Black American Art," an exhibition curated by David C. Driskell in 1976 for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which is considered by scholars as the groundbreaking exhibition which provided the foundation for the field of African American art history. This one-of-a-kind archive material is only available in the Driskell Center's archives. The Center's unique and valuable Art Collection contains a nationally-acclaimed sampling of important African American artists from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present.

The Driskell Center Digitization Project addresses several needs. Most importantly, and most generally, it addresses the need to fully understand, acknowledge, and have access to the contributions of African American artists to American art. By preserving, reformatting, and digitizing the Art Collection and portions of the Driskell Papers, the Center will expand the uses of this important collection, broaden the Nation's body of knowledge, and improve preservation and care of the Nation's content and collections pertaining to crucial aspects of African American art.

More specifically, one of the most urgent needs addressed by this project is to permanently preserve archival materials which are rapidly aging, disintegrating, fading, and becoming nearly too fragile to use; in some cases, the equipment to access these materials is no longer widely available. The Driskell Center seeks to do this work with the help of Professor Driskell, who turned 85 years old in June 2016, who can provide crucial information about these materials. Secondly, the Art Collection of more than 1,550 objects, though well cataloged, is only partially photographed; existing digital images, taken by the Center's staff, are only useful for informational purposes and aren't suitable to share with researchers. Creating high quality digital images will ensure preservation of the collection records for future generations. Thirdly, adding high resolution images to the Center's collections will address the need to provide additional resources, and thus enhance accessibility, to these materials. Finally, this grant will also address professional development needs of the Center's staff in best practices for digitization and will result in the creation of Digitization Management Policies (including procedures and policies and based on advice from consultant, collected information from the

contractors, as well as research of museum literature), to be added to the already existing Collection Management Policies. The newly acquired knowledge will provide sustainability to the Center as well as to its current and future students employees and interns.

Through this grant, the Driskell Center will be able to enhance its capacities in several important ways; it will: a) preserve unique and fragile material in the Driskell Papers; b) establish digital records for the Art Collection; c) improve its existing Collections Management Policies by adding new Digitization Management Policies so that its ever-expanding collections of art and archival materials can be properly managed, preserved, and cared for to the benefit of future generations; d) provide professional training to staff members and working and learning opportunities to students; and e) increase its capacity to provide broad and meaningful access to unique materials.

This project will address the stated goals of the Museum Grants for African American History and Culture by accomplishing all performance goals in the category of “Content and Collections.” As indicated, the Driskell Papers and Art Collection have been recognized by the IMLS and NEA as unique and important treasures; thus, the completion of the Driskell Center Digitization Project will directly enrich our Nation’s content and collections by expanding access to the Center’s valuable collections; improving preservation and care of the collections through the digitization which will lead to permanent preservation; and improving preservation of these collections by way of developing new digitization policies, to be implemented for future donated and acquired materials. Furthermore, the Driskell Center’s staff will continue to improve its knowledge of collections stewardship in a 21<sup>st</sup> century context and will be able to train the next generation of museum practitioners through internships and work experience, driving these goals forward sustainably beyond the grant period.

## **2. Project Work Plan**

This project will involve two main activities: firstly, the preservation and digitization of about 5,000 photographs and slides, and about 240 audio/visual materials (tapes and reels) from the Driskell Papers; and secondly, the digitization 1,550 objects of the Driskell Center’s Art Collection. Preserving and digitizing the Driskell Papers materials will include identifying and assembling the relevant photographic, slide, and audio/visual materials; some of the photographs and slides and all of the audio and video materials will be delivered to a contractor specializing in reformatting and preservation of these materials; most of the photographs and slides will stay in-house for on-site preservation, utilizing scanner/s for creating digitized records of the photos and slides. Preserving and digitizing the Art Collection will involve hiring an Art Registrar and Photographer to photograph about 750 works annually. This photographic process will involve developing work flow, handling each work, placing it for photography, and returning the work to its storage area. We estimate a rate of about 2-3 objects per hour, depending on the size, weight, and complexity of each object.

The project also involves an education component; and at the beginning of each year, and possibly each semester, the Driskell Center will hire undergraduates, graduate students, and student interns who will be trained in best practices for recording metadata for each of the digitized objects, ensuring that the new metadata is added properly to the records already existing in PastPerfect, the Driskell Center’s collections software. During the grant period, the Center’s staff will be trained to use the newly acquired equipment (camera, scanners) for future archive digitization projects, such as the recently acquired archives of the well-known artist Faith Ringgold. Simultaneously, the Driskell Center’s staff will be trained in the process of digitization and will develop its Digitization Management Policies. Once work on these digitization efforts is complete, the digitized files and metadata will be made live in PastPerfect, which interfaces with the Driskell Center’s website.

Evaluation and performance measurements of this project will center around the following: a) ensuring that students (six students per semester) are well informed about this opportunity and are provided with guidelines to be successful participants; b) ensuring that the digitization process follows best practices and that the process follows effectively and efficiently the proposed timeline; c) securing

professional contractors in a timely manner; and e) writing biweekly reports and meeting monthly to address any challenges or weakness in the proposed plan. Finally, after the digitized records will be launched on the Center's website, we will track web traffic and research requests.

The Driskell Center is well positioned to plan, implement, and manage these activities with the current level of staff knowledge and in collaboration with the University of Maryland's Maryland Institute of Technology in the Humanities [MITH] and the University of Maryland Arts and Humanities Center for Synergy, with which the Center has been involved regarding the intersections of digital humanities and African American studies. Additionally, the Center has been in consultation with the University of Maryland's Department of Information Technology [DIT] and several contractors for this project for the past two years and has consequently learned a lot as result of those interactions. The Center's staff has also learned how to develop and executed projects like this proposed project through its work related to the grant awards mentioned earlier.

During the duration of this project, the Driskell team will hold monthly meetings (on the first Monday of each month) to evaluate progress, and sometimes weekly meetings, especially during the first few months of the project; additionally, the Driskell Center will meet with a consultant from MITH and DIT to address any unanticipated concerns and challenges. The digitization of the Art Collection and the selected objects from the Driskell Papers, as well as developing the Digitization Management Policies will occur simultaneously. Soon after funding becomes available, we will publish internship and work opportunities. Students who are interested in internships will be identified by the Center, with assistance from departments such as Art, Art History and Archaeology, African American Studies, Anthropology, and American Studies' Museum Certificate program. The Archivist will focus on identifying the materials from the Driskell Papers which must be digitized by professionals, mainly the audio/video materials and the selected fragile photos and slides; other photos and slides will stay in-house to be digitized by students. Simultaneously, the Deputy Director will develop the process for photographing the Art Collection. During the first quarter of the grant period, the Center will also acquire a camera (possibly with lighting for photography), scanners, and a computer with a large storage component; this computer will be used as a point of access to the digitized records; copies of the records will be also saved on DIT's server as a backup.

The next step will be to identify the vendor of audio/video preservation and sign contracts with this provider as well as Photographer and Art Registrar. The Center's Business Manager will process invoices and salaries on a weekly schedule while ensuring that the appropriate procedures for hiring contractors follow the University's regulations. The Deputy Director and Art Registrar will work closely to identify the order of works to be photographed, and while the Art Registrar will physically move the art objects, the Deputy Director, with student assistance, will write condition reports on each object and develop the new for the Art Collection's Digitization Management Policies; we estimate that this process will continue until shortly before the end of the grant period.

Simultaneously, the Archivist will create metadata for the selected material to be digitized, oversee the transfer of the selected material to the vendor, and start to develop the metadata for the returned digitized material in consultation with Prof. Driskell. The Archivist and graduate students will develop the Arvhives' Digitization Management Policies; she will continue to develop and write the policy and procedures for the duration of the grant period. These newly defined Digitization Management Policies will become a part of the existing Collections Management Policies and will articulate distinct processes and policies for digitizing both the Art Collection and archival materials.

During the rest of the grant period, students will be trained in using both the equipment and PastPerfect; the Center's Deputy Director and Archivist will work with students on the process of adding the new digitized works to the already existing records in the database system, including adding metadata and descriptions to each of the digitized objects' records in PastPerfect and uploading them to the Center's website where the collections are searchable. The images will be available to the public

online only if copyrights are already available; if not, copyright requests will be sent to artists, their estates, as well as individuals whose works are included in the digitized material. Upon completion of the project, the Center will share all results (pending copyright permissions specific to artists and artworks) with its audiences through its website, social media, and press releases, ensuring that awareness of the new opportunities for research and access to the Art and Archives collections.

The risks to this project are minimal; any risk of damage to art and archival materials will be mitigated by thorough vetting of contractors, ensuring that best practices are observed in all handling and care of art and archival material, and following best practices as outlined in our Collection Management Policies, based on the American Alliance of Museums' guidelines. Any potential risk to the project as a whole might be due to changes in the schedule, e.g. the speed at which we will digitize the photos and slides depends on the number of students and the quality of the work to be done; we calculate that a student may scan 20 photos per hour and feel that our timeline reflects and anticipates a relatively slow pace, as well as allowing time calculated for school breaks and vacations. The availability of the private contractors Photographer and Art Registrar might challenge our proposed schedule; in case of a conflict, the Center will explore hiring different contractors than those proposed.

As outlined in the budget, to carry out the activities, the Center will use its own resources for salaries and benefits (pro-rated) and for supporting about 65% of the students' salaries (estimated minimum four paid students). The additional required resources to complete the project will be for a) grant-supported hired professionals, e.g. vendor for reformatting and digitization of audio and video materials, an Art Registrar, and Photographer; b) special scanners, computer, and camera; c) 35% of the student salaries; and d) to cover traveling to both IMLS-designated meetings and locations where the Center's staff can continue to learn about best practices for digitization and preservation.

### **3. Project Results**

The Driskell Center's goals are in the category of "Content and Collections" and address, in many aspects, all three of the performance goals: 1) Broaden access and expand use of the Nation's content and collections; 2) Improve management of the Nation's content and collections; and 3) Improve preservation, conservation, and care of the Nation's content and collections. The activities listed in this grant will meet all three goals: a) the project is inherently aimed towards significantly increasing access through digitization by creating a new digitized resource available both at the Driskell Center (by appointment) as well as its webpage; b) the necessary addition of Digitization Management Policies to our already robust Collection Management Policies will improve management of these unique and valuable Archives and Art Collection and position the Driskell Center as stewards of this material; and c) the preservation of content and collections occurring through the process of digitizing archival content and art objects. Keeping digital records of these materials in a sustainable, viewable format is a key aspect of preserving these collections for the future and making them more accessible. To this end, the results of the Driskell Center Digitization Project will be available on the Center's website and linked to the University's Libraries and MITH, providing accessibility to the entire research community and promoting stewardship in the field of African American art.

The Center will collect Performance Measure Data in a variety of ways. Firstly, since the project's goal is the digitization of a finite number of objects from the Driskell Papers and the Art Collection, the Center's students and team members will record those numbers and share them through biweekly reports, providing measurable indications of success, e.g. the number of photos digitized, the number of art works photographed, and the number of objects described with metadata. Secondly, the team will provide monthly reports during its mandatory monthly meetings. An additional measure that will assist in evaluating this outcome will occur toward the end of the project: the Center already receives research requests for the Driskell Papers material, and we receive a high volume of requests for loans from the Art Collection, up to 25 in any given year from such institutions as the Museum of Modern Art in New York City and the Detroit Institute of Arts Museum, IL, to

name a few. Currently, these research and loan requests include requests for images, which we are only able to provide in low resolution or by asking the borrowing institution to send museum personnel to the Center (a great expense of time and effort); the center will thus be able to measure success by tracking the expected increase in research and loan requests. Finally, toward the end of the grant period, after all relevant metadata and images are uploaded to the website, the Center will be able to track web traffic increases through its website, measuring how many people are accessing the new resources.

In addition to the intended results of digitizing selected material from the Driskell Papers, creating metadata with Prof. Driskell's assistance, digitizing the 1,550 objects in the Art Collection, enhancing accessibility to this unique collection, and increasing professional development, we will also include assessment of the acquisition of skills by staff, student employees, and interns. This will be measured by surveying individuals to assess their growth, collecting feedback from the faculty members who serve as interns' advisors, assessing the quality of the work at the end of the project, and following the development of our student's careers after graduation; as has been the case with previous grants, students who participated in the Center's projects indicated that this experience help preparing them for a career in museums and most are now working in nationally respected institutions such as the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture.

The Driskell Center's audience consists of students, scholars, artists, and the general public from both local and national communities. By meeting the needs and goals listed above, the Driskell Center expects to increase access to its collections, broaden knowledge, and educate people about these collections. If more information is available, then the Center's audience can be more aware of the unique materials held in our collections and better understand the contributions of African American artists to the canon of American art. Additionally, the Driskell Center's exhibitions have traveled to more than fifteen states in the US, and several countries worldwide, often to audiences who are not familiar with African American art. Therefore, digitizing the collections will not just improve the experience of the Driskell Center's local audience, but will also bring the center and its collections closer to non-local audience who want more information about the center, ultimately allowing the Nation to see more of our collection both in person or online. It is, however, clear that the skills and behaviors of the intended audience can be measured only over a longer period of time, and only when African American art becomes an integral component of American art canon.

The most valuable tangible result will be the newly expanded digital resources, including the selected material from the Driskell Papers and the digitized Art Collection. This will be a valuable resource for future generations, for the Center's audience, and for the Center, as a keeper of this Nation's collection. This most valuable digitized resource, including photographs, slides, and images from the collection will be used in future Driskell Center and other institutions' publications, e.g. exhibition catalogues. The final tangible product will be the newly developed Digitization Management Policies, which will add to the Driskell Center's current Collection Management Policies and will ensure the sustainability of knowledge of the procedures and policies surrounding digitization of future collections.

Finally, the benefits of this project are to be sustained in the following ways: throughout the project, the Center will be training graduate students, undergraduate students, and interns in best practices for digitization, thus increasing the number of prospective museum and library professionals with these skills. The sustainability of this knowledge is key to the Driskell Center's mission to "expand and replenish" the field of African American art. Additionally, this knowledge will stay with the Driskell Center's staff and will be passed on to new staff as transitions eventually occur through a revised collections policy that includes digital management practices. This will enable museum staff to digitize future acquisitions. Lastly, the digitized products themselves will be sustained through storage both on a computer at the Center, as well as storage backed up at the University of Maryland.

Tasks	Responsible party	* Team refers to Executive and Deputy Directors and Archivist ** Students refer to undergraduate, graduate students(GAs) & interns											
		2017	2017	2017	2017	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018
		Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	June	July	Aug.
Meetings - first Monday of each month	Team	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Reports - biweekly	Students	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Meeting with consultant/s	Team		X		X			X		X			
Review/supervise/advise/update reports	Ex. Director	■					■					■	
Selecting and hiring students	Team	■				■					■		
Purchasing equipment	Team	■											
Identifying material from Driskell Papers and finalizing vendor/s for digitizing audio/videos	Archivist	■											
Developing process for photographing Art Collection	Deputy Director & Art Registrar		■										
Developing and roviding metadata to vendor for audio/videos; Transfer of material to outside contractor/s	Archivist				■			■			■		
Update metadata for returned digitized material & consulting with Prof. Driskell	Archivist & Students									■			
Photography of Art Collection (on-going, depends on schedule of contractors)	Deputy Director & contractors						■						
Scan photographs, update metadata	Students				■								
Upload files to the University's DIT storage	Team					■					■		
Develop the Driskell Center's Digitization Management Policies; copyrights requests	Team & GAs; students			■									
Trips: digitization tour and IMLS	Team				X							X	



Tasks	Responsible party	* Team refers to Executive and Deputy Directors and Archivist ** Students refer to undergraduate and graduate students(GAs) and interns													
		2018	2018	2018	2018	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019		
		Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug.		
Meetings - first Monday of each month	Team	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Reports - biweekly	Students	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Meeting with consultant/s	Team and Consultant/s	X		X			X		X						
Review/supervise/advise/update reports	Ex. Director	■					■					■			
Selecting and hiring students	Team	■				■					■				
Clean up and provide metadata to vendor for audio/videos	Archivist	■													
Transfer of material to outside contractor/s	Archivist			■											
Update metadata for returned digitized material & consulting with Prof. Driskell regarding content (A/V and photographs)	Archivist & Students	■													
Photography of Art Collection (on-going, depends on schedule of contractors)	Deputy Director, Art Registrar, & photographer	■				■									
Scan photos and slides, and update metadata in spreadsheets and PastPerfect	Students	■													
Upload files to the University's DIT storage	Team	■				■					■				
Develop the Driskell Center's Digitization Management Policy; copyrights requests	Team & students	■													
Trips: digitization tour and IMLS	Team				X							X			