# Museum Grants for African American History and Culture

Sample Application MH-252055-OMS-22

## Oakwood University (Anna Knight Museum)

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| Amount awarded by IMLS: | $46,611 |
| Amount of cost share: | $15,150 |

The Anna Knight Museum at Oakwood University will develop a public interpretive storytelling program focused on African American women in the post-reconstruction era. Museum staff will collaborate with museums and Historically Black Colleges and Universities in Alabama and Mississippi to collect stories at 26 historic sites. Professional development activities will build staff skills in interpretive storytelling and archival historical research. The museum will hire two interns to support project activities. The project will document oral narratives, increase knowledge of key historic sites, strengthen community engagement, and expand community partnerships with historic registries and museums, ultimately increasing awareness of the women who fought for educational, social, and gender equality in the post-reconstruction era.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion
- Digital Product Plan

When preparing an application for the next deadline, be sure to follow the instructions in the current Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program to which you are applying.

**Oakwood University's Anna Knight Museum Project**
**African-American History and Culture in the Deep South: The Role of Women Educators During Reconstruction and Beyond**

## PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

The Anna Knight Museum (AKM) is a specialized museum located on the campus of Oakwood University (OU), a federally designated Historically Black College and University (HBCU), where the historic home of slave Dred Scott is located. This year, as we celebrate our 125th Anniversary, we are requesting $50,000 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to build the capacity of the AKM through development of an interpretive storytelling program in order to tell the story of African American women who were the unofficial educators during the post-reconstruction era.

### *Goals and Objectives*

We have chosen to address the following goal and three objectives as it relates to the IMLS:

*Goal 1:* Build the interpretive storytelling capacity of the AKM.

- *Objective 1.1:* Conduct collaborative field research to develop the content of the stories.
- *Objective 1.2:* Enhance professional management of the collection through staff development in the art and science of interpretive storytelling and expand the stories to effectively communicate with the African American community through this inclusive educational program.
- *Objective 1.4:* Foster partnerships and collaborations between the AKM and other similar museums: Gibbs Museum of Art and Sewanee: The University of the South. In collaboration with well-developed museums that have similar objectives in the region, we will visit to learn approaches to collection building, curation, management, and storytelling.

Specifically, the requested funds will build the three-pronged foundation: 1) develop a public interpretive storytelling program, 2) enhance professional management, and 3) foster research collaborations among museums and HBCUs. These stories are unique to the 14 HBCU's across the Deep South (eight in Alabama and six in Mississippi). We intend to capture oral narratives, research historic sites, strengthen community engagement, and expand community partnerships with historic registries and museums.

### *Needs, Problems and Challenges*

Currently, due to Covid-19, the AKM is limited to the students, employees, and approved visitors to the campus of OU. We have a one-dimensional way of telling the stories of bold and fearless women who, despite their disadvantages and challenges, still set out to learn and serve their communities. However, only part of the story has been told. Many are familiar with the Hollywood movie "The Free State of Jones." This movie is the true tale of the poor, white, Mississippi farmer Newton Knight, who led an extraordinary revolt against the Confederate army during the Civil War with white and black men in southeast Mississippi. Knight, the southern revolutionary, is a noteworthy historical figure according to the Smithsonian Magazine.[1] Knight had 19 children including his daughter, Anna Knight, that he had with his stepdaughter Georgeanne in 1874. Anna was a gun-toting unofficial educator born in the Deep South, who revolutionized education for the children of former slaves. Anna was also a socially conscious nurse and educator who organized and led the first Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) organization for Negro people in Atlanta, Georgia and the National Colored Teachers Association (NCTA) during the early 1920s.

The seminal publication of Dr. James D. Anderson's regarding the growth and expansion of the formal system of education of Blacks in the South tells a powerful, yet incomplete story. Missing from the records of the U.S. Department of Education and the national archives are the noteworthy stories concerning informal education of the newly freed slaves, performed by women. These women, black and white, realized that formal education was not made accessible to blacks. Many of the black educators themselves were just one generation separated from slavery and their stories remain untold even in stellar publications like that of Anderson.

The problem that OU is attempting to address is the silence about the impact of these strong-willed, unofficial women educators like Anna Knight, the black daughter of Newton Knight. Her role in the informal education of newly freed slaves is one of unfaltering commitment even when threatened by the marauding bands of whites seeking to rape and

[1] (Bynum, 2001; Grant & Widmer, 2016).

pillage her wards. There is a need to tell the complete story of this and other historical figures. These remarkable stories are the backdrops of the HBCU story, a story we seek to tell about bold and fearless women who, despite their disadvantages and challenges, set out to learn and to educate others. If these stories are not captured, they will be lost forever. We would like to uncover her story as well as other cohorts from the post-reconstruction era and beyond, such as Mary McCleod Bethune, Nannie Helen Burroughs, Rosa Parks, and Susie King Taylor. OU curates the majority of Anna Knight's collection consisting of over 136 historic papers, photographs, rare nineteenth century books, awards, periodicals, and reports, donated by her relatives.

***Solutions***

The Museum Docent will visit HBCU's (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) in Alabama and Mississippi to learn about their approach to collection, management, and storytelling. Staff members will be professionally developed to perform exploratory work and trained in the art of storytelling and historical research. Staff will be trained in best practices to tell stories so that our visitors will be educated in these important historical events and stories. The IMLS grant support will enable the AKM to hire consultants to achieve the objectives within the IMLS goals. Through field research, we will foster collaborations with other HBCU institutions working together with them to develop the stories of the unofficial educators of the Deep South. Part of this project includes improved accessibility to diverse and differently-abled audiences using various multimedia channels, including Digital Commons™, for public exhibition and access.

Research will be conducted at the Historical Societies of Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee; the Women's History Museum; the Smithsonian Museum; and at Fisk University and Tuskegee University to build the collection beginning with Anna Knight, and other unofficial educators, during the post-reconstruction period. Through research, we will develop a more complete and inclusive story of the women who fought for educational, social, and gender equality in the post-reconstruction era. These collections include archives related to the history and development of the first YWCA in Atlanta, Georgia, as well as the NCTA, also in Atlanta. We will work with an Accessibility Consultant for those who are differently-abled so individuals who may be visually or hearing impaired will be able to experience the stories.

Based on the IMLS data, there are no known HBCU's in Northern Alabama who have received support from the Museum Grants for African American History and Culture. With IMLS funding, this project will position the AKM as the only HBCU conservation while moving the museum forward in the development of our collections.

***Target Group***

We plan to offer this educational program to students in kindergarten through college to increase their cultural understanding and to develop civic engagement. According to the U.S. Department of Education, in 2017–2018, there were 804,340 college aged men and women.[2] Below the post-secondary levels, K-12 students in Alabama numbered 56,828.[3] HBCU students in Alabama and Mississippi make up 20% of the national HBCU community, making the South a concentrated area for HBCU's. Access to the exhibits, beyond the walk-in museum, will be assured through a Digital Commons™ platform and exhibits will be distributed first to HBCU's and Predominantly Black Institutions (PBI's) and then to public libraries.

***Beneficiaries***

The HBCU community in the Deep South will benefit from this project because our unique collections will tell the stories in the researched collections, discovered through our collaborative research. We will document our uncovered history and the cultural heritage of African Americans as it relates to the existence and discovery of informal education. By exploring and developing partnerships and collaborations, the near-term benefit will be to the organizations that will engage in the project. The immediate advantage will be fostering connections, organizing content, and expanding the knowledge base around one common theme of unofficial educators. Access to historic data will be available to members of this diverse community. Museum staff will develop a new skill of storytelling. In addition, staff would benefit from further training in

[2] Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Methodology Report, 2018-'20.
[3] https://www.al.com/news/2020/02/alabama-k-12-enrollment-up-cities-have-more-counties-have-fewer.html Retrieved November 11, 2021.

management of such collections. Individuals who are hearing and visually impaired will also benefit from our program by having access to their own personalized storytelling experience.

## PROJECT WORK PLAN

With support from IMLS we will build the interpretive storytelling capacity of the AKM through interpretive storytelling within a period of two years from July 2022 to June 2024. We have divided our project into two phases to align with the two-year project plan. During the first year of the project (Year 1), we will: (1) Research and collaborate with museums and HBCUs. And we will enhance professional management to build the capacity for storytelling. During the second year of the project (Year 2), we will (2) Develop the content of our public interpretive storytelling program and make our resources accessible and available to our diverse communities through the OU Digital Commons™ website and other platforms. Because of the nature of this project, many activities will take place concurrently. Our plan below lists specific activities. Performance measurements, both internal and external, will be conducted monthly, quarterly, and at the beginning, the mid-point, and end of the project. The cumulative information will be included with the closeout report at the end of the project. Please see timeline chart below:

***Specific Activities***

| **YEAR 1: July 2022-June 2023** | |
|---|---|
| **Objective 1:4 - Foster research collaborations among museums and HBCU's, and conduct field research, data gathering, and digitizing; Evaluate the program, making use of a variety of methods including surveys, assessments, interviews, and visitors' data. Our plan will rely on experts in the field of interpretive storytelling, visual arts, research, and accessibility for differently-abled persons.** | |
| ***Time*** | ***Specific Activities*** |
| July 2022-August 2022 | Plan Development - Conduct planning meetings to develop and refine the strategic plans for the collaborative research objective; Confirm partnerships & collaboration; Finalize coordination for travel and schedule visits to sites; Hire consultants and evaluators, design assessment tools, post intern announcement and subsequently interview and select candidates for Fall 2022 |
| July-September 2022 | Review current data and practices and make recommendations for adjusting our methods to improve preservation and storytelling |
| July 2022-September 2022 | Develop a plan consisting of best practices and program success measurements and evaluations with the assistance of expert consultants and professionals |
| August 2022-September 2022 | Purchase supplies |
| September-December 2022 | Update Digital Commons™ repository; Archive/digitize and conduct data hygiene of database; Digitize the collection access for staff, scholars, and the public |
| September-June 2022 | Collaborate on field research to capture stories and examine artifacts by visiting approximately 26 sites and local historical locations to develop narratives and sketches |
| **Objective1:3 - Enhance professional management.** | |
| August-September 2022 | Secure interns for Fall 2022 semester |
| July-September 2022 | Develop a strategic plan for staff archival, digitalization best practices and historical research |
| July-September 2022 | Develop best practices and staff success measurements and evaluations with the training help from expert consultants and professionals |
| November 2022-June 2023 | Key staff training in Interpretive Storytelling, archival historical research, interviewing, and disabilities training |
| **YEAR 2: July 2023-June 2024** | |
| **Objective 1:1 - Develop the content of our public interpretive storytelling program to make our resources accessible and available to our diverse communities free of charge on our Digital Commons™ website and other platforms.** | |
| July 2023-December 2023 | Update Digital Commons™ repository; Integrate collection with OU and Eva B. Dykes Library's website |

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| July-December 2023 | Recordings uploaded |
| January 2024-March 2024 | Distribute evaluation forms; OU students and collaboration partners for review and evaluation of the Storytelling Program |
| March 2024-May 2024 | Adjustments to program based on evaluation |
| July 2023-June 2024 | Storytelling Program launch and available on the Digital Commons™ publicly accessible repository |
| June 2024 | Develop final report detailing the results of the project and recommendations and next steps for improving the interpretive storytelling capacity of the AKM |

***Risks***

*1. Time constraints* - Even with the help of interns, there are many constraints to deployment within a short time period. The AKM will develop a research protocol and template for the stories, which will be used by interns and staff.

*2. Collecting Information* - Other institutions may not be willing to collaborate and share with us. We will leverage our consultant networks and relationships to obtain information that may not be directly available.

*3. Information not readily available* - There is a real risk that some of the archival repositories will only receive basic entries and not be thoroughly researched and documented. We will take extra time to make sure entries are documented properly following digital archival best practices.

***Planning, Implementation and Management***

*The Principal Investigator* (PI) – Principal signatory; Primary individual responsible for logistically and intellectually directing this public grant program

*Co-Principal Investigator* (Co-PI) – Supports the PI with project management requirements; Ensure the awarded project is performed within the allowable period and with greatest professional standards

*Museum Consultant* – Train and mentor; Advise key museum staff personnel by using their knowledge of museum best practices in digital and cultural engagement; Interviewing archival historical research and best approach to collection management and interpretive storytelling for all abilities

*Museum Docent* – Skill training in the development of our interpretive storytelling program; Primary guide for conducting museum tours and the storytelling program.

*Interns* – Students will be offered a temporary job opportunity (semester positions) that will provide them with a direct, practical expertise in a career as a Museum Professional; Assist as needed with project development; Students will receive a small stipend

***Resources***

| **INPUTS OR RESOURCES** | **ACTIVITIES** | **OUTPUTS** |
|---|---|---|
| *Personnel*<br>Project Investigator<br>Co-Project Investigator<br>Museum Docent<br>Interns (2) | Create job descriptions for interns and Museum Docent<br><br>Train personnel on recommended activities | 100% of museum staff and interns trained in recommended activities<br><br>Museum Staff Training manual<br><br>>1200 hours invested for this project (interns, personnel, partners, etc.) |
| *Financial*<br>$50,000 in financial assistance from the IMLS Grant<br><br>Oakwood University Cost Share | Grant dollars will pay for consultants and contracted specialists and historians, travel to research sites, the storytelling exhibition and Docent training, two student interns (one for the Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 and one | Reprinted folk art for resale and investment back into the museum/program to ensure sustainability<br><br>Interrelated storytelling program detailed around one theme -- unofficial educators, connected to more than 14 HBCU's and historical repositories |

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| | for Fall 2023 and Spring 2024) and research activities.<br><br>Work with OU Vice President for cost share costs and approvals<br><br>As a non-profit privately funded HBCU, full-time, permanent staff salaries and benefits are paid by the University | |
| *Technology*<br>Digital Commons<br><br>OU IT | Digitize historical records using administrative naming conventions, descriptive text, and metadata | Digital resources will be fully accessible through the OU website, AKM's website, and to partners and HBCUs in Alabama and Mississippi |
| Collection Space | Put physical records in a dedicated space | Workspace will be provided by the University |
| *Partners*<br>Collaboration with well-developed museums who have similar objectives within the region (i.e. HBCU's in Alabama & Mississippi)<br><br>Support from archival repositories<br><br>Visual Art Consultant<br><br>Evaluator<br><br>ASL Consultant<br><br>Digital & Cultural Engagement Consultant | Courses, Training, and mentorship in best practices in digital and cultural engagement, interviewing, archival historical research and best approach to collection management and storytelling<br><br>Review and selection of folk art from artist for reprint and resale<br><br>Development of museum staff, storytelling program, collections, assessments and evaluations<br><br>Interpretive Stories and ASL renditions of the stories for the hearing impaired | Licensed folk art from Artist for reprint and resale<br><br>Assessments and Evaluation<br><br>Interpretive Stories and ASL renditions of the stories for the hearing impaired<br><br>Knowledge of best practices in digital and cultural engagement, archival historical research and best approach to collection management and storytelling |
| Historical Research | Visit 20-35 historical research sites<br><br>Locate interrelated themes and stories<br><br>Document and record collection location and information<br><br>Digitize records | Untold stories will be uncovered and now be accessible for generations to come |

***Tracking Progress***

Staff will use a project management matrix to assign tasks and establish deadlines. Using the matrix as a guide, staff will hold monthly meetings to discuss project deliverables, identify obstacles and facilitate communication. Bi-monthly Project Team meetings will enable networking and ensure research is ongoing so the consultants and interns will have a steady flow of feedback and information to document.

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## PROJECT RESULTS

### *Intended Results*

Need: AKM is limited to the students, employees, and approved visitors to the campus of OU
Intended Results:

1. Build the interpretive storytelling capacity of the AKM through the fostering of partnerships and collaborations among museums and HBCU's and institutions of higher education
2. Expand access to our storytelling program. Build the interpretive storytelling capacity of the AKM, visit with them and to learn about their approach to collection, management, and storytelling

Need: One-Dimensional Story Telling; Only part of the story is being told; Collaboration needed with other partners
Intended Results:

1. Uncover the stories that are unique to the 14 HBCU's across the Deep South
2. Capture oral narratives, research, and historical sites
3. Conduct collaborative field research to develop the content of the stories

Need: Professional management and staff development
Intended Results:

1. Enhance professional management of the collection through staff development in the art and science of interpretive storytelling
2. Enhance and develop the stories to effectively communicate with the African American community through this postsecondary educational program

### *Target Group Results*

HBCU community in the Deep South, museums, and other organizations that will engage in the project:

1. Our partnership will result in related collections
2. Our collection will result in an appreciation of the unofficial educators of the post-reconstruction era and how it relates to the HBCU's in the Deep South
3. We hope to ignite a thirst for knowledge to know more about these women
4. Added information will be discovered for many in the HBCU community to build their capacity, saving time and money, by leveraging a research network and project which is already established

Community:

1. Motivate the community to work together despite our differences
2. Individuals who are hearing and visually impaired will also benefit from our program by having access to their own personalized storytelling experience
3. Bring awareness to the partnered museums, HBCU's, and institutions of higher education and its programs

### *Sustainability*

OU is a non-profit HBCU, funded by tuition revenue, the UNCF, and receives operational support from alumni and donors. Salaries/benefits for staff responsible for maintenance of the innovative storytelling program are covered by OU. Sustainability is ensured by collaborations with other HBCU's in the Deep South. With collaboration, we intend to motivate others to utilize our storytelling program repository for future research. We will uncover the stories that are unique to the 14 HBCU's across the Deep South by capturing oral narratives, research, historical sites, and conduct collaborative field research to develop the content of the stories.

This project will be maintained as a long-term resource by the AKM with support of OU's IT staff and consultation from digital and cultural engagement experts. The bulk of expenditure will be one-time. OU's commitment through capital budget, grant writing activities, annual operating budget, and donations will provide ongoing sustainability for access to the collection through Digital Commons™. Grant funds from IMLS will go towards launching this initiative. Funding will allow OU to research this important, historic, and phenomenal history of African American women.

| Activities | |
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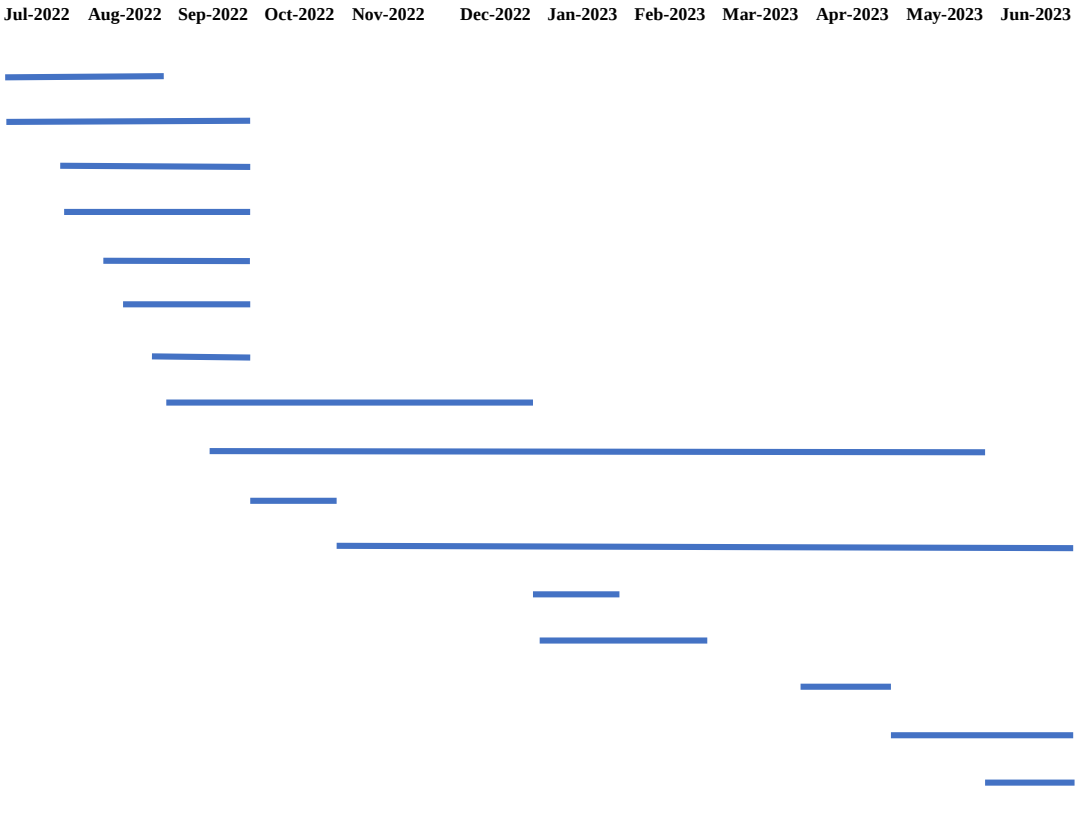
| **PROGRAM YEAR 1** | **July 2022-June 2023** |
| Plan Development-Strategic Plan for collaborative, historical research and digitization. Plan travel and schedule site visits. | |
| Beginning Performance Measurement: Current Programs and Collection Evaluation (Evaluator, External, Internal) | |
| Hire Consultants and Evaluators. Post intern/volunteer annoncement and interview candidates for Fall Semester 2022 (Student Workers) | |
| Develop Design Program Success Measurements, Evaluations, and Assessments | |
| Purchase items for archival preservation work (scanner, camera, gloves, shelving, office supplies, etc.) | |
| Hire interns (student workers) for Fall 2022 Semester | |
| Purchase items for archival preservation work (scanner, camera, gloves, shelving) | |
| Archival Preservation work on current collection: Digitize Collection on Digital Commons repository and conduct research on current collection to capure and develop stories. | |
| Collaborative Field Archival Research ~20 Field Site Visits | |
| Quarterly Performance Measurement | |
| Key Staff Training in Interpretive Storytelling, Archival Historical Research, Interviewing, and Disabilities Best Practices | |
| Quarterly Performance Measurement | |
| Post intern job announcement and subsequently interview, and hire interns for Spring 2023 semester | |
| Quarterly Performance Measurement | |
| Mid-Point Performance Measurement | |
| Quarterly Performance Measurement | |



| Activities | | Jul-2023 | Aug-2023 | Sep-2023 | Oct-2023 | Nov-2023 | Dec-2023 | Jan-2024 | Feb-2024 | Mar-2024 | Apr-2024 | May-2024 | Jun-2024 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PROGRAM YEAR 2** | **July 2023-June 2024** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Collaborative Field Archival Research ~7 Field Site Visits | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Archival Preservation work on Program Year 1 field research: Digitize expanded collection on Digital Commons repository and continue to capure and develop stories from collaborative field research. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Technical updates on the Dgital Commons repository to integrate with Oakwood Univerity and Eva B. Dykes Library's website. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Record and upload interpretive stories, interviews, event photos, and ASL intepretations to the Anna Knight Museum Repository. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Post intern job announcement and subsequently interview, and hire interns for Fall 2023 semester | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Quarterly Performance Measurement | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Post intern job announcement and subsequently interview, and hire interns for Spring 2024 semester | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Quarterly Performance Measurement | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Interperetive Story Program Review and Evaluation (Peer Review from Select Partners and OU Students) | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Review Evaluation and program adjustment, if necessary | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Program Delivery** | **Project Close June 2024** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Storytelling Program Launch-Program available on the Digital Commons' publicly accessible repository and other multi-media platforms. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Quarterly, End of Project Performance Meaurement, and Final Project Reports** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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## Type

During this project, the Anna Knight Museum (AKM) intends to generate digitized and born-digital resources and assets. These assets will be created by the museum staff, project team, and collaborative archival research. The resources and access created will include, but not limited to, still images, audio files, moving images, microfilm, object inventories, object catalogs, artworks, books, maps, metadata, charts, tables, drawings, and digital tools, plus accompanying documentation.

Digital content produced will be largely the AKM Collection consisting of over 136 historic papers, photographs, rare nineteenth century books, awards, periodicals, and reports from the Knight estate donated to us by her relatives. The other content we plan to produce will be digitized historical data collected through field research. Using the art of storytelling best practices, the digital content of the AKM Collection and other historical data collected, we will be professionally developed into audio and visual multimedia recordings of the interpretive stories representing historical events and stories of the unofficial educators of the Deep South.

We will create these recorded stories and digitized content using the resources and assets collected from our collaborative efforts and consultant-led training and partnerships. It is our intention to digitize the entire 136 item collection and no more than ten recorded stories. Our goal is to use design naming conventions and use metadata to assist in helping our program and collection easy to locate and discover through SEO and Organic internet.

## Availability

It is our intention to make our program and collection widely available and to share this program and collection through free and open-access repositories, including Digital Commons™, and other media. Our program and collection of digital products will be available through Digital Commons™, and other public and access-controlled websites, providing accessibly from anywhere in the world (i.e. access given to HBCU's, primary and secondary schools, and public libraries). These websites will permit the public to access, read, download, and analyze the work without charge. We will make the digital content and resources available to the public using our cloud-hosted institutional repository, Digital Commons™, Oakwood University's website, a dedicated AKM website, as well as accessibility via standard web browsers. We plan to distribute the program and collection, starting with HBCU's and PBI's and then public libraries.

## Access

The AKM plans to release, free of charge, our collection and program files under for unrestricted access with free license to reuse. We will freely distribute and identify any licenses under which digital products will be shared.

All research information gathered will become the property of the AKM. If any part of this program is intended to be used for monetary gain, it cannot be used without written permission from the AKM.

The AKM gives the IMLS, for purposes of the Federal Government, a non-exclusive, royalty-free, and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the work and authorize others to duplicate, reproduce, or otherwise use the work.

## Sustainability

The digital products produced during this project will be permanently preserved. We will retain our preliminary analyses, drafts of papers, plans for future work, peer review assessments, most social media communications, and communications with colleagues shared in the short-term.

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Our plan for preserving and maintaining the digital products during the project will be in the dedicated space of the Anna Knight Museum in dedicated archival containers for the near future, or until museum expansion. After the period of performance, as the latest information is discovered, additional digital products may be developed and curated. We will purchase archival containers for the original collection pieces. All digitized products will be available on shared repositories. The University's IT department will ensure proper technical documentation. In addition, OU will be responsible for migration planning and commitment of organizational funding for these purposes.