Museum Grants for African American History and Culture

Sample Application MH-257461-OMS-25
Project Type: Small Project ($5,000-$100,000)

Amistad Research Center

Amount awarded by IMLS:	$99,077
Amount of cost share:	$ 0

The Amistad Research Center (ARC) aims to make discoverable and to provide access to unique film footage and oral history interviews that document the historically Black community of Mound Bayou, Mississippi. This project will build upon ARC's previous work creating digital online collections to ensure preservation and access to historic materials. Activities will entail physical processing and cataloging moving image and sound recordings with unique numerical identifiers and outsourced digitization of all audiovisual items in multiple formats within the collection. At the close of the project, ARC staff will convene with colleagues from the Mound Bayou Museum of African American Culture and History to discuss, evaluate, and document processes resulting from project implementation. The outcome of this convening is to create and revise effective practices to sustain ARC's current and future digitization projects and discuss how ARC can assist and collaborate with the Mound Bayou Museum as it continues to grow into the future.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

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 and project category to which you are applying.

Project Justification:

The Amistad Research Center (ARC) seeks funding to make discoverable and to provide access to unique film footage and oral history interviews that document the historically Black community of Mound Bayou, Mississippi. The Brad Lichtenstein collection consists of 165 hours of never-before-seen video footage and oral history interviews recorded from 1992 and 1993 for an unfinished documentary about the historic city in the Mississippi Delta that formerly enslaved people founded in 1887 out of the Joseph Davis plantation. Award-winning documentary filmmaker Brad Lichtenstein's collection is one of the earliest examples from his documentary projects that focus on providing a platform for the narratives of the American Black experience. This project will not only preserve and provide wide-ranging access to the stories of the residents and community of Mound Bayou, Mississippi, but will also foster collaboration and partnership between the Amistad Research Center and the Mound Bayou Museum of African American Culture and History, and highlight the significate role the Mound Bayou community played as part of the civil, political, and economic activism during the Jim Crow era, the modern Civil Rights Movement, and beyond into present.

Lichtenstein and his company 371 Productions, founded in 2003, provides a platform to tell the stories of BIPOC voices using primary source collections located throughout the United States, including the collections at ARC. Lichtenstein worked closely with ARC's archivists and curators from 2016 to 2022 to produce the PBS Frontline documentary *American Reckoning* about the unsolved murder of Wharlest Jackson and the efforts of his family to reopen this case and other race-based murders cases in the South. ARC's stewardship and digitization efforts provided access to the extensive film footage of the Ed Pincus collection, allowing Lichtenstein and co-director Yoruba Richen to feature previously unseen film footage that captured the response of the African American community in Natchez, Mississippi, and local and national civil rights activists to the murder of Wharlest Jackson, including protest marches, meetings, and public sentiment. There is no doubt that the previously unseen moving images and recorded sound of the rich narratives of the Mound Bayou, Mississippi, community will become a central part of broadening the understanding of African American civic, community, and political life during a critical period in U. S. history.

Received in early 2024, the Brad Lichtenstein collection contains 165 items and an estimated 131 hours of moving images and sound recordings on ¾-inch Umatic, Betacam, VHS, 8mm video, and audio cassette tape formats. Lichtenstein donated the collection and provided a basic inventory; however, very little is known at this time about the true nature of the contents of the collection with the information currently available. Thus, ARC seeks to conduct digitization and preservation reformatting of the materials to complete metadata creation and descriptive content to better understand the significance of the resource and provide access for scholarly research, to the Mound Bayou community at-large, and the general public. Based on the assessment by the Curator of Moving Images and Recorded Sound and with discussions with Mr. Lichtenstein, the collection's content strengths have been determined to be significant for research use and public engagement, giving the voices of the Mound Bayou community's history and heritage to a new generation of residents.

The collection's topical strengths include economic, political, and civil rights activism in Mound Bayou, including discussions about the Mississippi Freedom Summer, Mound Bayou as a safe haven for Black reporters and witnesses during the trial of Emmett Till's murder, Black land ownership and farming, business development and networking, banking and loan assistance, education, healthcare, and advocating for and securing government funding for the community. Evidence highlighting the uniqueness of Mound Bayou should become clear when the collection can be fully reviewed[1], especially as it relates to the continued threat to its existence from the surrounding white community by limiting acceptable economic, social, and political behavior within Mound Bayou. Individuals interviewed include town mayors Wesley Liddell, Earl Lucas, and Nerissa Norman; educators Legorna Norwood, William Crockett and city librarian Minnie L. Fisher known for her work to acquire books by Black authors; politicians and judges Linda Coleman, Harvey Ross, and Harold Ward; and civil rights activists and figures Olivia Johnson, L.C. Dorsey, and Unita Blackwell. While the Brad Lichtenstein collection is audiovisual in nature there were some collected research paper-based materials donated including articles and publications, *In the Eye of the Storm*, a thesis by David Mark Silver (1993), and Booker T. Washington's *The Negro in Business* (1907).

As an organization focusing on the history of ethnic communities and social justice, diversity, and inclusion are interwoven into all of Amistad's collections, outreach efforts, internship programs, and policies. This project to digitize and provide access to at-risk moving images and recorded sound documenting the community, history, and culture of Mound Bayou, Mississippi, is a unique opportunity for Amistad and others to access previously inaccessible and unseen information about African American contributions to Black life and culture, and political and civil rights activism. In addition to the historical value of the Brad Lichtenstein collection to the Mound Bayou community, the collection is related to a number of archives and manuscripts collections at ARC including the papers of Catholic Bishop Harry R. Perry who served the pastorate in Mound Bayou; the papers of Mississippi civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer; the recently opened organizational records of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund and Emergency Land Fund, which includes materials and records related to the Mound Bayou Development Corporation and the Mound Bayou Planning Committee during the late 1960s to 1970s; and ARC's founding collection, the American Missionary Association (AMA) records, that include documentation regarding the Mound Bayou Normal Institute.

ARC is in a rare position to offer the three-year old Mound Bayou African American Museum Culture and History resources to enhance their operations and professional management. In the spirit of collaboration and fostering a long-term partnership, ARC's archivists and curators are available to consult on best practices in the museum field, provide information regarding funding sources and opportunities that the museum can pursue to support its mission, and work to share the town's history to a wider audience through ARC's online exhibitions, digital collections, and public outreach programs. The museum's Executive Director Hermon Johnson and former mayor and town historian, Daryl Johnson, will work with ARC to network within the Mound Bayou community and facilitate communications with individuals or their families represented within the collection; to assist ARC curators and archivists with questions regarding descriptive content from the collection; and to seek

[1] Crockett, N. L. (2021). Frustration and Failure. In *The Black Towns* (pp. 155–188). University Press of Kansas. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1p2gkjr.9

required releases in order to provide online access to the interviews and video footage. In addition, ARC and the museum will collaborate to produce a *Conversations in Color* public engagement program at the museum with filmmaker Brad Lichtenstein and former mayor and town historian, Daryl Johnson, to engage the community regarding this new historical resource and the history and culture of their town. *Conversations in Color* is a free cultural education speaker series that explores key social topics in the context of Amistad's collections.

ARC's project, *Preserving the Community History of Mound Bayou, Mississippi* closely aligns with the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) agency level goals to "strengthen community engagement and advance collections stewardship and access." In addition, the project meets the African American History and Culture program goals and objectives that "build the capacity of African American museums and their service to communities." This project aligns with ARC's mission to collect, preserve, and provide open access to original materials that reference the social and cultural importance of America's ethnic and racial history, the African Diaspora, human relations and civil rights.

Project Work Plan:

This project will begin July 1, 2025 and will end on June 31, 2027. Brenda Flora, Curator of Moving Images and Recorded Sound will implement and manage the project as Project Director. Key staff time will be devoted to this project on a percentage basis; therefore, it is not anticipated that there will be any conflict between ongoing responsibilities and those of this project.

This project entails two phases.

Phase I: Audiovisual Digital Preservation Reformatting

ARC's audiovisual preservation and digital reformatting program is closely related to its overall collections management and preservation policies. This program includes the digitization of material for both preservation and access. Activities to make available the Brad Lichtenstein collection will entail physical processing and cataloging moving image and sound recordings with unique numerical identifiers and outsourced digitization to vendor, Preserve South, Inc., of all audiovisual items in multiple formats within the collection.

The collection will be physically processed and each of the 165 moving image and sound recordings will receive a unique numerical identifier that will also become the digital surrogate's item-level file name. This work must be completed before the collection is packed and shipped to the digitization vendor, Preserve South, Inc. It is estimated the initial physical processing of the collection will take two months.

Preserve South will digitize the collection and provide preservation masters and hi-resolution access copies in the following formats: Uncompressed AVI 10-bit (720x486) and H.264/mp4@~700kbps Proxy for moving images and Uncompressed Broadcast WAV (96kHz/24 bit) and MP3@ 192 kbps

for sound recordings with a total of 8.15TB of digital surrogate files to be received. Digitization of the collection at Preserve South is estimated to take two to three months to complete.

The following standards will be followed for digitization of moving image material: for master files, the video will be encoded using 10-bit YUV 4:2:2 uncompressed. No image or sound processing, such as dropout compensation, noise reduction, audio equalization or limiting, shall be used in the creation of the archival masters. All archival masters shall maintain their source formatting, including interlacing, frame rate, aspect ratio, and recording standard. Access files will receive an MPEG4 wrapper (.mp4 extension) with video encoded using H.264/MPEG-4 Part 10 AVC. Audio will be encoded as uncompressed PCM, 48kHz. Files will maintain the original recording standard, frame rate, number of audio channels, and auxiliary information such as original timecode and closed captioning. The access copies will be de-interlaced. Levels may be adjusted. All non-program material at the head and tail of the tape, such as bars, tone or excessive black/silence, should be removed unless doing so incurs extra expense.

While the collection is at the lab for digitization, preliminary cataloging will commence to create the online finding aid in ARC's ArchivesSpace collection management system. In addition, the Digital Archivist will work to create the preliminary collection level file in ARC's digital asset management system, TMS Collections by GallerySystems. The Curator and Digital Archivist will coordinate to select any additional still photographs from the collection for scanning, and the scanned images will be imported into TMS.

Phase II: Content Analysis and Metadata Creation

Once the digitization of the collection is completed, Preserve South, Inc. will return an external hard drive containing the digital files, which is estimated at 8.15TB. The drive will be received by the Digital Archivist and will undergo standard intake procedures, including virus scanning and checksum review. Once complete the drive will be given to the Curator of Moving Images and Recorded Sound for sample quality control checks prior to the start of content analysis and metadata creation. This process is expected to take two to four weeks.

Staff will then view and listen to the digitized recordings to create content analysis and metadata descriptions. ARC employs the metadata standards of Dublin Core when describing digitized assets, as well as providing additional technical metadata as required. These descriptions will become part of the online finding aid to the collections within ARC's ArchivesSpace collection management system. During the course of the description and metadata creation process, the ARC project team will coordinate with the Mound Bayou Museum of African American Culture and History to network with interviewed individuals or their families for any clarification or additional information that will enhance accessibility of the collection. The content analysis and metadata creation process will serve to highlight any content duplication, as well as flag potential items for use in an online digital collection hosted on the Louisiana Digital Library (LDL) and the public *Conversations in Color* program to be scheduled during year two of the project. The entire description and selection process, as well as completion of the finding aid, is anticipated to take approximately ten months.

The digital surrogates of the preservation masters created under this project will be saved to ARC's SMART VAULT hosted by Iron Mountain with hi-resolution access copies saved to ARC's internal storage server hosted by Tulane University, allowing long-term preservation and access. The Digital Archivist and Curator of Moving Images and Recorded Sound lead the creation of policies and procedures that assist ARC in analyzing and professionalizing the stewardship of its digital assets including the selection, description, preservation, and provision of access.

Identified risks include unanticipated preservation needs of audiovisual materials, or delays in outside vendor digitization for audiovisual materials. However, ARC will adjust its schedule of completion based on regular monthly activity review and reporting as necessary in order to reflect needed changes to the work plan. Based on the success of previously completed archival processing projects, ARC staff is confident in their preliminary assessment of the collection in relation to the planning of this project.

Project Results:

This project will build upon Amistad's previous work creating digital online collections. ARC's most recently completed civil rights film project presented on the Louisiana Digital Library is the Ed Pincus collection, that filmmaker Brad Lichtenstein used for the PBS documentary *American Reckoning*. The Ed Pincus collection charts early attempts to register Black voters and the formation of the self-defense group Deacons for Defense and Justice in Natchez, Mississippi, in 1965. ARC has implemented several initiatives to provide better research access to and promotion of the collections, as well as implemented best practices for collection and preservation management. Online access to collections data, including digital collections, is a priority and with the successful implementation of a collections management system in 2009, research use of ARC's collections has increased exponentially over the last fifteen years.

ARC has embraced digital initiatives to enhance access to the collections and to better serve our global constituency of researchers, students, and patrons. Over the last four years, ARC has implemented its digital asset management employing the TMS Collections platform and has established relationships with outside vendors for hosting ARC's digital asset management system, its fine art collection management system (Gallery Systems), and storage of digital assets, thereby allowing greater access to its holdings for those who cannot visit ARC's reading room and for K-12 teachers to facilitate the use of primary source documents in the classroom. In 2015, ARC entered into a partnership with the Google Cultural Institute (GCI) to use their platform for digital exhibitions. Digital projects include the creation of online exhibitions and thematic collections hosted by GCI, the Louisiana Digital Library (LDL), and the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA).

At the close of the project, ARC staff will convene to discuss, evaluate and document processes resulting from project implementation, and include colleagues from the Mound Bayou Museum of African American Culture and History. The outcome of this convening is to create and revise effective practices to sustain ARC's current and future digitization projects and discuss how ARC can assist and collaborate with the Mound Bayou Museum as it continues to grow into the future. The accessibility of Brad Lichtenstein collection about the history of the community of Mound Bayou,

Mississippi will provide ARC's wide audience of scholars, students, teachers, documentary filmmakers and podcasters, members of the press, and the general public with a means to study the impact of self-reliant all-Black independent communities that were established in the era of Jim Crow.

ARC anticipates increased researcher interest and use due to more robust online description and information about this collection. In addition, the digitization of analog moving image and recorded sound formats will assist in the preservation of the content of those materials and make them available for the first time. ARC's existing policies and procedures for archival care and digital preservation will ensure the sustainability of the outcomes of this project.

ARC holds the physical property rights to the Brad Lichtenstein collection as per the Deeds of Gift, including allowing unfettered access to the public for research and viewing with a provision for ARC to use the materials for all standard and archive purposes without limitation. Brad Lichtenstein retains all intellectual property rights to the collection until his death when the intellectual property rights will be transferred to ARC without limitation. These purposes include exhibition, publicity, and educational endeavors in all media, including online. There are no ethical considerations that are known for sacredness, religious, or culturally sensitive content of the materials within the collections. This will be re-evaluated during review and construction of metadata for individual materials digitized during this project.

Digitization falls under archival reproduction and use, meaning this project is justified within the Deed of Gift.

Performance Objectives:

1. Submit complete reports by deadlines outlined by the grant award.
2. Acknowledge the Institute of Museum and Library Services in all print and electronic products that result from grant support.
3. Digitize approximately 131 hours of audiovisual items in the Brad Lichtenstein collection.
4. Complete content analysis and metadata creation for each recording and input the collection into ARC's content management system, TMS Collections.
5. Create an online finding aid to the collection within ARC's collection management system, ArchivesSpace.
6. Create an online digital collection on the Louisiana Digital Library public access.
7. Foster collaboration and partnership with the Mound Bayou Museum of African American Culture and History to promote access to the collection for the community and a national audience, as well as promote ARC as a resource for best practices in the archive and museum field.
8. The Mound Bayou Museum of African American Culture and History will host ARC's *Conversations in Color* free public culture and heritage speaker series to open the Brad Lichtenstein collection to the community and the public at-large.

Schedule of Completion:

Activity	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
One												
Two												
Three												
Four												
Five												
Six												
Seven												

Activity	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
One												
Two												
Three												
Four												
Five												
Six												

<u>Project Activities for the Period, July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025</u>:

1. Processing collection
2. A/V Digitization: outsource to vendor, Preserve South, Inc.
3. Online finding aid creation
4. TMS entry and scanning
5. Hard drive processing and check-in
6. Content analysis and metadata creation
7. Interim Reporting

<u>Project Activities for the Period, July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026</u>:

1. Content analysis and metadata creation
2. Digital exhibition selection
3. Finding aid completion
4. Digital exhibition upload
5. Event programming (likely timeframe)
6. Reporting: final project report and final financial report