



Diving into History: LIS In-Service Experience at the Black Archives of Mid-America

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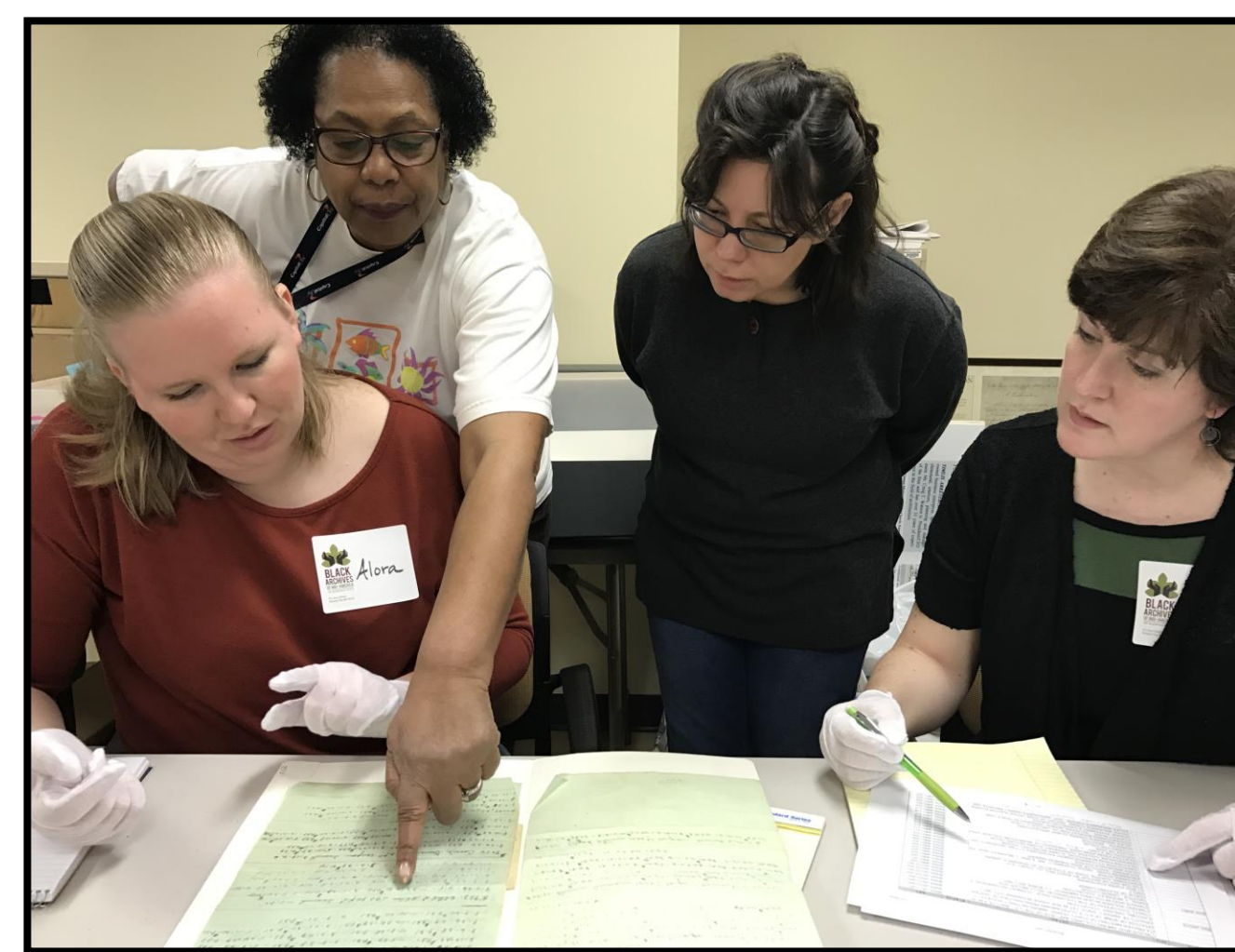
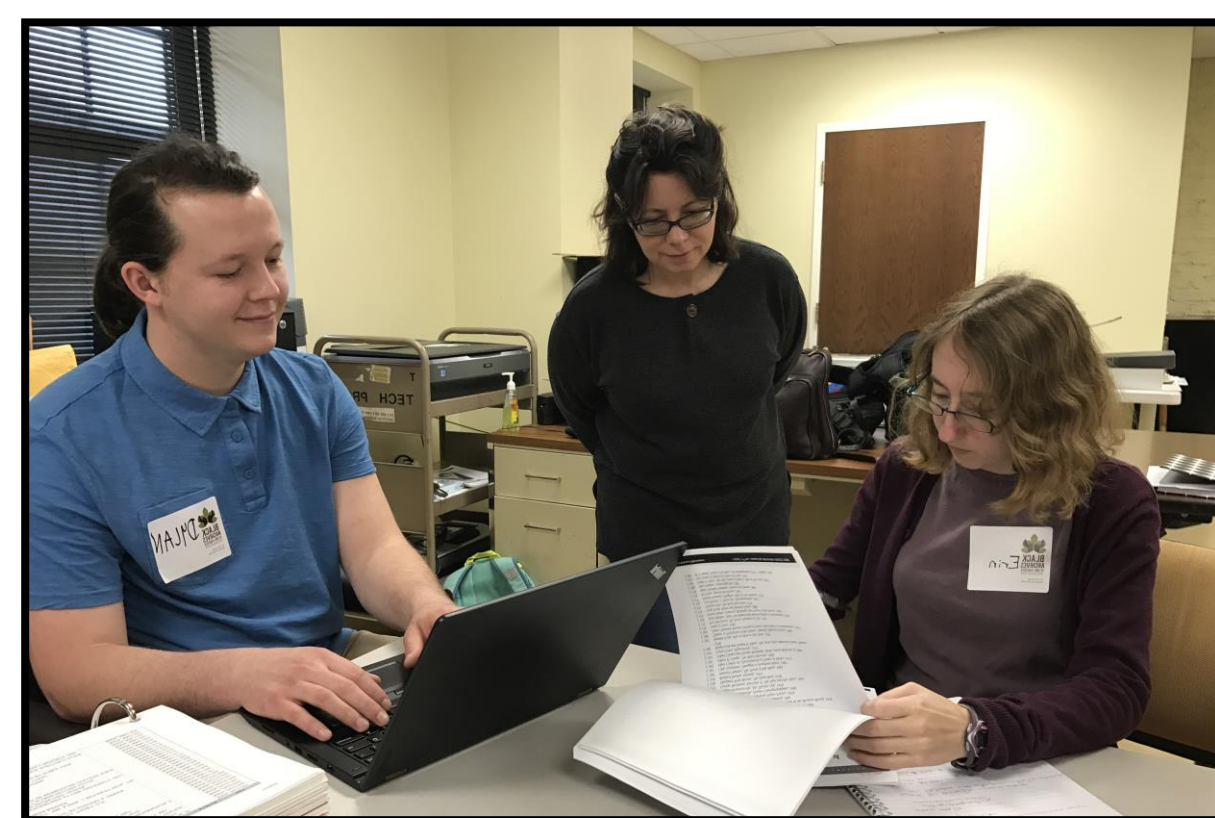
Introduction

"Archives in Context" was a one-credit hour course offered over Spring Break 2017, running from Sunday, March 26 to Friday, March 31, which provided six LIS graduate students with archival field experience at the Black Archives of Mid-America (BAMA). Following a five-hour "Intro to Archives" lecture on Sunday in Columbia by Dr. Sarah Buchanan, we began our work the next day at the BAMA facility, located in the historic 18th and Vine District of Kansas City, and continued throughout the course of the week. Working under the supervision of BAMA's archivist Geri Sanders, her associate Bridget Haney, and Dr. Denice Adkins, we were able to employ archival practices in sorting out those collections which remained unprocessed and thus unavailable to the public. This entailed handling the materials and creating descriptive metadata which would then be converted into a finding aid to provide access. Overall, the goal was to develop a more complete understanding of the archival profession and the responsibilities that come with it.

Background of BAMA

The Black Archives of Mid-America was created to collect and preserve the history of African Americans in the Midwest. Founded in 1974 by Horace M. Peterson III, BAMA housed its first collection in Kansas City's old Paseo Y.M.C.A. building before moving to old Firehouse

No. 11, the first all-Black firehouse in Kansas City, in 1976. During this time, Peterson collected oral histories of prominent African American community members, a former slave's cabin, and several other artifacts. In 2006, BAMA lost its home at the old firehouse. After a six-year closure, BAMA reopened at its current location, 1722 E. 17th Terrace, in 2012. Today, BAMA serves as a repository for photographs, letters, documents, and other historical artifacts that represent the African American experience of the 19th and 20th centuries.



Archival Studies

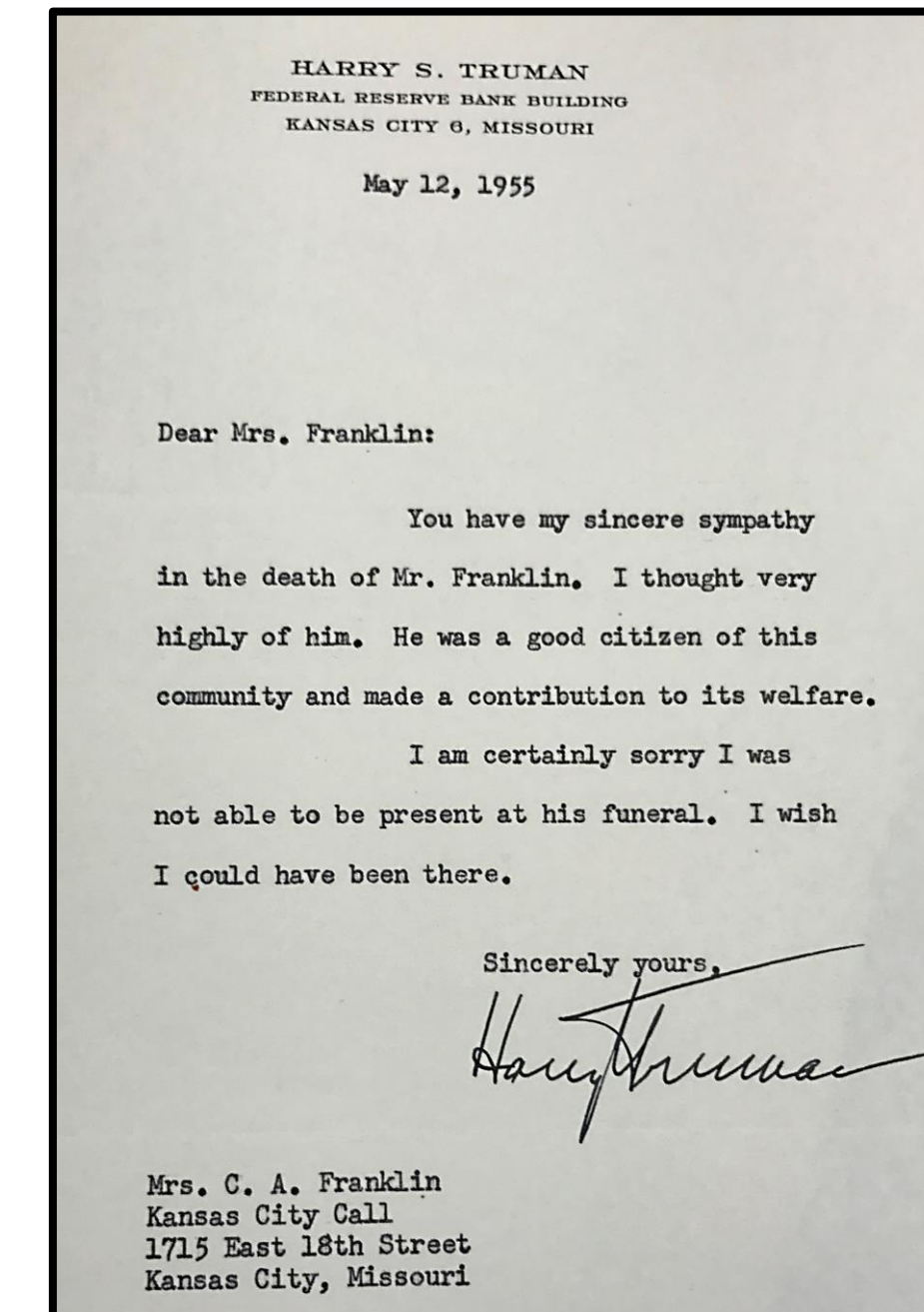
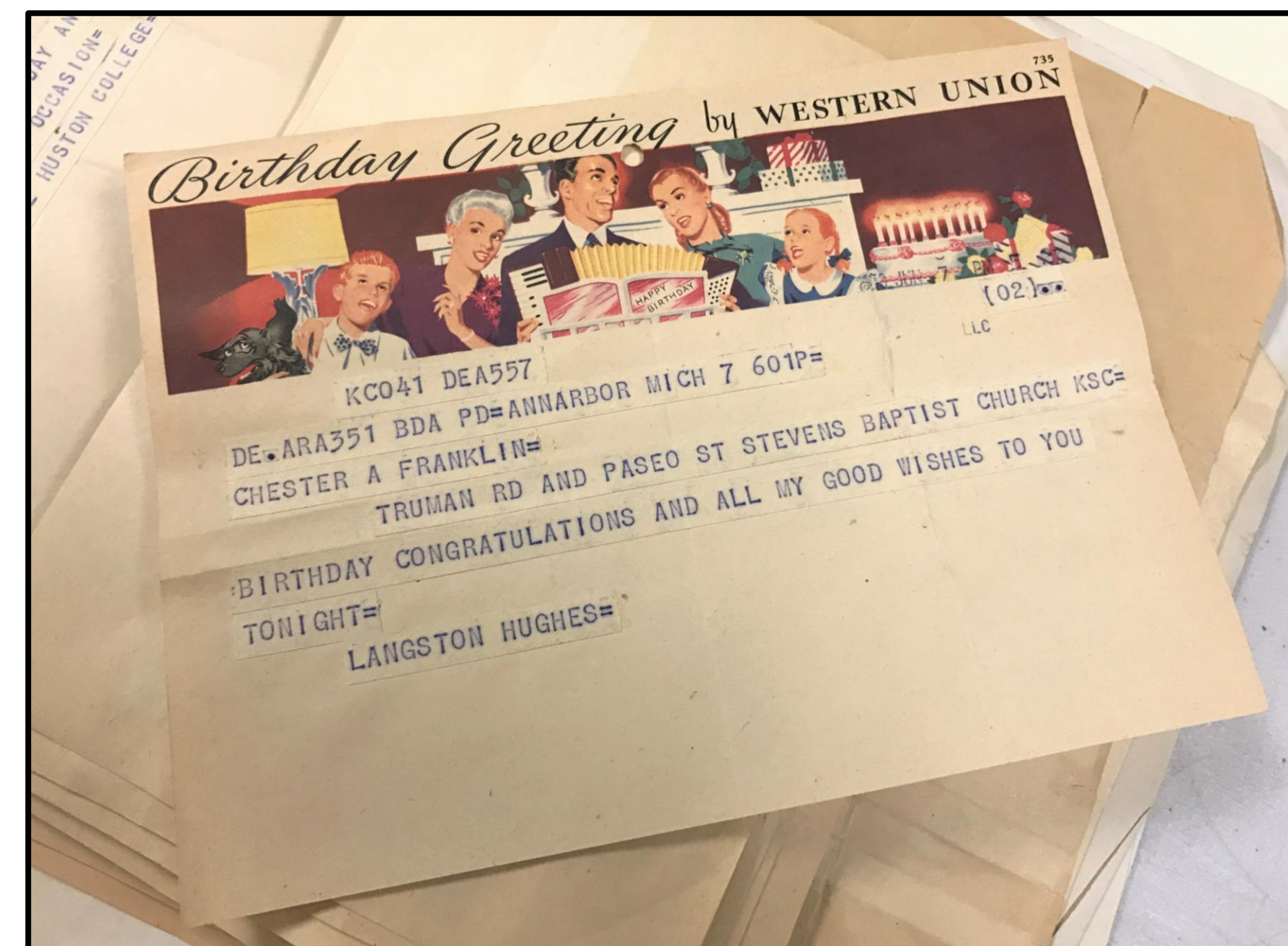
9410 Archives in Practice, led by Dr. Buchanan and Dr. Adkins during Spring Break 2017, was the first archives course offered at SISLT in many years.

Dr. Buchanan brings expertise in the areas of archives and archaeology, and now SISLT has developed a rotation of archives and records management coursework that began in Fall 2017. Courses on electronic resource management, digital libraries, and history of media and printing are available and may complement the educational experiences of those thinking about a career in digital or physical archives.



In addition, SISLT students recently formed the Society of American Archivists at MU Student Chapter (SAAMUSC) which gives students the chance to learn about archives through special events. Group members toured the archives and facilities of the MU Research Reactor, University of Missouri Archives, and the State Historical Society of Missouri.

SAAMUSC brings in speakers, organizes events, and raises awareness for archives scholarship at the University of Missouri.



Processing Collections @ BAMA

Collections processed during our week-long in-service included the J. McKinley Neal Collection, the Franklin Collection, and the Cloteele Raspberry Collection. The first step for each collection was re-inventorying existing boxes. If there were inventories contained within the individual boxes, these were checked against the physical master inventory. The contents of each box were then examined and compared against the inventory. Any extra items not listed on the original inventory were added and missing items were noted. While going through each collection, we recorded metadata on the folder level.

Metadata Schema

Using Microsoft Excel, we devised a basic metadata schema on our first day in order to precisely ingest all the information during our rehousing operations. Below is an example of our spreadsheet.

BA	AC	Box #	Folder #	Item #	Detail	Number of Items	Notes	Dates
BA4.FRA	AC56		1	1	0		1 Veil	n.d.
BA4.FRA	AC56		1	2	0		1 Ecclesiastical garment	n.d.
BA4.FRA	AC56		1	3	0		1 Plaque honoring Anderson F. Williams, 1975	1975
BA4.FRA	AC56		2	4	0 BA4.FRA02		1 Normand Durand Lady's Hat (Green Leaves with Pink Flowers); n.d	

- BA: First, we recorded the original "BA" number, which was the number assigned to the collection when the collection was received.
- AC: Next, we recorded the new "AC" number, which is the number BAMA assigns to processed collections. By combining AC, box, folder, and item numbers, a unique "call number" could be generated at the collection, box, folder, and item level, though this number was not used for assignment.
- Box #: (self-explanatory)
- Folder #: Folder numbers were first assigned in an ascending order, resetting to number 1 for each box. Once all the data was combined from all boxes, folder numbers were updated to represent an ascending order. See the row for box #2 for an example of this method.
- Item #: Since we processed the collection at the folder level and not the item level, each folder was assigned an item # of 0. This would enable future editors of the spreadsheet to process at the item level.
- Detail: For this field, we recorded any inscriptions on the original folders/items to enable identification and comparison.
- Number of Items: When possible, we noted how many separate items were in each folder for the benefit of the archivist. For example, one piece of paper comprised an item; one letter of four pages comprised an item.
- Notes: For this field, we entered details on the contents of each folder noting especially interesting, relevant, or important items.
- Dates: For this field, we provided a date, year, or range of dates.



After the first inventory check, we then went through the new inventory we compiled with Excel to determine a folder and box count as well as which folders would go in each box. Folder numbers were consecutive and did not restart between boxes. Once folder numbers were confirmed, we went back through the collection refolding any items with old folders and labeling each folder with a number in the right-hand corner and a brief description of its contents.

Any oversize materials were housed in flat boxes, and a tag attached to each piece included the folder number. If the items were taken out of their proper place in the collection, withdrawal forms were included in a placeholder folder. All process documentation was left in a separate folder. This included checked inventories, notes, and post-its used to label boxes.

Finally, we developed a label template in Word to create labels (3.33 in. by 4 in.) for the new boxes, and we produced a finding aid for each collection which would be placed on BAMA's website to aid researchers viewing the collection.

Cloteele Raspberry Collection (AC57)

Introduction

The Cloteele Raspberry Collection includes documents, photographs, and artifacts related to Cloteele Raspberry, specifically associated with her time as a fashion designer and officer of the National Association of Fashion and Accessory Designers, Inc. (NAFAD).

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Cloteele Raspberry
 Title: Cloteele Raspberry Collection
 Dates: 1958-1979
 Size: 2.25 linear feet, 3 boxes
 Collection Number: AC57

Donor Information

Found in collection.

Citation Note

Cloteele Raspberry Collection (AC57), Black Archives of Mid-America, Kansas City, Missouri.

Conclusion

Our time at BAMA provided a unique and invaluable experience working in an archive. The lecture that preceded the in-service component in Kansas City educated us in the foundational principles of archives. All students applied and discussed the principles of archives and consulted with BAMA archivist Geri Sanders in order to adhere to archival best practices and local practices. All students gained practical experience in processing inventory, recording metadata, rehousing materials, performing light preservation work, creating finding aids, and labeling collections. Our work for BAMA culminated in three processed collections complete with finding aids and a report to the archivist for future students.

In terms of labor hours, we collectively did the work that would take the archivist of BAMA six months to complete.

It is the sincere hope of the authors that more in-service courses of this nature will be coordinated.

References

Bauer, A., Jones, S., Martin, D., Niederberger, E., Schmitt, J., & Walker, J. (2017). *Final report of the collection processing procedures of the MU LIS SP17 archives class*. Unpublished report, School of Information Science and Learning Technology, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri.

Black Archives of Mid-America. (2017). *History & founder of the black archives*. Retrieved from <http://blackarchives.org/about/history>

