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Mississippi Digital Library

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Introduction

The [Mississippi Digital Library](#) (MDL) is dedicated to increasing the awareness of and access to the diverse and valuable resources found within Mississippi. As the collaborative digital library program for the state, the MDL partners with a range of institutions to bring together the vast amount of primary sources found in Mississippi and provide worldwide digital access to those resources. Ultimately, the MDL aims to provide a digital portal for the wealth of diversity found in and about Mississippi, and enhance collaboration between cultural heritage institutions within our great state. Working with over twenty institutions, each with a distinct focus, the MDL is as diverse as the participating institutions. Academic archives, museums, research centers, public libraries and historical societies bring unique contributions with various formats and context to the collections. From blues collections in the Delta to Hurricane Katrina collections on the Gulf, the content found in the MDL spans Mississippi history temporally as well as spatially. Furthering the research value and diversity of the collections, significant scholarly resources such as the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection and the Ulysses S. Grant Digital Collections may also be found through this distinctive discovery tool. Together, the MDL forms a veritable melting pot of cultural and historical resources for use by researchers worldwide.

Building the Mississippi Digital Library

The Mississippi Digital Library began as a grant-funded partnership with Delta State University, the University of Mississippi, The University of Southern Mississippi, Tougaloo College, Jackson State University and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. With funding awarded in December 2003 by the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services, the MDL built upon the foundation of a previous University of Southern Mississippi project, the Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive. The first and only collaboration of its kind in the state, the MDL attempted to identify and unite six institution's civil rights materials digitally online. Three years were spent identifying the primary sources to be included at each institution, digitizing the materials, creating metadata, and making the materials available online. By the end of the grant, the MDL had digitized 2,268 items and over 10,000 pages of civil rights materials. A unanimous agreement by all institutions involved determined that the MDL would continue after the grant funding and would be hosted at USM.

Expansion

The next few years saw the expansion of the MDL, not just in member institution numbers and collection size, but in the scope of the project as well. Rather than keeping the focus limited to institutions of higher learning and civil rights, the advisory board decided to open the library up to all cultural heritage institutions and any collections that would show off the incredible scholarly resources available within the state. A dining hall record of soldier's activities during the Civil War was added from Beauvoir, the Jefferson Davis Museum and Library in Biloxi, Mississippi. Genealogy documents and an oral history from First Regional Library in Oxford, Mississippi were uploaded. Numerous other collections were identified and selected for inclusion in the MDL with topics ranging from Hurricane Katrina to the Korean War and the

students of Mississippi Gulf Park College for Women. This time period also saw the addition of the first public library, museum, community college and research center to the member institution ranks. The program now includes three museums, five public libraries, three community colleges, six universities and colleges, two research centers, and a historical society.

Diversity in the collections continues to grow exponentially as well. Our newest collection additions include the Lucy Somerville Howorth Collection from Delta State University, photographs of WWII army training camps from Camp Van Dorn, and historic photographs and documents of Clarksdale and Coahoma County, Mississippi from the Carnegie Public Library. Additionally, The University of Mississippi has added a new Mississippi postcard collection with over 370 postcards of Mississippi cities and counties, and The University of Southern Mississippi has added the S. G. Thigpen papers featuring historical materials from the seventy-eight year business of the Thigpen Hardware Company in Picayune, Mississippi.

Non Mississippi centric research collections are also growing. For example, The University of Southern Mississippi Libraries partnered with the USM Geography Department to launch an interactive historical map viewer where users can overlay a historical map over a current base map to note differences over time. Additionally, The University of Mississippi's Kenneth S. Goldstein Recordings contain over 850 audio reels, documenting the folk traditions of Ireland and the United Kingdom and their influence on North American folklore and music. These collections bring international attention to Mississippi, highlighting the state as a premier research venue.

Moreover, the MDL is apt to provide training opportunities across the state. Recently, the MDL was awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to host two digital preservation experts and a day long workshop for Mississippi institutions. Information was delivered on digital preservation requirements and recommendations to ensure long term access to our collections. Building on the fundamentals presented, the MDL is working towards guaranteeing long term access to our collections and ensuring the valuable research materials in Mississippi will be available not only to current researchers, but future generations of researchers as well. Educational opportunities such as workshops and training sessions help us progress as a state and foster collaboration as we move forward.

Looking to the Future

The MDL looks forward to showcasing Mississippi's cultural heritage diversity as we continue to expand our list of participating institutions and increase the digital collections we exhibit. We believe that even the smallest cultural heritage institutions hold valuable resources, and we seek to aid them both in the digitization of their materials and by facilitating increased access to those materials. Whether assisting in grants, providing workshops for learning, or simply making their collections more discoverable, the MDL is devoted in encouraging all Mississippi cultural heritage institutions to succeed and foster statewide collaboration along the way. We encourage researchers to utilize the MDL's unified portal to Mississippi's diverse collections, and look for additional cultural heritage institutions to join our membership. Diverse collections and

institutions add to the uniqueness of the Mississippi Digital Library, and help to provide an accurate portrayal of the vast research materials available in Mississippi.