

Research Article

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Representation of Black History in Archives: A Collection-Centered Quantitative Analysis of the Billups-Garth Archive

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Abstract: This pilot study presents a collection-centered quantitative analysis of Black history resources available at the Billups-Garth Archive in Columbus, Mississippi. The Archive's inventory lists for its record series and control files for its manuscript collections were assessed in order to determine the percentage of extant Black history resources in relation to the collection's total holdings. Relevant collections were then evaluated to determine their mediums, subjects, and provenance. The results showed a dearth of collections related to Black history and indicated that very few were created by the Black community. Results also showed that most relevant resources were made up of textual documents as well as documents relating to everyday life and education. Overall, this study demonstrates how collection analyses may be undertaken to identify collection biases and collection deficiencies, especially deficiencies in representing the histories of marginalized communities.

Keywords: Collection bias, Collection equity, Marginalized communities, Systemic racism, White privilege

Since the early 20th century, historians, scholars, and activists have recognized a dearth of primary resources that reflect Black culture and history and have promoted the conscious collecting of resources in this area. For instance, in the 1910s and 1920s, Carter G. Woodson and Arthur Schomburg were instrumental in recovering and preserving collections related to the Black experience in America (Goggin, 1985, p. 262; Holton, 2007, p. 219). During the 1960s, attention to collecting the history of the Black community increased with the rise of the Civil Rights Movement and growing academic interest in Black Studies (Porter, 1976, p. 77; Gibbs, 2012, p. 197).

Researchers note, however, that even in the 21st century there is still an overall lack of equal representation (Flinn, 2007, p. 152; Johnston, 2001, pp. 213-215; Prescod, 2017, p. 76). Andrew Flinn (2007) and Rabia Gibbs (2012), for example, have openly reprimanded the archival community for its lack of conscious attention to collecting resources that represent the history of marginalized communities, including Black archival resources (p. 152; p. 199). Others have further noted that the resources that do exist are often limited in scope in terms of type and subject matter and often are not created by the Black community (Gibbs, 2012, p. 199; Prescod, 2017, p. 76). Many of these researchers call on the archival community to recognize its overwhelming complicity in systemic racism and offer insights on how to overcome this form of white privilege (Dunbar, 2006, p. 113; Punzalan & Caswell, 2016, p. 33; Robinson-Sweet, 2018, p. 24; Smith & Cotton, 2018).

In light of these issues, some repositories have made stronger attempts to combat this lack of representation by crafting mission statements and collection policies that reflect this desire. One such organization includes the Columbus-Lowndes Public Library's Billups-Garth Archive (BGA), a local-history

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archive established in 1992 that is dedicated to collecting resources related to Lowndes County, Mississippi (Vance-Ali, 2011, p. 1). Its mission is to collect materials that “[represent] the diversity of Lowndes County and its people” (Vance-Ali, 2011, p. 1). It seeks “[m]aterials ... encompassing every race, gender, religion, age, business, etc.” (Vance-Ali, 2011, p. 2).

Because creating a balanced collection is central to the BGA’s mission and purpose, a collection-centered quantitative analysis of the archive’s primary resources (i.e., manuscript collections and record series) relating to Black history was undertaken in order to understand better the extent of these resources as well as address specific deficiencies that may exist. Thus, this paper examines the scope, depth, and variety of primary resources reflecting Black history at the BGA. More specifically, it seeks to answer four central questions. First, this paper will examine what the percentage of Black primary resources is within the existing archival collection. It will also analyze the types of resources that make up this percentage (e.g., textual documents, ephemera, sound recordings, etc.). The subjects or themes associated with these resources will also be assessed. Finally, the paper will determine the provenance of each relevant collection and evaluate what percentage of these resources were created by members of the Black community. The overall goal for this project is not only to help the BGA identify its Black primary resources, but also to contribute to scholarship relating to the representation of Black history in archival collections and to encourage other repositories to perform similar analyses.

Throughout the study, the researcher used jargon specific to archival practice and social-scientific research; thus, some readers may find the defining of these terms beneficial to understanding. First, it is important to understand the various documents the BGA uses to establish intellectual control over its record groups and manuscript collections. For example, the BGA maintains inventories for each of its record groups; each inventory lists the record series that make up the record group and contains brief descriptions of each series. In addition, the BGA maintains a control file for each of its processed and unprocessed manuscript collections. Each control file contains an accession record, which is “[a] form or log that summarizes standard information about the process of transferring materials to a repository,” and a deed of gift that serves as a transfer of ownership agreement between a collection donor and archival repository “without an exchange of monetary compensation” (SAA, 2020a, para. 1; SAA, 2020b, para. 1). An important component of these documents is that they often track the provenance of a given collection, which is “a fundamental principle of archives, referring to the individual, family, or organization that created or received the items in a collection” (SAA, 2020c, para. 2). For the purposes of this study, provenance refers to the creator(s) of the materials in any given collection.

In addition, this study is centered around collection analysis, which “provides information on various aspects of the collection, among them the number of pieces and titles in a particular subject; formats represented; age and condition of materials; breadth and depth of coverage; language in which the resources are available; patron use and nonuse of the collection; and resource sharing” (Johnson, 2014, p. 297). This information is vital to collection development and maintenance because it allows archivists to acknowledge their collection strengths and weaknesses and develop collecting priorities. Finally, it is important to understand that the current study was conducted as a pilot study. In other words, it serves as a “[brief] exploratory investigation to determine the feasibility and validity of procedures, measurement instruments, or methods of analysis that might be useful in a subsequent, more in-depth research study” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 370). While the current study may not be able to generalize about the state of Black history in archives, it can serve as a model for conducting similar analyses at other archival repositories or as a launching point for similar, but possibly more generalizable, scholarly research and discussion.

Furthermore, this pilot study served as the researcher’s capstone project for her Archives and Special Collections Certificate from the University of Southern Mississippi, which she submitted in February 2018. The BGA was chosen because the researcher served as an archival intern from August-December 2017. During this time, the author noticed a large number of community requests for materials related to the Black experience in Lowndes County, Mississippi. These requests prompted the author to explore research related to the collecting of Black history resources in archives, which aided in the formation of the research questions listed in this study. Thus, once her internship responsibilities ended at the beginning of December 2017, she began collecting data in relation to these research questions over the course of a two-week span.

In order to keep the study feasible within the limited timeframe, the researcher chose to focus only on the BGA's primary resources, and the study does not include data in relation to secondary research materials. It is important to note that over the course of this study, some assumptions were made. First, it was assumed that all inventories used for data collection were up-to-date and accurately represented the repository's current holdings of primary resources. It was further assumed that information (e.g., donor agreements and accession records) found within the archive's control files consistently and accurately represented the contents of physical collections.

Due to the lack of recent scholarship on this topic, the current study's findings may fill a gap in research about the representation of Black history in archival collections. Practicing archivists and historians with interest in Black history may find the results and recommendations of this study of interest. Further, the study's methodology and its findings may help archivists and other stewards of history evaluate their own collection practices of Black primary resources and may encourage other researchers to conduct similar or more comprehensive analyses in the future.

1 Literature Review

1.1 Overview

Concerns for equal representation in archival collections is not a recent development. In fact, efforts to strengthen Black representation date as early as the 1910s and 1920s. Goggin (1985) notes that Carter G. Woodson, with the assistance of J. Franklin Jameson, worked in the 1920s to develop the Carter G. Woodson Collection of Negro Materials, a collection at the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress comprising over five thousand documents (p. 261). Holton (2007) also credits Arthur Schomburg's work as a historian, archivist, and theorist in the 1910s and 1920s as being instrumental in "recovering, archiving, and popularizing a dynamic history of the African Diaspora" (p. 219). However, efforts to collect these resources stagnated until the 1960s (Gibbs, 2012, p. 197). According to Porter (1976), this new interest in Black Studies prompted repositories "to examine closely their collections to discover unknown, hidden, or uncataloged Afro-American subject matter... [and] to augment their meager holdings and in some instances build new collections of Afro-Americana" (p. 77). However, Johnston (2001) notes that even after individuals such as Howard Zinn and F. Gerald Ham reprimanded the archival community's role in unequal collecting practices in the 1970s, efforts in acquiring Black and ethnic minority resources were no better thirty years later (pp. 213-215). Flinn (2007) seems to agree and states: "[T]he mainstream or formal archive sector does not contain and represent the voices of the non-elites, the grassroots, the marginalised" (p. 152).

Recent scholarship has attempted to identify the cause of this unequal representation of the Black community in archival collections. Suggested causes include: a lack of written records; incorrectly or inefficiently coded record indexes; skepticism toward mainstream repositories; and assumptions stemming from within the Black community that their own histories are insignificant (White, 1987, pp. 237-238; Johnson, 2017, p. 1). Still, others blame passivity and a general adherence to the status quo (Zinn, 2009, p. 527; Gibbs, 2012, p. 196). Moreover, some studies point to systemic racism and white supremacy as root causes (Dunbar, 2006, p. 113; Robinson-Sweet, 2018, p. 24).

Furthermore, scholars have also pointed out that when resources do exist, they are often limited in scope. For instance, Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd (2009) describe the shortcomings of mainstream archival collecting practices when compared to those of community-driven archives. They state:

The collections held by these archives include a much broader range of materials than would be traditionally be collected and preserved in a mainstream archive. Alongside the more conventional organisational records, personal letters and oral histories, there are books, pamphlets, leaflets, posters, objects and art works as well [as] what is usually described as ephemeral but is in fact absolutely crucial. (p. 79)

In addition, HistoryMakers (2010) notes that collections relate largely to "slavery, the Civil Rights movement,

music, sports, and entertainment” (as cited in Gibbs, 2012, p. 199). Prescod (2017) indicates that there is also a lack of “Black agency in the making of the record,” where instead this history is crafted by mainstream society (p. 76).

1.2 Key Literature

Though equal representation in archival collections remains problematic, the literature indicates that the number of Black archival resources and repositories has grown over the course of the last two decades. Bond’s (2004) article detailing the digitization of analog Black oral histories not only includes best practices for creating digital audio files, but also highlights the two collections included in the project: The Black Oral History Collection and the Civil Rights Interviews (p. 16). Through this effort, both collections are available to stream online through the Washington State University Library’s CONTENTdm-supported platform (Bond, 2004, p. 15). LaGuardia (2006) brings attention to the digitization of the Black Studies Center, an extension of the New York Public Library’s Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (p. 26). In the article, LaGuardia (2006) describes the Center’s holdings as “commissioned essays detailing the Black Experience and other related materials” (p. 26).

Evans (2007) details initiatives to digitize Black publications, which include the National Information Service Corporation’s *Black Studies Database*; the aforementioned Black Studies Center; Accessible Archive Inc.’s African American Newspapers: The Nineteenth Century; and others (pp. 205-206). According to Evans (2007), “The digitization of African American publications is significantly increasing access to the voice of a community that educators and information specialists have been recapturing” (p. 203). Davis (2008) offers a more extensive list of collections held at public libraries, universities, museums, and cultural organizations dedicated to preserving and promoting Black history (p. 695). The article contains summaries and access information for more than 37 collections and repositories (Davis, 2008, pp. 695-698).

Others have explored more non-traditional means of highlighting Black primary materials. For instance, Averkamp (2009) details the process of creating the digital collection African American Women Students at the University of Iowa 1910-1960 (p. 157). While the article articulates digitization processes, the author also describes the challenges of capturing the experiences of an underrepresented population, which necessitated pulling individual pieces from multiple archival collections to create one, cohesive digital collection (Averkamp, 2009, pp. 157-158). Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd (2009) describe several community archives in the United Kingdom that attempt to document the history of marginalized society that does not appear in “mainstream archives”; these include Future Histories, rukus!, and Migrant and Refugee Communities Forum (p. 75). According to Flinn et al. (2009), the community archives is “a form of activism that seeks to redress or rebalance [the] pattern of privileging and marginalising” (p.74).

In recent years, articles have detailed the continued efforts to collect and preserve Black primary resources. Stewart (2011) focuses on the development of the Tyler, Texas Black Film Collection, which was created after recovering nitrate prints of Black films in the 1930s-1950s (p. 147). Stewart (2011) examines the recovery of these “lost” materials, especially in terms of why they were dismissed for so long, and argues:

The more we look into the material histories of these films, the more we stand to learn about how they and other films have been affected by, in David Robinson’s words, “the intervention of time, storage conditions, projectionists, editors, colourists, thieves, producers, distributors, re-issuers, titlers, re-titlers, censors, over-enthusiastic archivists, incompetent archivists, and practically everyone else who ever came into contact with [them].” (p. 166)

Further, Brooks-Tatum (2016) describes efforts made by Virginia State University’s (VSU) Special Collections and Archives to preserve the history of Black VSU students through the digitization of artifacts, manuscripts, photographs, and sculptures (p. 28). According to Brooks-Tatum (2016), this digitization initiative has made Black primary resources, especially in relation to achievements in the arts, education, and public policy, more widely accessible to researchers (p. 29).

1.3 Collection Analyses

According to Johnston (2001), in order to cultivate more representative archives, archivists should engage in collection analyses in order to establish “collecting priorities”; the author argues that this process allows archivists to “realistically evaluate the materials they currently hold, identify any significant weaknesses and use this knowledge to develop acquisition priorities” (p. 219). However, there are very few recent studies in circulation dedicated to performing collection analyses on archival collections in relation to Black primary resources. McDaniel (2011) performed a survey on African-American records in the University of Kentucky’s Special Collections. The primary method for obtaining data included searching the repository’s catalog for relevant resources (p. 12). Heidelberg (2013), however, performed a collection analysis of the University of Southern Mississippi’s de Grummond Children’s Literature Collection to assess its holdings of African-American poetry. This research was completed by comparing the collection’s holdings to several checklists, such as Joyce Patton’s *African-American Poets Past and Present: A Historical View* (p. 6).

Johnson (2017) completed a study outlining the Black archival resources available in North Carolina, Georgia, and South Carolina. Johnson (2017) used a qualitative design where repositories were contacted directly for information regarding their holdings on this subject. Data were then collated into a single list of resources (p. 8). Finally, Cotton & Smith (2018) performed an environmental scan of the Giles County Historical Society in relation to Black resources, which included reviewing the Society’s microfilm collection, family files, and books (pp. 1, 3-4).

These previous studies serve as examples of the diverse ways in which one may approach a collection survey or analysis, which include catalog searching, list comparing, list collating, and environmental scans. However, none of these studies present a collection-centered quantitative analysis that seeks to uncover specific patterns in collecting habits in relation to Black primary resources. Furthermore, the current study seeks to understand better the quantity of Black primary resources available in relation to the larger archival collection in terms of extent, type, theme, and provenance. While this study has a similar goal as these previous studies — to highlight Black resources within archival repositories — these variances differentiate it in hopes of adding to the extant body of literature regarding Black representation in archival collections.

2 Methodology

2.1 Data Collection

The current study involved a collection-centered quantitative analysis to collect data about Black primary resources. Data were collected over the course of two weeks during December 2017 at the close of the author’s archival internship. Data were retrieved from two sources: record series inventory lists and manuscript collection control files. First, inventory lists of each of the Archive’s record series were examined (see Appendix A for an example). These inventory lists were considered the most reliable source of information on record series due to Mona Vance-Ali’s (the BGA’s Archivist) effort to carefully document record series relevant to Black history either in the title or notes field of this document. These series are divided into three record groups (chancery court records, circuit court records, and city & county records), and each record group has its own inventory list. In each inventory list, every record series is described using the following information: shelf location, title, inclusive dates, volume title, dimensions, physical condition, intellectual access, intellectual access rating, microfilmed, roll number, and notes. For the purposes of this research, the author considered the title, date, and notes fields.

While an inventory list exists for manuscript collections at the BGA, the author opted to utilize each collection’s control file due to the fact that often the titles of collections and their notes were vague or nonexistent in the manuscript inventory list. Materials typical of a BGA control file—for processed and unprocessed manuscript collections—include deeds of gift and accession records. Each deed of gift contains the name and contact information of the donor as well as a brief description of the collection’s materials (see Appendix B for an example). The accession records are much more detailed and include the

collection's accession number, title, donor information (name, address, phone number), date of receipt, date accessioned, provenance, contents, description of materials, inclusive dates, bulk dates, volume, condition, acquisition type, restrictions, possible future additions, temporary location, preliminary plans, notes, and accessioner information (name and date; see Appendix C for an example). For the purposes of this study, the information provided on the deed of gift that proved most beneficial included the description of the collection's contents; the accession record information that was sourced included the provenance, contents, description, inclusive and bulk dates, and notes fields.

In order to answer R1, the title and notes fields from the record group inventories; the notes field from deed of gifts; and the title, description, and notes fields from accession records were mined for keywords, phrases, and references relating to race (e.g., *African American*, *Black*, *colored*, *enslaved person*, *freedman*, *negro*, *person of color*, *slave*, etc.) as well as people, places, and organizations with strong associations to the Black community in Lowndes County. While rare (only two instances over the course of this study), when a collection's contents were ambiguous, additional resources were briefly consulted to verify its relevance; no more than half an hour was dedicated to this task. For example, one unprocessed manuscript collection, the Robert E. Hunt High School Proclamation 2005, required further examination. While Hunt High School served only Black students prior to integration, it served all races of students in 2005, the date of the collection. The physical collection, a single document, needed to be examined to determine its significance; upon further inspection, this document was a proclamation made by Jeffery Rupp (the mayor of Columbus in 2005) in honor of the Class of 1965's (an all-Black class) 40th high school reunion. This closer inspection deemed the collection relevant. Another collection that was problematic included the Literary Mississippi Collection, which contains the works of three writers: Frances Jones Gaither, an American writer best known for her novels on American slavery; Etheridge Knight, a Black American poet; and William Raspberry, a Black syndicated columnist. A simple *Google* search of these names confirmed the collection's relevance to the project.

Once a collection was deemed relevant, additional information was documented. In order to answer R2, the author examined the contents field of the manuscript collections' accession records to determine what types of materials were included in these collections, while all record series were deemed as being textual in nature. According to the BGA's accession forms, the repository uses 10 groups to classify resources, which include: books/publications, ephemera, film/video, maps/plans, photographs, prints/paintings/drawings, sound recordings, textual documents, and other. For the purposes of the current study, the maps/plans and other categories were omitted, and the data were analyzed using the remaining groups as well as the addition of one other group: three-dimensional objects. In addition, the notes fields from the record group inventories; the notes field from deed of gifts; and the description and notes fields from accession records were analyzed to answer R3. The author began by classifying collections based on HistoryMakers' (2010) list of common subjects related to Black historical collections (slavery, Civil Rights, music, sports, and entertainment; as cited in Gibbs, 2012, p. 199). However, the author quickly expanded and revised this list to include other subjects more commonly found in the BGA's relevant collections (church organizations, Civil Rights, education, Emancipation/Reconstruction, employment, everyday life, Jim Crow, legal/records, slavery, and sports and culture).

Last, answering R4 required the examination of the provenance section of each manuscript collection's accession record. All record series were assumed to have been created outside of the Black community due to their date (pre-1900s). In some instances, the race of a collection's creator was unclear based on the provenance information provided on the accession record. This ambiguity necessitated the use of collections' finding aids, when available (e.g., there are no finding aids for record series or unprocessed manuscript collections). When available, finding aids' biographical fields were sourced for information denoting the racial or cultural background of the collections' creators. When not available, the physical collection was scanned for clues regarding the racial or cultural background of the collections' creators. No more than thirty minutes for any given collection was devoted to the process in order to keep the project on track and manageable for a single researcher. In many cases, the racial and cultural background of a collection's creator could not be definitively pinpointed and was marked as "unknown."

2.2 Data Analysis

All data gathered during the collection process were recorded and organized within a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. For each relevant collection or series, the following information was documented: collection number, collection name, resource type, status (i.e., processed or unprocessed), date created, creator, and content notes. The data were then analyzed descriptively. The number of processed and unprocessed manuscript collections and record series were counted separately and collectively and then compared to the BGA's total collections/series in order to determine what percentage Black primary resources make up the archive's holdings. Data concerning the types of resources were color coded into seven groups: books/publications, ephemera, film/video, photographs, prints/paintings/drawings, sound recordings, textual documents, and three-dimensional objects. Data related to the overarching themes of collections/series were color coded into ten groups: church organizations, Civil Rights, education, Emancipation/Reconstruction, employment, everyday life, Jim Crow, legal/records, slavery, and sports and culture. Data relevant to the provenance of resources were color coded into three groups: yes, no, and unknown/uncertain. After coding, each group was then counted, and percentages of Black primary resources were calculated in relation to the BGA's total holdings. Visualizations for this data were also included in charts using Microsoft Office tools.

2.3 Limitations

Since this study focuses on just one repository's collections, its findings are not generalizable to all repositories, even those that also contain Black history content. In addition, the BGA does not currently utilize a formal electronic records management system, so electronic subject and keyword searches were not possible. Instead, the archive's inventory lists and control files were manually searched for keywords and phrases relevant to the study. In addition, due to time constraints, data collection occurred over the course of two weeks, and all data were collected solely by the author. It is therefore possible that some relevant collections were overlooked due to these limited resources. Even so, these results may shed light on the current representation of Black primary resources within the BGA that may prompt archivists and the like to consider the representation of Black history within their collections. Furthermore, this study introduces a new methodology in completing a collection-centered quantitative analysis and could potentially be used as a guide for other archivists in conducting similar analyses of their own collections. Finally, the results of the current study may stimulate new scholarly discussions and investigations regarding this topic.

3 Results

R1. What is the percentage of Black primary resources within the existing archival collection?

The project's first objective was to assess the percentage of Black primary resources in existence in relation to the BGA's collective holdings of primary resources. According to the BGA's inventory lists and control files, the archive holds approximately 413 processed manuscript collections, 356 unprocessed manuscript collections, and 34 record series, which totals to 803 individual collections or series (as outlined in Figure 1). From these, 31 processed manuscript collections, 32 unprocessed manuscript collections, and 5 record series — or 68 total collections or series — were deemed relevant. The difference in numbers between the total existing manuscript collections and record series and the total existing Black primary resources is stark. Translated as percentages, Black primary resources make up 8% of processed manuscripts, 9% of unprocessed manuscripts, and 15% of record series. When manuscript collections and record series are considered together, Black primary resources make up only 8% of the repository's holdings.

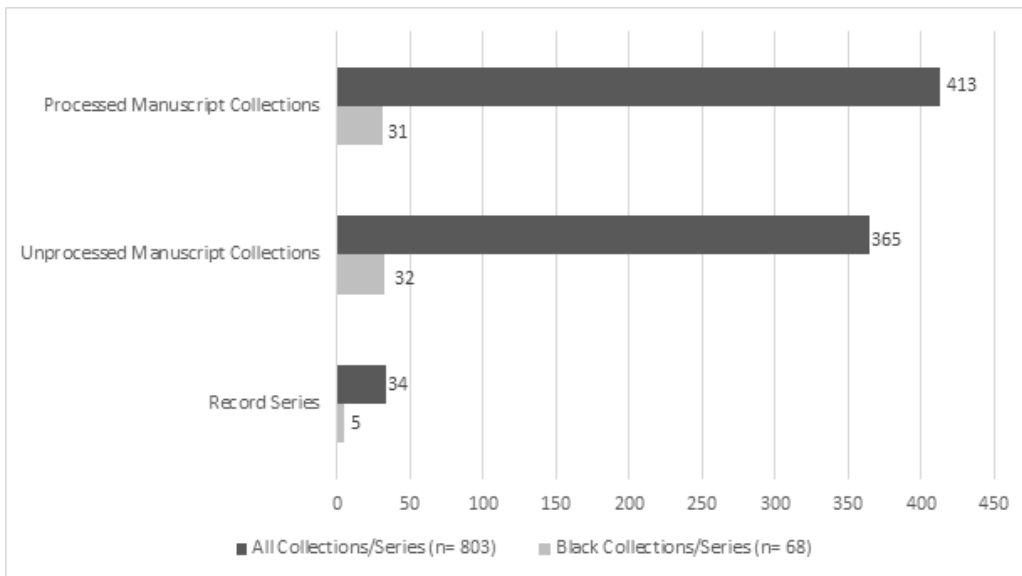


Figure 1. Total number of manuscript collections and record series compared to total number of Black primary resources.

R2. What types of resources make up this percentage (e.g., textual documents, ephemera, sound recordings, etc.)?

The project’s second objective was to identify the types of resources held by the BGA in relation to Black primary resources. As previously mentioned, the ten categories used to code the types of materials found in Black history resources include books/publications, ephemera, film/video, photographs, prints/paintings/drawings, sound recordings, textual documents, and three-dimensional objects. As Figure 2 shows, textual documents made up the majority of resources across processed collections (21 total), unprocessed collections (15 total), and record series (5 total). The remaining types had 5 or less representative collections. Thus, the following types make up the following percentages of the total number of relevant resources: books/publications, 6%; ephemera, 9%; film/video, 1%; photographs, 15%; prints/paintings/drawings, 3%; sound recordings 3%; textual documents, 60%; and three-dimensional objects, 3%.

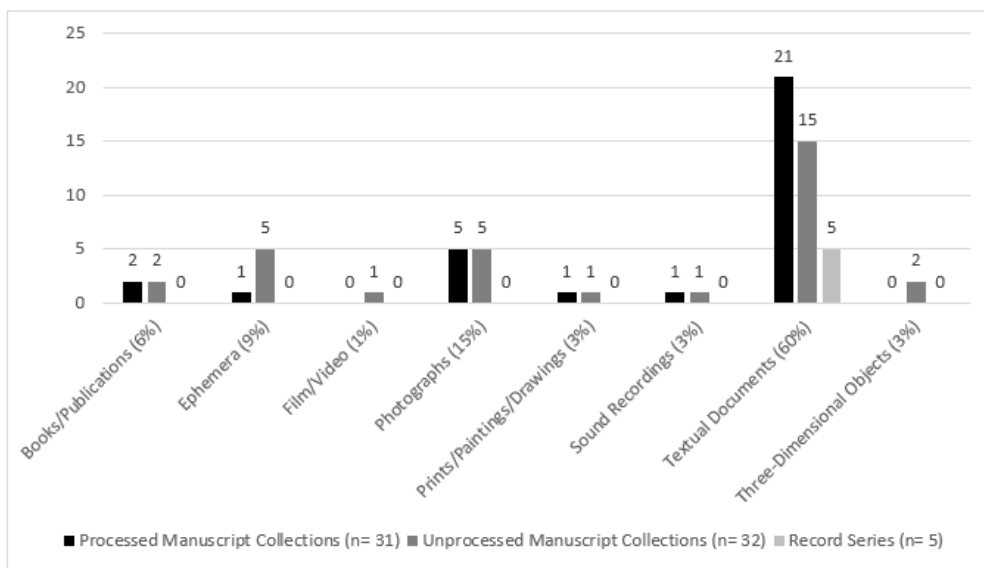


Figure 2. Black primary resources broken down by resource type.

R3. What are the subjects or themes associated with these resources?

As Figure 3 shows, the researcher identified ten overarching themes within the relevant materials. In relation to manuscript collections (processed and unprocessed) the following number of themes were found: church organizations, 1; Civil Rights, 3; education, 12; Emancipation/Reconstruction, 3; employment, 4; everyday life, 18; Jim Crow, 2; legal/records, 4; slavery, 6; and sports and culture, 10. In regard to record series, the following number of themes were recognized: education, 1; legal/records, 2; and slavery, 2. When considering these numbers together, resources pertaining to everyday life make up the largest portion of relevant resources at 26%. Resources related to education, sports and culture, and slavery make up the next three largest groups at 19%, 15%, and 12% respectively. The remaining themes break down as follows: legal/records, 9%; employment, 6%; Civil Rights, 4%; Emancipation/Reconstruction, 4%; Jim Crow, 3%; and church organizations, 1%.

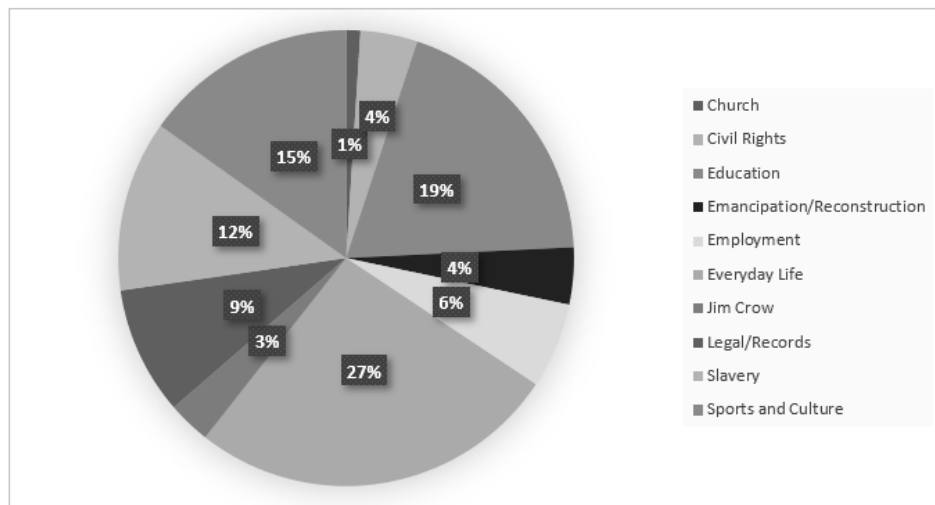


Figure 3. Thematic percentages making up relevant manuscript collections and record series.

R4. What is the provenance of these collections and what percentage of these resources were created by members of the Black community?

The project's final objective was to determine the provenance of relevant collections and to assess the number of manuscript collections and record series created by the Black community. Out of the 68 relevant manuscript collections and record series, only 13 were proven to have been created by the Black community. The figures show (as depicted in Figure 4) that 21% of resources have a provenance traced to the Black community, 35% have outside creators, and 52% have unknown or unclear creator origins. More specifically, the 13 collections identified as being created by the Black community were solely manuscript collections. All record series, a total of 5, were created outside of the Black community. Of the remaining relevant manuscript collections, 17 collections were documented as having creators from outside of the community (e.g., from the government or white community members), and no clear racial or cultural associations could be defined for the remaining 33 collections.

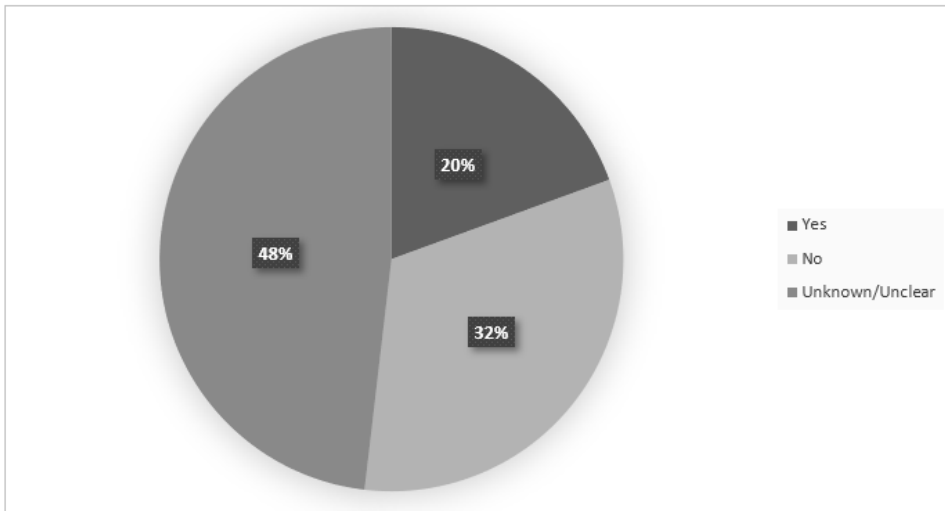


Figure 4. The percentage of resources created within and outside of the Black community.

4 Discussion

Findings suggest several implications. First, it was noted that of the BGA's 803 manuscript collections and record series, only 68 of these could be deemed as highlighting Black history in Lowndes County, Mississippi. In other words, Black primary resources make up only 8% of the total collection. This percentage seems low, especially when compared against data from the 2010 U.S. Census, which indicates that Black individuals make up approximately 43% of Lowndes County's total population (USCB, 2010, Race section). While this finding seems to echo much of what has been noted in the literature, some external factors may have an impact over the BGA's ability to acquire resources. For instance, the R.E. Hunt Museum and Cultural Center (REHMCC) is also located in Columbus, Mississippi and was founded in 2011 as a repository highlighting Black history in Lowndes County (REHMCC, n.d., Mission section). Thus, the BGA and the REHMCC may find themselves in competition over Black primary resources, which may have had an effect over what the BGA has been able to procure since 2011. Even so, the BGA's number of Black primary resources is low, especially considering that the archive has been officially operational since 1992 — nearly 20 years prior to the opening of the REHMCC.

It has also been noted that mainstream repositories, much like the BGA, often hold a very narrow range of materials, which most commonly include organizational records, personal letters, and oral histories (Flinn, Stevens, & Shepherd, 2009, p. 79). This assertion prompted the researcher to examine the BGA's holdings of Black primary resources in relation to their material type. The results revealed that, while 60% of the BGA's holdings of Black primary resources are textual documents, a wide range of other materials were found: book/publications, ephemera, film/video, photographs, prints/paintings/drawings, sound recordings, and three-dimensional objects. Thus, the BGA's holdings of Black history materials seem to span beyond Flinn, Stevens, & Shepherd's (2009) defining features of materials typically held at mainstream repositories. However, it is important to note that in comparison with the Archive's total holdings, these numbers are still small in number. Even the most significant portion of Black resources, textual documents, makes up around 5% of the Archives total holdings. This suggests that while the BGA holds a wide range of materials relating to Black history, these materials are still very small in number overall.

The literature has also noted that, while archives may hold materials related to the Black community, often those resources are limited to topics such as Civil Rights, entertainment, music, slavery, and sports (HistoryMakers, 2010; as cited in Gibbs, 2012, p. 199). Though the BGA's collections contain similar resources, they cover other subjects, particularly those related to everyday life and education. The literature's grasp of subject coverage may therefore be inaccurate or at least incomplete.

According to the literature, the Black community is rarely given agency over its own history, especially in terms of archival resources (Flinn, 2007, p. 152; Prescod, 2017, p. 76). This project's results showed that only 21% of these resources were created by members of the Black community. This finding supports assertions, particularly Flinn's (2007) and Prescod's (2017). This finding hopefully may help repositories, the BGA included, be more aware of the provenance of resources, especially in regard to the Black community, in order to create more equally representative collections.

5 Conclusion

There is an overall lack of research that explores the extent of Black primary resources within archival repositories. This project attempted to fill that gap by examining the BGA's holdings of Black primary resources in relation to common issues noted in the literature. Results indicated overall that the BGA lacks primary resources related to Black history and culture. The results also showed that a very small proportion of resources were created by the Black community. Rather than contradicting what the literature reports, these two findings support it. However, the BGA holds a high concentration of textual documents as well as documents relating to everyday life and education, which contradicts the findings of other studies.

While the results of this study have shed some light on the subject, they are not generalizable to all repositories. A broader view would require more research. Studies that use data from multiple archival repositories could be undertaken in order to present more exhaustive, comprehensive findings. In addition, other studies could compare the state of Black primary resources in relation to the resources of other racial, ethnic, and gender groups to better illustrate the unequal representation that exists in archival collections, especially among marginalized communities. Though the current study is unable to make generalizations or answer broader questions, it has demonstrated how collection analyses — specifically collection-centered quantitative analyses — may be used to identify collection deficiencies, which may be helpful in not only building collections that better represent the history of marginalized communities, but also identifying and overcoming systemic racism in collecting practices. Thus, the researcher hopes that this study will encourage others to tackle similar analyses in order to grow the collective understanding of this issue as well as create collections that better represent the communities they serve.

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Appendix A

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
1	Shelf Location	Title	Low Date	High Date	Volume Title	Dimensions	Physical Condition	Intellectual Access	I. A. Rating	Microfilmed	Roll Number	Notes
933		Circuit Court Lowndes County-Jury Lists List of Persons Liable for Jury Service-January Term 1874	1873-07-07	1891-05-01	No #	15.75 x 10.5 x 1	Tears/Scratches/Spine deterioration	None	Poor			New title taped on above original title--on front cover and side spine--"Lost of Persons Liable for Jury Service"/List indicates both white and "colored" individuals who served on the jury
934		Circuit Court Lowndes County-Jury Recet Book-County Warrants	1872-02-27	1878-04-27	No #	17 x 13.75 x 1	Tears/Scratches/Bug or rat damage to top of pages	None	Poor			
935		Circuit Court Lowndes County-Jury Lists-Record of Jury	1850-10	1856-11-10	No #	16.5 x 10.5 x .5	Tears/Scratches/Spine deterioration	None	Poor	Yes	64	Title on front cover is faded/newspaper clippings of public acts glued into first four pages of book--date 1863-1866 and some are glued over writing
936		Circuit Court Lowndes County-Records-April & Oct. Terms 1837	1837-01-01	1837-10-10	7	16.5 x 11.5 x 2.75	Tears/Scratches	Index 100%	Good			Index to Record Book #7 found inside front cover and put into acid free folder 8-6-07 by mkv
937		Circuit Court Lowndes County-Records-Oct. Term 1834 + April & Oct. Terms 1836 + April Term 1837	1834-09-22/1836-04/1836-10/1833-12-15	1834-10-14/1836-04-12/1836-10-13/1837-04-11	5	16.25 x 11.5 x 3	Tears/Scratches	Index 100%	Good			
938		Circuit Court Lowndes County-Records-October Term 1835 + April & October Terms 1836	1835-08-25/1836-04-15/1835-01-01/	1835-10-17/1836-04-18/1836-10-13	4	17 x 12.5 x 2.5	Tears/Scratches	Index 100%	Good			Page 87 has addition glued onto it and folded up/Index is in the back of the book and is a part of the overall book and not separate
939		Circuit Court Lowndes County-General Docket-Civil Cases 2922 To 3553	1902-09-13	1913-05-15	3	18.5 x 13.5 x 3	Tears/Scratches/Spine deterioration-spine cover detached & on shelf by book	None	Poor			
940		Circuit Court Lowndes County-General Docket-Civil Cases 3554 To 4151	1912-08-24	1921-12-08	4	18.25 x 13.5 x 2.5	Tears/Scratches	None	Poor			
941		Circuit Court Lowndes County-General Docket-Nov. Term 1894 + May & Nov. Terms 1896-1902-Civil Cases 2588 To 2921	1893-01-10	1903-05-07	2	18 x 13.5 x 3	Tears/Scratches	Index 100%	Good			
942		Circuit Court Lowndes County-General Docket-Civil Cases 2579 To 2975	1892-11-14	1902-10-08	1	18 x 13 x 2.75	Tears/Scratches	Index 100%	Good			

Image 1. A screenshot from the BGA's Circuit Court Records of Columbus, Mississippi Inventory. Please note that the shelf location field has been redacted for security.

Appendix B

Deed of Gift Form (Blank):

Side 1 of 2

Columbus-Lowndes Public Library
Local History Department
Billups-Garth Archives

Deed of Gift

Name of Donor _____

Phone number _____

Address _____

Description of Materials:

I, _____, being the legal owner of the material described above, do hereby give the material to the Columbus-Lowndes Public Library as an unrestricted gift, transferring both legal title and copyright to the library.

Donor Signature

Date

Mona Vance-Ali
Archivist

Date

Deed of Gift Form (Continued):
Side 2 of 2

Columbus-Lowndes Public Library
Local History Department
Billups-Garth Archives

Deed of Gift Addendum

Access Considerations

Separation of Materials

May the library publicize the donation of this collection? _____

May the library use your name to publicize the donation of this collection? _____

Donor Signature

Date

Mona Vance-Ali

Date

Appendix C

Accession Record Form (Blank):

Side 1 of 2

Columbus-Lowndes Public Library

Local History Department

Billups-Garth Archives

Accession Record

Accession No. _____ Record Group No. _____

Title of Collection: _____

Name of Donor: _____

Address & Telephone: _____

Date of Receipt: _____ Date Accessioned: _____

Provenance: _____

Contents:

___ Textual Documents

___ Sound Recordings

___ Maps/Plans

___ Photographs

___ Books/Publications

___ Ephemera

___ Prints, Paintings, Drawings

___ Film/Video

___ Other (describe): _____

Description of Materials: _____

Accession Form (continued):

Side 2 of 2

Inclusive Dates: _____

Bulk Dates: _____

Volume (approximate): _____

Condition: _____

Acquisition Type:

Donation/Gift

Transfer

Copied Material

Purchase/ \$: _____

Other (specify): _____

Restrictions: _____

Possible Future Additions: Yes _____ No _____

Temporary Location: _____

Preliminary Plans: _____

Notes: _____

Accessioned By: _____

Date: _____