

Response 1

Using the case of nine years of cooperation and collaboration between Liberia's Center for National Documents and Records Agency (CNDRA) and the Indiana University Liberian Collections (IULC), now a part of the IU African Studies Collection, this response addresses questions from the Theme I Provocation on collaboration at the international level (**endnote 1**).

Earlier this year, as we were planning the workshop, we asked Director-General Philomena Bloh Sayeh of the Liberian CNDRA, one of the original invited workshop participants, to write a statement in response to Provocation 1 on collaboration and partnerships. Director-General Sayeh and the CNDRA have collaborated with Liberian Collections at Indiana University for many years and more recently with other units of the IU Libraries, and we felt that she would be in a perfect position to respond to questions such as:

- What kinds of partnerships and collaborations will take us into the future?
- Should we find ways to establish networks of international partnerships as a basis for collaborative collection development?
- How might such partnerships look?
- How can questions of intellectual property rights be addressed at the international level?

With Director-General Sayeh unfortunately unable to attend, the workshop organizers asked Dr. Marion Frank-Wilson and Dr. Verlon Stone to respond to the provocation. Dr. Stone, in his capacity as head of the Liberian Collections from 2002 to 2013 and, more recently, as Special Advisor to the Liberian Collections/African Studies Collection of the Wells Library, and Dr. Marion Frank-Wilson, through her work as African Studies Librarian at IU and her long collaboration with Dr. Stone and the Liberian Collections, are both able to describe and discuss the partnership, albeit from the IU perspective.

Although relatively small, the IU Liberian Collections is the world's largest collection of publicly accessible Liberian documents, papers, books, and photographs. These Liberian Collections began to reach critical mass in the late 1980s when Professor Ruth Stone, then director of the Archives of Traditional Music (ATM) at IU and a Liberia scholar herself, began accumulating documents and other related materials on Liberia from fellow scholars. The ATM had already held a significant number of Liberian recordings with supporting documentation made by scholars in Liberia that dated back to the 1930s, including wax cylinders made by George Herzog, the founder of the Archives of Traditional Music. In 1997, both Professor Svend E. Holsoe and Professor Warren d'Azevedo donated their extensive Liberian collections, which to this day constitute the two core collections of the IU Liberian Collections.

In 1999 the IU Liberian Collections was officially established as an initiative of the IU Archives of Traditional Music at the first Liberian Collections Advisory Board meeting. In 2002, Dr. Verlon Stone became the Project Coordinator of the IULC, which marked the beginning of activities to acquire, curate, and provide scholarly access to the collections.

Advisory Board member Dr. D. Elwood Dunn and Dr. Stone made their first post-conflict trip to Liberia in 2004 to assess the condition of Liberian document repositories. They observed that CNDRA remained the most viable Liberian document repository although it suffered from nearly a quarter century of problems ranging from neglect to active war damage. Beginning with a 2004 meeting at CNDRA with document managers from several agencies, the IULC delegation agreed to cooperate in finding funds to begin locating and preserving the many at-risk documents and collections that still existed. Beginning with two grants from the British Library's Endangered Archives Programme in 2005, supplemented by an additional grant from the Africana Librarians Council/Title VI Librarians, CNDRA and IULC began working cooperatively and evolving into collaborative partnerships on projects that involved recovery, preservation, microfilming, digitization, and collections sharing. IU specialists also conducted workshops and training sessions on document handling and preservation techniques, record management, organization and description of archival materials, and basic collection administration.

In 2011 CNDRA installed a World Bank-funded digital scanning center, co-designed by the IU Libraries' Digital Library Program, the IU Liberian Collections, and CNDRA's IT specialist. CNDRA's Digital Scanning Center (DSC) included a sophisticated network of scanning stations connected to a cluster of servers for image storage, running networked land title management software and making the materials searchable and publicly available. The CNDRA/IU team trained digital scanning technicians, data entry technicians, and quality control specialists, as well as scanning project managers and IT operations technicians. When the training was completed in mid-December 2011, the IU specialists left Liberia. With the new Digital Scanning Center completely under the control and management of the Liberian staff of the CNDRA, the DSC has continued to operate until the present to scan nearly one million pages from Deed Registers dating back to the 1830s. These collaborative projects resulted in the 2012 signing of an MOU between the CNDRA, the IU Libraries, and the IU Liberian Collections (now also a part of the IU Libraries), formalizing the sharing of Liberian materials between the two institutions as well as experience and expertise.

Now that CNDRA's Digital Scanning Center is in full operation and broadband connectivity with Liberia is a reality (though still not cheap or widely available), additional exciting collaborations are underway to expand and share each repository's holdings: The CNDRA and IU Liberian Collections each digitize collections according to their own selection criteria, priorities, and policies and share this content with the partnering repository. Currently, CNDRA sends their scanned images to Bloomington on hard drives for ingestion into the IU Libraries' digital repository for eventual publication on the IU Libraries' web sites as well as secure storage in the IU Scholarly Digital Archives.

Currently the IU Liberian Collections re-versions the *Archives Online and Image Collections Online* Liberian content for Liberian users lacking adequate bandwidth. Whereas IU is able to depend on the availability of significant bandwidth and uses very sophisticated and complex server and networking technologies, Liberian public school, college, and university libraries, student technology centers, and archives still lack adequate connectivity and bandwidth to download and display the digitized materials at a reasonable speed. To overcome these problems, the IULC re-versions its digitized Liberian content using Greenstone Digital Library's open access software for the scanned images and associated metadata. With Greenstone software the IULC can produce an indexed, searchable package of digital content that can be easily written to DVDs or portable USB hard drives. For example, the Liberian Collections can deliver the 5,600 images in Liberian President William V. S. Tubman's Photograph Collection to anywhere in Liberia on one DVD, requiring only a Windows computer with a DVD drive. No Internet connectivity is required. Now the Liberian Collections is producing a similar deliverable using the 140,000 digitized pages from the William V. S. Tubman Papers Collection as found online at IU's *Archives Online*. Other digitized Liberian Collections will follow.

As more Liberian institutions connect to the Internet through a submarine cable connecting Liberia to the rest of the world via the Africa Coast to Europe (ACE) fiber optic cable, the current modes of collaboration will become easier and faster and new modes of collaboration will become possible. (By the way, it is lack of funds that prevents local hookups to the ACE fiber optic cable that was lit up in mid-2012, not availability or technology.) For instance, whereas CNDRA and the IU Liberian Collections now exchange digitized images via hard drives and DVDs carried by travelers, soon the transfers can be made online via FTP or similar transfer technologies. But two new possibilities are more exciting:

- Liberian users at CNDRA, the University of Liberia, and other Monrovia locations can link directly to the Liberian content at Indiana University as well as at other universities and public repositories. (As good as the Greenstone DVDs are, the presentation and power of IU's *Archives Online and Image Collections Online* are better.)
- Content, metadata, and technical specialists working at either CNDRA or Indiana University can remotely access the other location to work on their materials, anything from updating metadata to tweaking the technology on the other end.

Another potential area of collaboration where fast internet connections are of benefit is web archiving. A vast amount of knowledge world-wide (on websites, in blog posts, on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, etc.) is produced and disseminated via the world wide web. This is certainly true in the case of Liberia: discussions, analyses, primary information ranging from cultural initiatives to government information, and the latest news on unfolding political events are all published on the web—via websites based in Liberia and abroad. A collaborative approach to systematically archiving/preserving, cataloging, and making this content fully searchable

will ensure that both the CNDRA and the IU Liberian Collections are equally involved in selecting sites for archiving.

Nevertheless, until fiber optic cables connect the other fourteen county seats, not just the capital city of Monrovia, and Super Wi-Fi nodes (or a similar technology) enable more universal connectivity, the portable Greenstone Digital Library-based content on DVDs and hard drives will be necessary to reach most schools, colleges, and universities.

Both repositories also benefit from the collaborative sharing of digitized collections: sending digitized images of valuable Deed Register pages dating back to the 1830s to Indiana University avoids the thorny, politically sensitive issues raised when American and European "experts" try export national treasures to "save" them, issues certainly raised regarding the Tubman collections both by Liberians and the Government of Liberia and by the US and international granting agencies. Conversely, sending CNDRA scanned images of Liberian materials donated to Indiana University avoids problems raised when trying to de-accession collections earlier donated to the IU Liberian Collections because the Liberian owners were uncertain about the long-term stability of Liberia during or after the nearly quarter century of civil strife.

Regarding international issues of copyright and intellectual property: Verlon's experience with copyright and intellectual property in Liberia dates back to his photography and audio recordings in 1970, mainly of music and dance performance, interviews, and livelihood activities. Videotaping was added in 1975-1976, while working with archival materials did not begin until 2002. With the exception of Liberian newspapers and personal papers, Verlon has had very little experience with non-governmental documents and publications, but this is what he has encountered:

- Similar to the US, by law Government of Liberia documents, publications, and photographs are considered to be in the public domain.
- The Government of Liberia's 2010 Freedom of Information Act is more expansive than the US Freedom of Information legislation, providing additional protection for individuals and institutions publishing government documents.
- In spite of international treaties and conventions, vast differences exist in copyright and intellectual property laws among African countries, and it is assumed such is the case world-wide.
- Sorting out the applicable copyright and intellectual property laws for a photograph collection of a widely-traveled world figure such as President William V. S. Tubman is complicated by the various laws of many countries and regimes (colonial and independent), the time period, and the lack of identification of the photographer and agency.
- Setting up an Area and International Studies Librarians Group task force to research applicable copyright and intellectual property laws and publishing the findings online as tables and text would be an extremely useful undertaking, saving individual repositories vast amounts of research time that often duplicates similar research by other repositories.

Endnotes

1) While collaboration and cooperation are frequently used interchangeably, it is more useful for describing and understanding arrangements between organizations when they are considered as points along a continuum. Collaborative arrangements require more coordination, planning, active participation, and listening among the organizations than a cooperative arrangement. Collaboration is a more complex process than cooperation. (Partnerships are usually collaborative arrangements.) (O'Leary and Bingham 2009:3)

References

O'Leary, Rosemary, Beth Gazley, Michael McGuire, and Lisa Blomgren Bingham. "Public managers in collaboration." In *The collaborative public manager: new ideas for the twenty-first century*, edited by Rosemary O'Leary and Lisa B. Bingham. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009.