Black Book Interactive Project – Extending the Reach

Scholars Program

Abstract:

Scholars have access to millions of books in digital archives but a negligible number of these are African American literary texts. Even with increased interest in African American history, writing and culture, the continued absence of these texts in digital databases makes it difficult for scholars to engage in the computational analysis that has become a central part of humanistic scholarship. To bridge the gap between invisible archives and digital scholarship, the Project on the History of Black Writing at the University of Kansas presents the Black Book Interactive Project – Extending the Reach (BBIP-ER). BBIP-ER is a digital archive and research initiative that currently has 1,200 mostly unknown and understudied African American novels. An initial grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and current funding from ACLS/Mellon/ACLS will allow us to (1) add additional content to the existing archive, complete the conversion to machine readable files and add descriptive metadata; (2) adopt and test a user interface to enable greater discoverability; and (3) provide workshops to make BBIP-ER available to scholars outside the digital community. We will produce an expanded BBIP-ER database that provides a dedicated interactive environment for scholars to become working partners in new research opportunities. The availability of a major collection of understudied works not only provides evidence of culture/literary productivity but also gives a more comprehensive picture of human interactions. Most importantly, BBIP-ER provides an answer to a systematic problem across the humanities, incomplete and under-documented collections of texts. Our solution: work with already networked communities while building and expanding access. BBIP-ER is an inter-institutional, inter-organizational collaboration with the Chicago Text Lab, the College Language Association and the HBCU Library Alliance. Working collaboratively, we will bring a larger body of African American literature to the digital age.

BBIP-ER Scholar Program – 15 scholars will be selected through a competitive application process to participate in a series of webinars, as well as an on-site workshop at the CLA Conference in April 2019 and the BBIP-ER Conference in 2020. ACLS-funded stipends will support the Scholars' 12 months of research, as well as their travel and lodging costs. BBIP-ER Scholars will form working groups of 1-3 people based on their research interests. *Each group will have access to a BBIP DH Consultant to help guide their projects.* Research projects will be an investigation into some aspect of African American literature utilizing the BBIP-ER database and interface.

Program Timeline Overview

January 15, 2019 – Application deadline for BBIP-ER Scholar Program

February 1, 2019 – 15 BBIP-ER Scholars are announced

After the 15 BBIP-ER Scholars are announced, we will hold Webinar #1 – Introduction to the BBIP Database: What is it? How does it work? What do we do with it? Following this webinar, BBIP-ER Scholars will form 1-3 person working groups to focus on a research project. BBIP DH consultants will be available to provide guidance.

April 13, 2019 – Afternoon workshop immediately following CLA Convention at North Carolina Central University. Scholars will present their preliminary research-in-progress and receive feedback. Scholars will continue to work on their research projects through the end of 2019 and into 2020.

Four additional webinars will be held over the next year. Topics will be determined based on the BBIP-ER Scholars' needs.

April 2020 – BBIP-ER Conference will be the culmination of the project open to the DH community. The Conference will feature a keynote speaker and BBIP-ER Scholar research project presentations with opportunities for extensive feedback.

<u>**APPLICATION INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS**</u>

<u>**Eligibility Criteria**</u>

This program is designed primarily for higher education professionals: teachers and librarians at American universities, qualified independent scholars, and those employed in museums, historical societies, and other organizations who can effectively advance the teaching and research goals of the program. Teams, (for example, a librarian and a faculty member) are especially encouraged to apply.

An applicant need not have an advanced degree to qualify.

Applicants must be United States citizens, residents of U.S. jurisdictions, or foreign nationals who have been residing in the United States or its territories for at least three years immediately preceding the application deadline.

<u>**Application Information**</u>

Prior to completing an application, please review these documents and consider carefully what is expected in terms of attendance, research and presentation requirements, and general participation in the work of the project.

The Black Book Interactive Project – Extending the Reach (BBIP-ER) Scholars Program has space for 15 scholars to participate.

<u>**Selection Criteria**</u>

A selection committee reads and evaluates all properly completed applications in order to select the most promising applicants and to identify a number of alternates.

The most important consideration in the selection of participants is the likelihood that an applicant will benefit professionally. This is determined by committee members from the combination of several factors, each of which should be addressed in the application essay. These factors include:

- Support from the employing institution or organization, if applicable, to participate in this project
- Level of exposure to DH methods (digitizing collections, conversion to machine readable files, metadata creation, related conference presentation, grant proposal for funding)
- Access to and/or knowledge of a collection that has or has not been digitized

<u>**Stipend, Tenure and Conditions of Award**</u>

Individuals selected to participate in the BBIP-ER Scholars Program will receive a stipend of $2,275. Stipends are intended to **help** cover travel expenses to and from project events, books and other research expenses, and ordinary living expenses. Stipends are taxable. **Applicants should note that supplements will not be given in cases where the stipend is insufficient to cover all costs.**

BBIP-ER Scholars Program participants are required to attend all meetings and to engage fully as professionals in the work of the project. **Participants who, for any reason, do not complete the full tenure of the project must refund a pro-rata portion of the stipend.** Stipends will be paid in two installments: the first installment of $1,140 will be paid at the beginning of the project and the second installment of $1,135 will be paid at the end.

Checklist of Application Materials

A complete application consists of the following *collated* items:

- A cover sheet as outlined below,
- A curriculum vitae, resume or brief biography with contact information for two professional references,
- A letter of recommendation, and
- An application essay as outlined below.

Application Cover Sheet

Include the following information:

- Full name
- Work address
- Home address
- Phone number
- Email
- Citizenship
- A brief summary of your teaching experience (years of teaching experience, number, name and level of courses taught this year, how many students; whether your school is a 2-year/4-year/public/private institution; academic appointment, independent scholar, graduate student, administrator). Librarians/museum professionals should include data on workshops taught or other training activities provided to students/faculty.

Resume and References

Please include a detailed resume, curriculum vitae or brief biography (not to exceed five pages). Be sure to include the name, title, phone number and email address of two professional references.

Letter of Recommendation

The referee will be asked to answer a series of questions on a recommendation form *or* submit a letter. Recommendations may be from inside or outside the applicant's home institution, though the former is preferred. They should be familiar with the applicant's professional accomplishments or promise, teaching and/or research interests, and ability to contribute to and benefit from participation in the BBIP-ER Scholar Program. The referee should be provided with the description of the program and the applicant's essay. Applicants should request their referee email the recommendation form or letter as

an attachment directly to the program coordinator Sarah Arbuthnot Lendt at arbuthno@ku.edu. Applicants may request a recommendation form from Sarah Arbuthnot Lendt at arbuthno@ku.edu. Recommendation forms or letters must be received by the January 15, 2019 deadline.

The Application Essay

The application essay should be no more than four double spaced pages. This essay should include any relevant personal and academic information; reasons for applying; the applicant's interest, both academic and personal, in the subject to be studied; qualifications and experiences that equip the applicant to do the work of the project and to make a contribution to the learning community; a statement of what the applicant wants to accomplish by participating; and the relation of the project to the applicant's professional responsibilities.

SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS AND NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE

Completed applications should be submitted to the project coordinator Sarah Arbuthnot Lendt via email at arbuthno@ku.edu no later than January, 15, 2019.

Successful applicants will be notified of their selection by February 1, 2019 and must confirm their participation within one week.