

VIRGIN ISLANDS HERITAGE COLLECTION: A GLOBAL RESOURCE SHARING MODEL

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ABSTRACT: This paper describes a joint project with the University of the Virgin Islands and universities in Florida to provide greater access to materials about the history and culture the Virgin Islands. This project serves as a prototype for a larger venture, “Library of the Caribbean,” and for other possible global resource sharing projects. It uses the global resource sharing model of centralized technologies and decentralized digitization from member libraries.

Library of Congress Subject Headings: Digital libraries; Information services--international cooperation; Information technology; Library cooperation; Universities and colleges—Florida; Virgin Islands of the United States--history

A recent agreement between the libraries at the University of the Virgin Islands (hereafter UVI), Florida International University (hereafter FIU), and the University of Florida (hereafter UF) will offer digital access to material on the history and culture of the United States Virgin Islands (see Appendix 1). While the subject matter of the digital library may not relate directly to marine science, the content of the collaborative digital project is less important than the process and the method used for this global research sharing venture. This arrangement will serve as a prototype for partnerships across borders that will enhance access to research collections for students and scholars.

The University of the Virgin Islands Libraries, in partnership with the Virgin Islands Division of Libraries, Archives & Museums (DLAM) was awarded a National Leadership grant for digitization from the Institute of Museum and Library Services in 2000, in order to enhance access to research resources in areas of biography, education, history and culture. The core of the Virgin Islands

Heritage Collection will be a digitized collection of Virgin Islands material, which now includes:

(<http://webpac.uvi.edu/imls/project2002/2000.shtml>)

- Funeral Booklets
- Historical Photographs
- Newspaper articles
- Project Introspection – documents VI history and culture for K-12 school program, produced by the VI Department of Education
- Research Reports and Occasional papers – produced by UVI's Agricultural Research and Cooperative Extension units

Future material under consideration to be added to the “Virgin Island Heritage Collection” are print and microform versions of:

- The Danish West Indies records in the U.S. National Archives, compiled by Harold Larson
- List of records relating to the Virgin Islands of the United States (formerly Danish West Indies) in the Royal Archives at Copenhagen, Denmark
- Records relating to the Danish West Indies 1672-1860 received from the Danish National Archives

Limitations of technical capabilities and technical expertise at the University of the Virgin Islands led the project directors to seek assistance from an outside consultant from the Digital Library Center at the University of Florida. This relationship quickly developed into substantial discussions on how best to sustain and preserve the project and to best provide access to the materials. Synergies based on need between UVI and institutions in Florida immediately presented solutions to these questions of sustainability and technical support. It would be an equal trade of technology for access. Florida institutions and the State Library System's central library technology unit, Florida Center for Library Automation (FCLA) would host the project and supply technical support, and in return would gain access to unique and rare materials from the Caribbean.

In late June 2002, an agreement was signed between UVI, UF, FIU and FCLA, to administer the “Virgin Islands Heritage Collection.” This collection will become one of the digital collections within the “Publication of Archival, Library and Museum Materials” (hereafter PALMM), a cooperative digital library of the State of Florida's Colleges and Universities (<http://palmm.fcla.edu/collection.html>). PALMM is a coordinated effort with the 10 State Universities in Florida to share both collections and infrastructure. Shared technical expertise and integration of the digital library into existing library catalogs for easy access are two goals with broad benefits.

Inclusion in PALMM provides the UVI project with centralized software and technical support services, including mechanisms for contributing metadata and data; services to load, store, and navigate text and image collections; bibliographic search software; and Z39.50 client and server facilities. UVI also has access to future technologies, such as the provision of long-term archival storage and migration facilities. This access to technology and support assures the preservation and sustainability of the project. UVI, on the other hand, agrees to continue to digitize collections identified as appropriate to the overall aim of the Heritage Collection. Hosting and technical support for the project are centralized, while digitization of items remains decentralized.

The division of technical responsibility is only one aspect which makes this international collaboration an important model to replicate. Mutual interest extends beyond the technically practical to include cooperative collection development initiatives. PALMM collections are intended to be collections of important source materials that are relevant to the students, research community and citizens of Florida. It is natural for these collections to include Caribbean sources and subjects, not due to the proximity to the Caribbean, but due to our physical location and our cultural heritage within the Caribbean. In Florida the VI Heritage Collection will most likely be used for research purposes at the Caribbean area studies centers at both UF and FIU and in regional history, geography and genealogy. Currently there are fourteen PALMM collections; several collections of note include:

- The Eric Eustace Williams Collection – a bibliography and library of digitized works by and about Dr. Williams, the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.
- Florida Geological Survey Publications – consisting of bulletins, reports and maps on aquifer systems, geological frameworks, oil and mineral resources in Florida, some of which go back almost 100 years.
- Reclaiming the Everglades – documenting the history of the Everglades and the south Florida environment from 1884-1934, includes photographs, maps, reports, personal correspondence, and much more.

The UVI agreement carefully negotiated aspects of collection development and sharing, with the understanding that VI cultural and national patrimony would naturally remain as such, with digital access provided to Florida partners and beyond. UVI serves as the lead institution in the development and management of the collection. It is responsible for the collection development plan, the authorship of on-line descriptive material about the collection, and to related electronic links. Both UF and FIU are collaborators in the development of this collection and have agreed to make their collections accessible to UVI for digitization. This becomes especially important as materials may be discovered in either UF or FIU collections that have been lost in the Virgin Islands. Both

UF and FIU can also request titles to be added to the collection, and can digitize these materials after consent has been granted. It is supposed, for example, that United States government publications in the public domain will soon be linked to the VI Heritage collection. This collection development plan is significant in that it places control with the institution that has cultural and national ownership of the collection, no matter where the physical and/or digital collections reside or are accessed.

The UVI agreement is sustainable because of the shared sense of value and mutual interest derived from the collaboration, in both technology and in collections.

UF, FIU and UVI are hoping that the success of this agreement will serve as a prototype to build a larger and more comprehensive Library of the Caribbean. As traditional barriers to information are diminished because of the benefits of new and still emerging technologies, global resource sharing becomes more of a reality and less of a dream. Librarians and libraries interested in universal access often tend to group together around certain subject areas of interest. In area studies, such as Caribbean studies, these collaborative projects tend to cross borders and to build a federation of institutions based on mutual interest and broad benefit.

It is the intention of a future Library of the Caribbean to bring together Caribbean libraries to share resources in a common space to expand the range of research materials available to scholars, students and citizens through enhanced electronic access. Using the PALMM model of centralized technology and support, decentralized digitization and distributed collection development, individual libraries would retain ownership of collections, yet provide access to collections and gain access to additional resources.

Appendix 1: Abbreviated UVI agreement

AGREEMENT - Abbreviated

This agreement, entered into on 2002 June ____, between the **University of the Virgin Islands Libraries** (hereafter, UVI), the **University of Florida's George A. Smathers Libraries** (hereafter, UF), the **Florida Center for Library Automation** (hereafter, FCLA), and **Florida International University's Latin American & Caribbean Information Center** (hereafter, FIU) governs the administration and deployment of materials related to the U.S. Virgin Islands as a digital library collection, entitled "*Virgin Islands Heritage Collection*", under the aegis of "*Publication of Archival, Library and Museum Materials*" (hereafter, PALMM).

(text deleted – due to space constraints)

This agreement provides UF, FIU and their partners with access to collections within the context of PALMM, an interface familiar to their patrons. This agreement provides UVI with access to technologies and personnel of UF, FIU, FCLA and PALMM. It provides both with a venue for collaborative and cooperative development of collections and services of mutual interest.

COLLECTION PURPOSE and CONTENT

“*Virgin Islands Heritage Collection*” is intended to be an image and full-text collection of archival, library and museum materials documenting Virgin Islands’ history and culture.

At its core is the collection digitized as part of a National Leadership grant, entitled “Preparing Virgin Islands Librarians for the New Millennium”, from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to the UVI Libraries in partnership with the Virgin Islands Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums (hereafter, DLAM). This core collection, in the areas of biography, education, history and culture, includes funeral booklets, *Project Introspection* materials, research reports and newspaper columns. (See Appendix 1, *Additional Information about Collections*.)

Supplemental materials, many drawn from the collections of the UF, FIU, and other DCU institutions will be added to the collection.

UF, in its role as PALMM member institution, assumes responsibility for petitioning PALMM for the official establishment of this collection.

(text deleted)

COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

UVI shall serve as the lead institution in development and management of the collection.

UF and FIU shall serve as collaborators in collection development at the direction of UVI.

(text deleted)

OWNERSHIP

Digital resources remain the property of the contributing institution.

(text deleted)

COLLECTION INTERFACE

PALMM collection interfaces maintain a common look and feel. The interface for “*Virgin Islands Heritage Collection*” shall comply with PALMM website design, including sidebar and secondary page requirements (cf, <http://palmm.fcla.edu/strucmeta/designguide.html>).

UVI assumes full responsibility for and editorial control over the design of collection graphics and all texts associated with the collection interface. Both UF and the Florida Center for Library Automation retain staff with design experience and who will be made available for graphical and technical assistance as requested.

The collection interface will be mounted by FCLA on FCLA server(s) at <http://palmm.fcla.edu/usvi/>.

(Remaining text deleted)

Resources:

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