

Dean's Innovation Grants

Final Report

Date: October 18, 2018

Project Title: Call and response: Engaging with African American male students through culturally relevant music resources

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Project Purpose

The University of North Texas student body includes more African American male students than the total enrollment of most historically black colleges and universities. At the same time, institutional research shows that African American male students have the highest risk of attrition at UNT. This demonstration project examined how librarians can work with faculty and students to develop and support culturally relevant projects and assignments. MARTIAL Eagles—a living/learning community comprised of freshmen males—met weekly in Fall 2017 for a one-hour course focused on the African American male experience in the United States examined through the lens of music. The cohort was also required to take Sociology 2070: Race and Ethnicity. Library faculty from Public Services and the Music Library worked with the MARTIAL Eagles cohort and faculty, introducing the students to library resources that supported their studies.

Through the Libraries' collaboration with a cohort of African American male students who came together to learn more about their culture, we added resources that were culturally relevant to these students in particular as well as the student population at large. Our goal was to demonstrate how the library can directly support topics of current interest, contributing to library collections that reflect students and their cultures, and experiences. Furthermore, this project strengthened the Libraries' existing relationship with the Office for Student Academic Success.

Rap and hip-hop were identified as the African American music genres having the most potential for collection development. The UNT Music Library primarily collects music resources that support the College of Music curriculum, so the acquisition of rap and hip hop music resources has been largely incidental. Grant funding was used to purchase African American music resources—sound and video recordings—to fill gaps in the Libraries' collections, beginning with those recommended by the MARTIAL students and faculty.

Project Activities

Prior to the Fall 2017, Sara Outhier met with Harold Woodard to identify resources to support the class; some materials were purchased at that time. For the Soci 2070: Race and Ethnicity, and related sociology topics, Lilly Ramin ordered a few items from the general budget and introduced the instructors to Kanopy as a means of streaming videos for the class. Lilly Ramin provided the instructors a list of suggested non-music resources for this component of the MARTIAL Experience. Throughout the grant period, Sara Outhier identified important rap and hip-hop recordings to add to the Music Library collection in addition to those selected by the students. These recordings were purchased with the remainder of the grant funding and some of the Music recordings firm order budget. Sara Outhier met the class at Rawlins Hall on September 13 to give the class an overview of music library resources.

On November 1, Lilly Ramin provided the class library promotional bags with business cards for their subject librarians she then took the class and instructors library tour of all the levels then ended on the fourth floor Music Library. At that time, Sara Outhier and David Huff demonstrated the antique music players in the Sandborn Music Reading Room for the class.

Lilly Ramin did a library instruction on November 8 at the living learning community, Rawlins Hall, demonstrating research tips with Sociology as an example. There was also general information and an invitation to assist students further. A few post instruction questions, ranging from course reserves or general follow-up did happen, which was good to see as the students might have increased their comfort level in approaching the librarians.

On November 15, Sara Outhier interviewed six of the students for a podcast, recorded by David Huff. The class, instructors Harold Woodard and Candi Harris, and library faculty and staff attended a social hour with musical entertainment and food in Willis Library to celebrate our collaboration. Sara Outhier attended the final meeting of the class during which the students performed original music and spoken word compositions, some of which were recorded by Joshua Sylve. A podcast featuring interviews with MARTIAL Eagles students was published in the UNT Digital Library on December 18. The students and instructors met in Willis Library 250H twice weekly during Spring 2018. Lilly Ramin attended to the May End of Year celebration.

UNT Libraries purchased *Music Magazine Archive: Hip Hop & Rap*, a one-time purchase totaling \$3,680. Although the publisher's website indicated the content was already available, the release date of the database was initially delayed until Spring 2018. The publisher signed a contract with the Libraries and accepted payment, but they went out of business before delivering the content. Collection Management and the Administration Office are aware of the situation and are exploring options for acquiring the content or seeking reimbursement.

Budget

Funding in the amount of \$1000.66 was used to purchase rap and hip-hop sound and video recordings beginning with those recommended by the MARTIAL students and faculty. Funds in the amount of \$280.46 were used to host a reception for the MARTIAL cohort with live musical entertainment, and vouchers for a small coffee from The Study were purchased for \$38.88 and given to the students during their Willis Library tour. UNT Libraries purchased *Music Magazine Archive: Hip Hop & Rap* for \$3,680.

Project Outputs/Outcomes

- Gaps in the Music Library's collections were filled with input from the MARTIAL Eagles students and faculty
- A special edition of the Music Library's podcast, *From the Archives* was recorded and published in the Digital Library <https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1049925>
- Items selected by the students will be the Music Featured Items exhibit for February 2019
- Efforts for students to deposit their final projects to the Digital Library are ongoing

Other Results (if applicable)

Sara Outhier will be presenting on the collaboration at the Music Library Association conference in February 2019.

Anecdotal Information

Not applicable.

Best Practices

Actively soliciting and incorporating student and faculty interests in collection development is a best practice and enhances the quality and relevancy of library collections.

Program Continuity

As the first year experience coordinator, Lilly Ramin has continued support for the MARTIAL Eagles in Fall 2018. This new group of students meet twice a week in Willis Library for group study, and Lilly is available to them for research help and instruction when requested. Inter-divisional support for efforts geared towards assisting these instructors and students makes this collaboration a success.