

LANGUAGE MATTERS™ IV

PROJECT ON THE HISTORY OF BLACK WRITING

2010-2012 REPORT

**UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS
LAWRENCE, KANSAS**



THE PARIS WORKSHOPS

11/6/10

Project on the History of Black Writing
University of Kansas
1445 Jayhawk Boulevard, Rm 3001
Lawrence, KS 66045
(785) 864-2561
www.hbw.ku.edu
hbw@ku.edu

TABLE OF CONTENTS

VISION, MISSION AND GOALS	3
FOREWORD	4
REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR	5
2010-2012 REPORT FROM THE PROJECT DIGITAL COORDINATOR	8
REPORT FROM THE PROJECT MANAGER, KENTON RAMBSY	11
FINANCIAL REPORT	12
THE PROJECT ON THE HISTORY OF BLACK WRITING: A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF 30 YEARS	13
CONFERENCES 2010-2012	15
College Language Association Conference	15
2012 HBW ADVISORY BOARD MEETING	16
PARTNERSHIPS / COLLABORATIONS 2010-2012	18
Furious Flower Poetry Collaborative Projects	18
73 Poems for 73 Years	18
Language Matters IV	18
PUBLICATIONS	19
<i>Faces of Haiti</i>	19
<i>Recovering the Work of Allen Polite</i>	19
<i>The Cambridge History of African American Literature</i>	20
NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD	22
PROJECT STAFF	22
CURRENT HBW STAFF MEMBERS	23
ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS	23

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Dean Danny Anderson
Associate Dean Ann Cudd
Marta Caminero-Santangelo
Chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little
HBW's Advisory Board
HBW's dedicated staff
Lori Whitten
Dean Lorraine Haricombe
KU Libraries
Ermal Garinger Academic Resource Center
CLAS Digital Media Services
Dean Thomas Heilke, Graduate Studies
KU Center for Research

VISION

To become the premiere enterprise for the reclamation of literary contributions by people of African descent in the United States to world culture. To keep before the public the works of African American authors and encourage scholarship in little explored or unexplored areas.

MISSION

To identify and advocate for the return of “fugitive texts” that have been lost to history; to promote the awareness of and create opportunities for learning about and engaging the works produced by African American authors; and to promote the development of scholarship on literature by African Americans.

GOALS

To create by 2015 a robust database of published fiction by African Americans; to secure permanent support for the Project; to promote an awareness of African American authors through teacher institutes, online and print publications, and presentations at conferences, book clubs and other venues.

Adopted at 2009 Meeting of the Advisory Board

FOREWORD (SPRING 2013)

As the Project on the History of Black Writing (HBW) prepares to celebrate its 30th anniversary (2014), research and scholarship in the fields of African American literature and culture are changing rapidly. Digital venues for presenting critical thoughts about what is literature and what is culture continue to multiply. The statements of vision, mission and goals adopted by the HBW Advisory Board in 2009 are still viable, but they must be interpreted from new angles. And we ought to consider what role we want HBW to play within diverse communities of interest and as an African American bridge between global cultures. We may need, for example, to examine the texts we reclaim from the angles of book history and cultures of print. We shall make little progress in encouraging “scholarship in little explored or unexplored areas” unless we triage the new directions we would have scholars adopt, unless we design and broadcast blueprints for future studies. In creating “a robust database of published fiction by African Americans,” we must think with great care about what is cost-effective and whose needs we intend to serve. Using new technologies is not cheap. Databases designed for scholars may require special interactive features to meet the needs of teachers who have to deal with pedagogy and unpredictability in the twenty-first century. Audacious prudence demands that we practice austerity.

This report provides a synopsis of our work from 2010-2012; information on funding and the HBW digital initiatives; a summary of the 2012 Advisory Board meeting; and executive notes on participation in conferences, on partnerships and collaborations, and on projections for a future. In short, the report is a catalyst for our using historical memory and ancestral wisdom to ensure that HBW will continue as an invaluable resource.

Jerry W. Ward, Jr.
HBW Advisory Board

REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Project on the History of Black Writing began the second decade of the 21st century as a true trendsetter in the field of literary studies. We are pleased to report that in these two years, we regained our rightful place both at KU and as an exemplary center for research, scholarship, and service. Our reach has gone beyond our expectations, and we continue to attract amazing students, who are the lifeblood of our work. How do we do it, many of you ask?

First, at HBW, we always stay the course in all that we do. Our collaborative work style, equalitarian to the core, means that we can draw on everyone's strengths, shift assignments when necessary, and demand nothing less than excellence from all. We encourage everyone to take ownership over an area of work, pushing it as far as possible, returning to the collective regularly to rethink and reframe what can and needs to be done to maintain that excellence. While we are workaholics, we have some down time, and each meeting includes a "personal moment" where we can triumph or even cry together. As corny as it may sound, it not only works, but our method is also contagious. Our staff has learned how to feed on each other's energy, take that energy and commitment outward, and help HBW build strong relationships throughout KU, on the academic, administrative and student support sides.

HBW focuses on its infrastructure—built around teams—to accomplish its work. Because we experienced a major staff turnover in 2010, our team approach helps us to easily find the gaps and make appropriate hires to fill them. It was our great fortune to welcome some exciting new staff members who bring both vision and focus to the work that will lead us into our next decade. Kenton Ramsby, a 2010 graduate of Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA, joined us as our new project manager, and became the team leader for the Project Digital Initiative (PDI). As his report indicates, the initiatives he and the team developed increased HBW's visibility on campus—through 4 Black Literary Suites (BLS)—and our web and public presence generally, through a multi-tiered approach use of social media. Kenton's recruitment efforts expanded the team to include Chrystal Boson (2010-11), and Goyland Williams, who remains an active HBW volunteer even when he is not working as a staff member. Kenton's design skills have been especially helpful in rebranding HBW for the 21st century. That team would not be complete without the help of Lynne Lipsey, our website developer and manager extraordinaire.

We were most fortunate as well to have Yuan Ding, a native of Beijing, join the staff in her first year of the English PhD program. Yuan's timing was perfect since she was able to keep us on track as we completed our most important work on HBW to date, the publication of *The Cambridge History of African American Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2011, Maryemma Gaham and Jerry W. Ward, eds). With her experience as a writer, editor and translator, Yuan was an exacting task master, getting the 900 page manuscript edited and back to the publisher in time. A special thank-you goes to Cambridge, especially editor Ray Ryan, who invited us to do this project, supported it over the ten years from conception to completion, and funded the book launch and reception at the annual meeting of the College Language Association in Spartanburg, South Caroling in April 2011. Our celebration at CLA, where more than 200 people attended, including board members and many of the authors, was a highlight of our year. CHAAL, as we call it, necessarily represents the work of many earlier and ongoing staff as well through the years, including Cynthia Lynn (now working in Graduate Studies at KU) and Sarah Arbuthnot Lendt, HBW's long time editor and grant development team leader. During Yuan's time with us, we were able to get another overdue project out the door: Biennial Report 2008-2010.

Another newcomer, Alysha Griffin, a 2011 graduate of Spelman College in Atlanta, joined HBW in the fall, spent her first months working with the BLS exhibits, then began to breathe new life into our effort to update and complete a full inventory of our print and media files. Alysha threw her heart into this long and tedious work that remains the heart of HBW and was never dispirited when unexpected setbacks confronted us. An accomplished thespian, Alysha continues to give leadership to the inventory team, joined by Lacey McAfee, another of our HBW long-time staffers. After two years with HBW, Lacey became our official communication officer, keeping HBW and the campus in regular touch, and making sure our growing staff and volunteers are all on the same page.

We continue to rely heavily upon our grant development team, headed by Sarah Arbuthnot Lendt, an experienced professional writer and editor, and curriculum developer, accustomed to meeting harsh deadlines associated with grants. The grant development team now includes Jaime Whitt, original HBW staffer from 2001-2005, who returned to law school and to HBW in 2011. Jaime and Sarah both prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that HBW is indeed a human connection that is hard to break. Jaime's work with our *Language Matters I: Reading and Teaching Toni Morrison (2002)* and *Language Matters II: The Cardozo Project Model* make her an excellent addition to the team. As I write this report, the team is preparing for its seventh NEH-funded project, *Don't Deny My Voice: Reading and Teaching African American Poetry* scheduled for July 14-August 3, 2013. [<http://dontdeny.dept.ku.edu>] The grant, written and submitted in January 2012, emerged from a dialogue among board members Jerry Ward and Howard Rambsy, KU AAAS faculty Tony Bolden, and our partner project, the Furious Flower Poetry Center at James Madison University, under the direction of Joanne Gabbin. Our grant development team led this successful effort, keeping HBW **# 1 in grantsmanship in the Humanities at KU**, a fact that makes us very proud. Since grants funds are essential for maintaining our staff, Lendt and Whitt literally keep HBW alive, increasing our impact on a daily basis.

HBW continues its local, campus and regional work with successful programs and collaborations. In 2011, we hosted a standing room only event with Thabiti Lewis, a professor at Washington State University, Vancouver. Lewis's timely talk, "Can Michael Vick Be Forgiven? Race, Gender and Mythologies in American Sports Culture," was based on his book *Ballers of the New School: Race and Sports in America*. His visit included his participation in a panel with Associate Dean Ann Cudd and Derrick Darby on race and sports. Opportunities such as this show KU's communal spirit, as we joined forces with the Office of Diversity and Equity, Kansas Athletics, the School of Journalism, KU Libraries, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences as well as the Departments of English, Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies. Working with *Make It Funky*, an annual series sponsored by AAAS and directed by Tony Bolden, has been another successful collaboration. These events bring to campus some of the most brilliant interpreters and critics of black poetry, as the fall 2012 visit from Adam Bradley, author of *The Poetics of Hip Hop*, demonstrated.

On the international front, HBW has made perhaps its most significant strides. In the fall of 2010, we co-hosted our first NEH-funded international workshop with the Toni Morrison Society. The grant, which brought US and French teachers together in Paris in November 2010 to discuss Morrison in translation, became the basis of a lively dialogue and shared exchange that continues through the Language Matters website: <http://www2.ku.edu/~langmtrs/> The professional development work that we do is crucial for keeping public educators informed and prepared, for building community, expanding literacy, and widening our global reach.

In the spring of 2011, HBW took the lead in forming the Haitian Research Initiative, which resulted in a two-week trip to Haiti in the summer 2011. The team who made the visit, three from KU and one from Texas Southern University, produced a widely circulating report, *Faces of Haiti*. <http://hdl.handle.net/1808/8271> My KU colleagues, Kiran Jayaram (KU LAS graduate) Brian Rosenblum (KU Libraries), as well as C.B.Claiborne (TSU) and I continue to believe that this was a pivotal moment for KU and for each of us. KU's historical ties with Haiti, spearheaded by professor emeritus Bryant Freeman, have given us an opportunity to bridge a human divide that makes our work at KU more meaningful, but that can more importantly be of long term benefit for a country still struggling from the effects of its disabling political and natural disasters.

Among our preservation projects, HBW recovered the work of Allen Polite, (1932-1993), an expatriate poet who lived for most of his professional career in Stockholm, Sweden. Mrs. Helene Polite, Allen's widow, continues to be tremendously supportive in assisting us with reprinting his 2 volumes of poetry and presenting his work to the literary community.

We must express our gratitude to KU, to those with whom we collaborate, all listed in the acknowledgements, and especially to our most loyal board members, who continue to make annual contributions in support of our work. With your help, we are able to blaze new trails as we preserve and present black writing, creating the critical apparatus necessary for engaging and teaching it. As a result, HBW is one of the best-known laboratories for young scholars and professionals-in-the making.

We wish to acknowledge the Department of English, and chair Marta Caminero-Santangelo, whose generosity never fails us, and the ongoing support of KU Libraries, especially Dean Lorraine Haricombe, Associate Dean Deb Ludwig, and the co-director of the Institute for Digital Research in the Humanities, Brian Rosenblum. They are our special advocates as we expand our digital operations. The Eral Garinger Academic Resource Center, Director Jon Perkins and Assistant Director Keah Cunningham make our work, our grants, and our daily life at HBW much easier.

From the very beginning of our work nearly three decades ago, we made it our mission to be as engaged in the full range of conversations about African American writing (which we prefer to the term "literature") as we could be. Since those conversations are now global, and HBW has a most active online presence, we look forward to continuing our work with new initiatives that connect the intellectual and professional interests of our staff, our mission, goals and objectives and the needs of our literary community, both inside and outside the academy.

On a personal note, I know that HBW is the best of KU, in its visionary practice, in team spirit, and in its commitment to a rigorous intellectual enterprise. Thanks to all of you for two more great years. It only gets better with age.

Sincerely,



Maryemma Graham
University Distinguished Professor of English
HBW Founder/Director

2010-2012 REPORT FROM THE PROJECT DIGITAL COORDINATOR

Since assuming the position of Project Digital Initiative Coordinator in early September, I have sought to outline and implement specific short-term and long-term strategies that would help reorganize the digital infrastructure of HBW and highlight the program's collections through internet, music, video, and print mediums. Early on, I issued a postcard design that has since become adopted as the main image of HBW for our online mediums. The goals of the 2010-2011 "Rebuilding and Rebranding" campaign has been to create a distinct image that could be associated with HBW's diverse programs and also, create cost efficient outreach programs that could be managed by our staff. Below I have provided more detailed explanations of PDI initiatives started this year:

NOVEL ARCHIVE REORGANIZATION

This past year, HBW has begun to review the novel collections to begin the digitization of over 1,000 items in our collections. This process will involve merging the novel files and author files to make our data more manageable. Additionally, the file ordering has been changed to outline the novels by alphabetical order as opposed to cataloguing the novels by time period. After the completion of the file reordering, the PDI staff will begin reviewing and updating the author files and soon outline a plan for the digitization component of the project.

TREND ANALYSES PROJECT—100 NOVELS

The Project on the History of Black Writing's extensive collection of African American novels presents scholars with numerous opportunities to examine history, culture, and politics of black literary art. Over the last six months, members of HBW have gathered data on a group of 100 African-American-authored novels—from Williams Wells Brown's *Clotel; or, the President's Daughter* (1853) to Terry McMillan's *Getting to Happy* (2010).

Collecting information on at least six dozen factors pertaining to the 100 novels and the lives of the authors has begun to reveal a wide range of fascinating commonalities and variations ranging from the months when the most major novelists were born and how many authors had received Guggenheim fellowships to the cities that had served as the most common settings for novels.

Our preliminary research findings have also led us to identify relationships between large numbers of books published over more than 150 years. For instance, a city like Chicago seems to be a popular setting for novels; the Windy City is featured in Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* (1928); Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940); *The Outsider* (1953); *Lawd Today* (1963); Iceberg Slim's *Trick Baby* (1967); and *Mama Black Widow* (1969). Novels that are adapted into movies seem to end up with several print editions and novel covers and highly developed Wikipedia pages. In addition, after 1980, there seems to be a strong correlation between novelists with M.F.A. degrees and novels that end up on *The New York Times* bestseller list.

BLACK LITERARY SUITE

The Black Literary Suite was a two-part series of exhibits that utilized quantitative research in order to enhance understandings of black literary history. The exhibits, an extension of HBW's Trend Analyses Project, featured 100 African American novels from HBW's collection. The multi-media, interactive exhibit was hosted on March 16 and April 20 at the University of Kansas. The project also served as a means to re-introduce HBW to the KU community and demonstrate how HBW's holdings are a resource for both students and faculty.

HBW WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK REDESIGN AND TWITTER LAUNCH

The former *HBW home website* has been redesigned and expanded to highlight our online initiatives and to emphasize the many resources the project houses. As online archival database and professional development center, HBW's new design seeks to be more user-friendly and act as a virtual connection to our broad ranging audiences.

Additionally, the *Facebook Fan Page* has been redesigned to coincide with the home website and serve as an interactive interface for our audience members where they can provide us with feedback on new HBW initiatives.

A *twitter account* was started as a means of disseminating information to our audience members—specifically, offering concise updates about our daily blog activities, monthly programs and events, as well as current developments in African American Studies.

The ultimate goal of our online mediums has been to keep our national and international audience actively engaged with our programs. Also, our online resources serve as cost-efficient advertising sources that allow us to take a more hands-on approach when informing those interested in our activities about new developments.

ONLINE/DIGITAL INITIATIVES

HBW Blog

Launched on February 22, 2011, the *HBW Blog* serves to extend the efforts of HBW by identifying and highlighting topics related to African American and American literature that various audiences might find interesting. The blog also seeks to shed new light on the holdings in HBW's novel collection and stimulate more conversations about what we can learn by studying a large number of black artistic compositions produced over 150 years.

Early on, the blog's focus has been geared towards black literary history, contemporary developments in the production of black writing, digital humanities, and literary scholarship that pertains to African American writers. Every Wednesday, the

blog features a “guest blogger” to discuss an aspect of African American literature. The guest blogger feature has helped us to cultivate a diverse readership and also gain wide ranging perspectives on issues related to African American literature.

Guest Bloggers: Professor and HBW Board Member Jerry W. Ward; Professor Frank Dobson, Jr.; Professor and HBW Board Member Howard Rambsy; Professor Gregory Rutledge; KU graduate Jennifer M. Colatosti; and new author Kevin Reeves

Literary Vantage Points

Literary Vantage Points is HBW’s newest initiative geared towards engaging our audience members in conversations about African American literature. We have produced a series of short video segments that will be featured weekly on our blog in order to utilize the most effective digital mediums and spark dialogue among audiences interested in black artist production.

We have collected brief interviews from a number of professors at KU and throughout the U.S. to get their perspectives about various authors—James Baldwin, Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison, and Richard Wright—and to describe their initial impressions of author Toni Morrison as well as discuss the legacy of her work.

Digital Perspectives

In an effort to think about how digital mediums influence a person’s relationship with written and spoken word, every week HBW featured quotations from a single author on the Facebook and Twitter accounts. The new initiative—also known as “Digital Perspective”—explored how users interpreted the meaning of a concise quote that is a part of a larger conversation or discussion. In order to better gauge the attitudes of our most active users and what literary artists they seemed to engage the most online, we documented the number of times an author or quote received some sort of feedback (positive or negative) on Facebook or Twitter.

These findings will better help us to shape the projection of our blog and bring information to our online community on authors and subjects which they deem most useful or relevant to them.

This year has been a whirlwind of activities for the PDI department. I look forward to the next school year and developing more interactive programs and encouraging studies in digital humanities.

Kenton Rambsy
Project Digital Initiative Coordinator

REPORT FROM THE PROJECT MANAGER

In August 2010, I began working with the Project and assumed the role of Project Digital Initiative Coordinator. Since then, my role has expanded, and I have also assumed the tasks of office manager after the departure of Doretha Williams and completion of her graduate studies.

Following in her footsteps, I have attempted to strengthen office management by placing an emphasis on efficiency and organization. The summer of 2011 witnessed significant changes to our physical office space. Our summer staff succeeded in reorganizing the office by archiving over twenty filing cabinets with documents spanning more than twenty-eight years, integrating our novel and author files, digitizing the entirety of our audio/visual collections as well as processing and inventorying our collection of reference materials.

Under the direction of Dr. Graham, recently, my attention has turned to taking advantage of our resources and organizing the staff's contrasting skill sets in order to apply for funding through various sources such as NEH. Our staff, comprised of graduate research assistants, work studies students, and volunteers is one of the most diverse in terms of capabilities—ranging from computer, research, and journalism, marketing and design skills. Similar to Dr. Graham, I feel this is an ideal opportunity to utilize our set of committed scholars to take HBW to the next level as we transition and become a major force in the digital humanities, especially with regard to teaching, research and writing in African American literature.

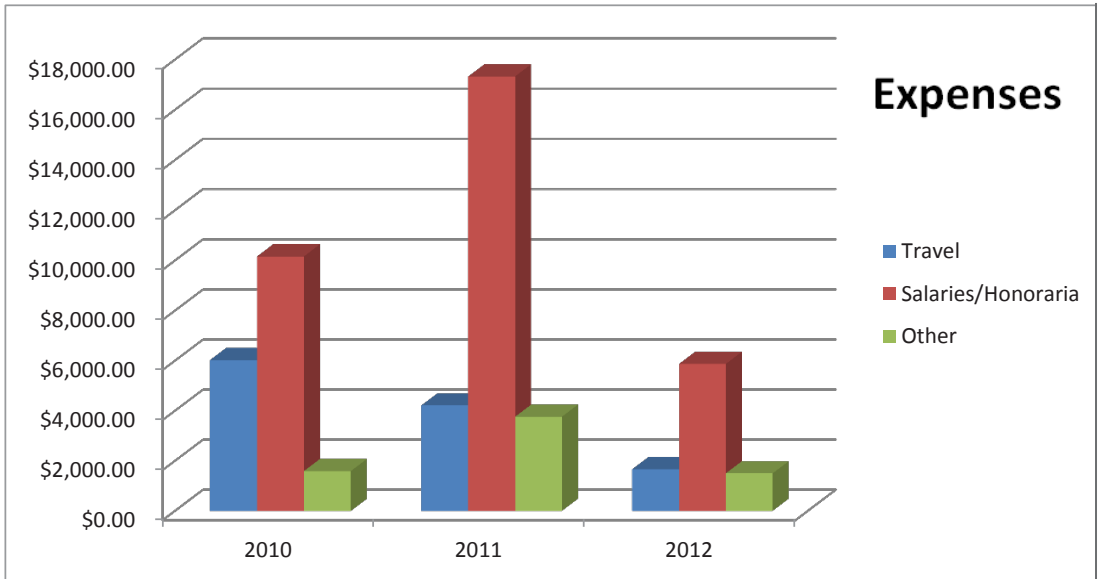
My tenure with the Project, so far, has been both challenging and rewarding. My varied responsibilities with HBW have presented me with numerous opportunities for personal growth.

In addition to lasting memories with my colleagues, the Project has already provided me with the necessary resources and opportunities for advancing my professional goals and scholarship in African American literature, culture, and digital scholarship.

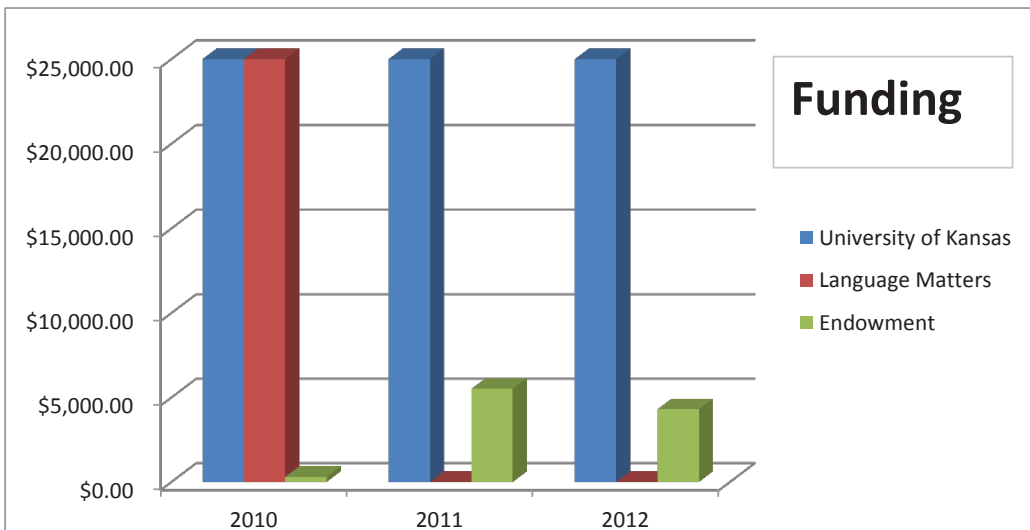
Kenton Rambsy

2010 - 2012 HBW FUNDING AND EXPENSES

<u>Expenses</u>	2010	2011	2012
Travel	\$6,030.43	\$4,213.34	\$1,664.21
Salaries/Honoraria	\$10,164.56	\$17,328.77	\$5,869.50
Other	\$1,593.55	\$3,762.04	\$1,498.74



<u>Funding</u>	2010	2011	2012
University of Kansas	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00
Language Matters	\$25,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Endowment	\$300.00	\$5,508.67	\$4,300.00



THE PROJECT ON THE HISTORY OF BLACK WRITING: A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF 30 YEARS

In 2013, the Project on the History of Black Writing (HBW) will celebrate its 30th year.

- Originally known as the Afro-American Novel Project (AANP), HBW began in 1983 at the University of Mississippi, Oxford. With a three-year grant from NEH, we published *The Afro-American Novel: A Guide for Teachers and Students* (1986), and acquired a collection of novels and interviews with major writers. Then, in 1989 the project relocated to Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts.
- At Northeastern, the Project continued to expand its holdings to create *A Checklist of the Afro-American Novel, 1853-1990* (1990). We also made our first appearance at the annual meeting of the College Language Association, which began our annual scholarly panels, and lively presentations by established and new writers at CLA's April conference.
- Officially under the new name of the Project on the History of Black Writing, during the Northeastern years, the Project inaugurated its first professional development workshops for teachers and assisted younger scholars in securing summer research opportunities. Two NEH-funded grants provided support for a group of educators to mentor others in teaching African American literature. That project continued over a four-year period, and featured a collaborative publication from the institutes: *Teaching African American Literature, Theory and Practice* (Routledge 1998).
- Gaining an affiliation with the Smithsonian's Museum of American History and the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History (ASALH), HBW secured additional funding from NEH to conduct a second series of professional development institutes, "The Middle Passage: The Making of the Atlantic World," based at Howard University in Washington, DC, in 1997 and the summer of 1998.
- During the same period, HBW received a two-year grant from the Lemelson Foundation of Hampshire College to expand its technology component; we spent two years developing a prototype for a CD-ROM. The result was "Neither Bond Nor Free: An Anthology of Rare African- American Texts," a completely digitized anthology with information about the author and the period, which provided the model for the later PDI.
- In 1999, the Project moved to the University of Kansas, Lawrence. With funds from Microsoft and the Kansas Endowment Association, HBW took a second step in expanding digital access. We joined the team, headed by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., that produced *Encarta Africana: Library of Black America*. Full texts of seventy-five African American novels from our collection became available as a CD-ROM.
- In 2002, the Project initiated a successful, long-term partnership with Cambridge University Press. *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Novel*, released in early 2004, and *The Cambridge History of African American Literature*, released in early 2011, add significantly to the Project's reputation not only as a leading archival collection in African

American literature, but as a major producer of scholarly works that aid the study and interpretation of African American literature for all academic levels.

- Continuing as the most important base of external support, NEH awarded six grants to HBW between 2001 and 2012. In 2001 and 2003, respectively, HBW received funds for The Langston Hughes National Poetry Project to both plan and implement “Speaking of Rivers: Taking Poetry to the People.” In 2002, working with the Toni Morrison Society, HBW’s professional development work continued with “Language Matters I,” a humanities focus grant for Washington, DC area teachers, and in 2004, “Language Matters II: Reading and Teaching Toni Morrison,” a national workshop for teachers. Directed and coordinated out of the HBW office, these programs were highly successful in promoting the reading and study of major African American authors to a diverse national audience. The professional development work continued with a national institute, “Making the Wright Connection: Reading *Native Son*, *Black Boy*, and *Uncle Tom’s Children*” (July 2010), and “Language Matters IV: Reading and Teaching Toni Morrison in Translation” (November 2010). In July 2012 NEH granted funds for HBW’s most current project, a three week summer 2013 institute for college teachers, hosted at KU, titled “Don’t Deny My Voice: Reading and Teaching African American Poetry.”
- Since its inception, the bulk of the Project’s work has been concerned with the study of the African American novel. The Project has emphasized the importance of knowledge dissemination, while retaining its primary emphasis upon recovery and documentation of an African American narrative tradition. 2011-2012 saw efforts from HBW on the “re-discovery” of expatriate African American author Allen Tate and the re-publication of two of his poetry collections: *Poems* (1996) and *Looka Here, Now* (1997).
- The 21st century continues to bring new dimensions to the Project. In addition to efforts on the digital front (www.hbw.ku.edu; Facebook page: Project on the History of Black Writing; @projectHBW on Twitter), the Project has surged ahead, riding the pulse of trends created in the community of black literature. In many cases the Project has created those trends itself. Linking the concept of literature with literacy as we have begun to do, HBW is fully prepared to meet the challenges presented by the global study of African American literature.

CONFERENCES 2010-2012

2011 COLLEGE LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION CONVENTION

- Spartanburg, South Carolina – April 6 – 9th, 2011

Rebuilding and Rebranding: The Project on the History of Black Writing in the 21st Century

Chair: Maryemma Graham, University of Kansas

Candice L. Jackson, Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville
“Black Novels at the Margin”

Howard Rambsy, II, Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville
“100 Volumes of Poetry: A Black Studies Project”

Kenton Rambsy, University of Kansas
“100 Novels: Mapping Trends Past, Present, and Future”

2012 COLLEGE LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION CONVENTION

- Spelman College, Atlanta, GA —March 28 – 31st, 2012,

HBW @ Social Media: How the Project on the History of Black Writing Utilizes Blogs, Facebook, and Twitter

Moderator: Howard Rambsy II, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville

Members: Alysha Griffin, University of Kansas

Kenton Rambsy, University of Kansas

Cindy Lyles, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville

Danielle Hall, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville



HBW at CLA 2011: Yuan Ding, Kenton Rambsy, Maryemma Graham, Crystal Boson, Earl Brooks, Howard Rambsy

2012 HBW ADVISORY BOARD MEETING HELD AT CLA CONFERENCE, ATLANTA, GA. MARCH 31ST-APRIL 1ST, 2012

Members Present

Maryemma Graham
Trudier Harris
Edgar Tidwell
Kathleen Bethel
Jerry Ward, Jr.
Howard Rambsy II
Joyce Hope Scott

Project Staff

Kenton Rambsy
Goyland Williams
Alysha Griffin
Jaime Whitt

Guests of the Board in Attendance

Carmaletta Williams
Tony Bolden
Joanne Gabbin
Dana Williams
Carolyn Denard

The 2012 HBW Advisory Board meeting was held in spring of 2012 in Atlanta, GA, in conjunction with the annual CLA Conference. Board members spent a day and a half discussing issues related to HBW's current goals and projects as well as its goals and challenges as it looks to the future. Specifically, the following issues were discussed in depth:

“Rebuilding and Rebranding”

The HBW staff worked to recover and re-order our collection and inventory after coming out of storage at KU. Also, many efforts have united to provide a new “face” to HBW, including a newly designed (Thanks to Kenton Rambsy) logo and through social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter as well as an active literary blog on the HBW website: www.hbw.ku.edu

-Current HBW projects include “Don’t Deny My Voice: Reading and Teaching African American Poetry” an NEH summer institute for college teachers.



Goyland Williams, Trudier Harris, Edgar Tidwell, Carmaletta Williams, Jerry Ward, Kathleen Bethel, Joyce Hope Scott, Alysha Griffin, Howard Rambsy, Carolyn Denard (from the Toni Morrison Society), Maryemma Graham.
(not shown: Tony Bolden, Jaime Whitt, Kenton Rambsy)

Looking to the Future

- Dana Williams – Met with board members to discuss potential partnerships with CLA
- Focus continues on efforts to digitize the HBW collection
- Board discussed whether KU will be permanent site for the collection
- Practicing “glocalization” – HBW needs to expand efforts to connect through the virtual community and expand the Project’s reach
- Black Literary Suite/100 Novels Project—efforts to get HBW collection more exposure on campus as well as getting the novels into a larger dialogue.
- Director and staff will continue efforts to partner with libraries, who have access to funds to digitize content, but do not have the content
- Discussion of thoughts toward endowing HBW

HBW Collaborations

- HBW and the Toni Morrison Society—Language Matters, as an initiative has been suspended temporarily as TMS moves to its new home at Oberlin College, but partnership will continue in the future. Board will remain engaged and will consider how the partnership with Oberlin might affect HBW and Language Matters.
- Archie Givens Collection at University of Minnesota has contacted HBW to request a potential partnership. Board will consider.
- Faces of Haiti—HBW partnered with KU Institute for Haitian Studies to facilitate a research trip to Haiti and produce *Faces of Haiti* booklet



Language Matters IV with Morrison at the Bellevilloise Cultural Center, November 5, 2010 Photo by C.B. Claiborne

PARTNERSHIPS / COLLABORATIONS 2010-2012

FURIOUS FLOWER POETRY COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

Since 1994, HBW and the Furious Flower Poetry Center have maintained a fruitful partnership, which began to flourish in 2008 to 2010. Outlined here are three collaborative projects during this period. www.jmu.edu/furiousflower/

73 POEMS FOR 73 YEARS

The Project on the History of Black Writing sent representatives to participate in the “73 Poems for 73 Years: Celebrating the Life of Lucille Clifton” event on September 21, 2010. The HBW members and affiliates read at the event, including Dr. Maryemma Graham, Dr. Trudier Harris, and DaMaris Hill, each reading one of Lucille Clifton’s poems. DaMaris Hill was also interviewed for the Furious Flower Poetry Center’s archival collections.

LANGUAGE MATTERS IV: READING AND TEACHING TONI MORRISON

Moderator: Maryemma Graham, University of Kansas

Workshop Facilitator: Christina Lux, University of Kansas

Language Matters IV was an invitational workshop for teachers in US and French schools held in conjunction with the Sixth Biennial Conference “Toni Morrison and the Circuits of the Imagination/Toni Morrison et les Circuits de l’Imaginaire” in Paris. It aimed to facilitate the dialogue between teachers from the US and Paris teaching Morrison, some in English, others in French, to consider the challenges of teaching translated texts and develop strategies for implementation.

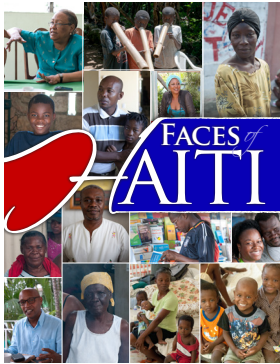


Twenty-eight teachers were selected to meet with two teacher-discussion leaders and scholars of translation studies for a workshop on Saturday, November 7, 2010. These teachers demonstrated an ongoing commitment to teaching works by Toni Morrison and participated in web-based (virtual) discussions subsequent to the workshop. Selected teachers also were able to attend all conference events from November 4th to 7th, 2010. The focus of the conference was the discussion of *The Bluest Eye* and *Song of Solomon* by French and English teachers, and about the English to French-French to English translations of Morrison’s works.



Language Matters IV with Morrison at the Bellevilloise Cultural Center, November 5, 2010 Photo by C.B. Claiborne

PUBLICATIONS 2010-2012



THE FACES OF HAITI: RESOLUTE IN REFORM, RESISTANCE, AND RECOVERY

Nineteen months after the worst natural disaster in more than 200 years hit the island, time seems to have stood still for the country and its people. Recovery is far from complete; in fact, it has hardly begun. Indeed, this was the first contradiction that confronted our KU team that traveled to Haiti July 20-29, 2011. We saw little evidence of the \$500 million raised by the American Red Cross, the \$1.4 billion donated by the American people or the \$11 billion pledged by other countries and corporations around the world.

Haiti is indeed a “disaster of good intentions,” as *Rolling Stone* calls it, inviting more questions about ethics, about exploitation, about accountability, about the real meaning of humanitarian aid than about almost anything else. We knew—all of us—that the Haitian people deserve so much better, but what we learned during our journey would not allow us to wallow in sympathy for them. Instead, we learned lessons about the human capacity to survive, to find joy, to love and care for one another, to know and create beauty, to express a sense of dignity and self-worth—none of which is dependent on outsiders.

It was not the earthquake alone that generated our interest in a visit to Haiti. KU has been home for the Institute for Haitian Studies since 1992, when it was founded by Bryant Freeman, currently an emeritus professor of French and Italian. While some of our team were more aware of the KU-Haiti connection than others, we were all interested to understand how Haiti had fallen off the media’s radar screen, why so little progress was being made in the recovery effort, and, frankly, whether this was going to be a replay of Katrina.

Our nine-day visit to Haiti then was the result of a series of inquiries, which simultaneously evoked the language of KU’s strategic initiatives campaign. We at KU were all being challenged to consider “the highest priorities for investment in research for the next five years” summed up as follows:

- *Sustaining the Planet, Powering the World*
- *Promoting Well-Being, Finding Cures*
- *Building Communities, Expanding Opportunities*
- *Harnessing Information, Multiplying Knowledge*



The Haiti Research Initiative: Maryemma Graham (English/HBW), Brian Rosenblum (KU Libraries), Prof. Emeritus Bryant Freeman (founder, KU Institute for Haitian Studies), and Kiran Jayaram (KU Grad, Haitian specialist). Not shown: C.B. Claiborne (TSU) whose photographs documented the visit.

****Faces of Haiti booklet is attached in PDF to the electronic version of this biennial report****

RECOVERING THE WORK OF ALLEN POLITE (1932-1993)

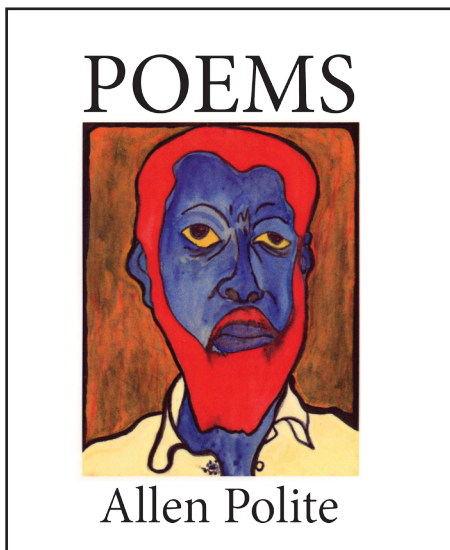
Allen Polite was born in New Jersey in 1932. His poetry was first published in 1958 in *Yugen*. His writings also appear in *Sixes and Sevens, An Anthology of New Poetry* (1962) and in Langston Hughes' *New Negro Poets, U.S.A.* (1964). An early association with LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) led him to serve his apprenticeship as a beat poet before he became identified with the Black Arts Movement.

After his service in the U.S. Army in Korea and Japan, Polite moved permanently to Europe, settling in Stockholm in 1963. There he was part of a collective of artists, musicians and poets that included the late Harvey Cropper, another black expatriate. Polite left hundreds of poems, paintings, and drawings that he had planned to publish later in his career. His wife, Helene Polite privately published three volumes of the work he left behind and has assisted HBW in reissuing two of his volumes.

This recovery work allows for the visibility of Polite's significant literary and artistic contributions as an artist abroad. In recovering his work, HBW has also examined his global appeal and cultural expression as a Black writer, though Polite believed "Each is an artist first and has no flags in his pocket."

In 2012, HBW organized a panel at the College Language Association, where novelist Tony M. Grooms presented a paper on Polite's work. In the 2013 NEH summer institute, "Don't Deny My Voice," Polite's poetry will be included in discussion of poetry of the 1960s.

Allen Polite died of cancer in 1993. His papers are housed at the University of Connecticut, Storrs.



THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE. Cambridge Univ. 847p. ed. by Maryemma Graham & Jerry W. Ward Jr. bibliog. index. ISBN 9780521872171. \$165.

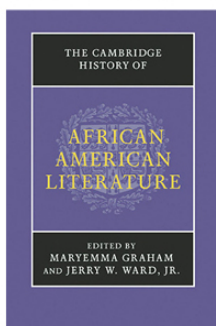
In February 2012, *Library Journal* selected *The Cambridge History of African American Literature* as one of its top reference texts of 2011. <http://reviews.libraryjournal.com/2012/02/reference/best-reference-ecl>. See review below.

Covering 400 years of writing, this balanced reference is a comprehensive overview of the literary traditions, oral and print, of African-descended peoples in the United States, with expert contributors from this country and beyond. It does an excellent job of collecting current scholarship while suggesting new approaches to that effort. The work provides a reasonably complete chronological accounting from early oral traditions of the 17th century to classic works from late 19th-century writers such as poet Paul Laurence Dunbar, through Langston Hughes in the Harlem Renaissance, to the most recent decades where August Wilson became the most produced playwright in the 1990s.

CAMBRIDGE

[HTTP://WWW.CAMBRIDGE.ORG/9780521872171](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521872171)

**THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE**



Maryemma Graham
University of Kansas

Jerry W. Ward, Jr.
Dillard University, New Orleans

The first major twenty-first century history of four hundred years of black writing, *The Cambridge History of African American Literature* presents a comprehensive overview of the literary traditions, oral and print, of African-descended peoples in the United States. Expert contributors, drawn from the United States and beyond, emphasize the dual nature of each text discussed as a work of art created by an individual and as a response to unfolding events in American cultural, political, and social history. Unprecedented in scope, sophistication and accessibility, the volume draws together current scholarship in the field. It also looks ahead to suggest new approaches, new areas of study, and as yet undervalued writers and works. *The Cambridge History of African American Literature* is a major achievement both as a work of reference and as a compelling narrative and will remain essential reading for scholars and students in years to come.

F. Abiola Irele
Philip Gould
Vincent Carretta
Stefan Wheelock
John Ernest
Kimberly Blockett
Joycelyn Moody
Warren Carson
Keith Byerman and
Hanna Wallinger
Keith Leonard
Mark Sanders
Craig Werner and
Sandra Shannon
Emily Bernard
Darryl Dickson-Carr

Nicole Waligora Davis
John Lowe
Sabine Broeck
Daryl Cumber Dance
James Smethurst and
Howard Ramsby
Trudier Harris
Opal Moore
Tony Bolden
Madhu Dubey and Elizabeth
Swanson Goldberg
Giselle L. Anatol
Candice Love Jackson
Harry Elam
Lawrence P. Jackson
Kenneth Warren

AVAILABLE FROM CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Phone: US & Canada: 800.872.7423
Web: www.cambridge.org/us

OR YOUR LIBRARY WHOLESALER

 **CAMBRIDGE**
UNIVERSITY PRESS
www.cambridge.org

NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD 2010-2012

Kathleen E. Bethel, Northwestern University, Illinois

Suzanne B. Dietzel, Ohio University

Trudier Harris, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa

Alisha Coleman Knight, Washington College

Sybil Moses, Library of Congress (2010-2011)

Howard Rambsy II, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, Illinois

Joyce Hope Scott, Wheelock College

John Edgar Tidwell, University of Kansas

Jerry W. Ward, Jr., Central China Normal University (Wuhan)

Richard Yarborough, UCLA

PROJECT STAFF:

Maryemma Graham, Founder/Director

Sarah Arbuthnot Lendt, Special Projects, 2003-2007; 2009-current

Jennifer Hurst, Inventory Assistant, 2012

Suzy Allen, Wright Connection Grant Assistant, 2009-2010

Ashley Jelks, Language Matters Grant Assistant, 2010

Lynne Lipsey, Webmaster/Consultant, 2008-current

Justin Pavel, Office Assistant, 2010-2012

Yuan Ding, Publications Coordinator, 2009-2011

Lacey McAfee, 2010-current

Jamie Whitt, Publications Coordinator, Board Liaison, 2001-2003; 2011-current

Kenton Rambsy, PDI Coordinator, 2010-current

Alysha Griffin, 2011-current

Crystal Boson (2010-2011)

CURRENT (FALL 2012) HBW STAFF MEMBERS:

Kenton Ramsby
krambsy@ku.edu

Alysha Griffin
a982g059@ku.edu

Lacey McAfee
1594m740@ku.edu

Jackie Monroe
monroejacquelyn@yahoo.com

Goyland Williams
goylandw@gmail.com

Felipe Pena
felipepena123@gmail.co

Sarah Arbuthnot Lendt
saraharbuthnot@hotmail.com

Jaime Whitt
jaime.whitt@sbglobal.net

Project email:
hbw@ku.edu

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS:

Howard Ramsby
Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville
Peck Hall 3206 Box 1431
Edwardsville, IL 62026
Tel: (618) 650-2213
hrambsy@siue.edu

Joyce Hope Scott
Wheelock College
200 The Riverway
Boston, Massachusetts 02215
Tel: 617-879-2403
jscott@wheelock.edu

John Edgar Tidwell
University of Kansas
1445 Jayhawk Blvd
Lawrence, Kansas 66045
Tel: (785) 864 2583
tidwelje@ku.edu

Jerry W. Ward, Jr.
1928 Gentilly Blvd.
New Orleans, Louisiana 70119
Tel: (504) 283-4065
jerry.ward31@hotmail.com

Richard Yarborough
UCLA
149 Humanities Building
Box 951530
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1530
Tel: (310) 825-4173 Fax: (310) 267-4339
yarborou@humnet.ucla.edu

Kathleen Bethel
Northwestern University Library
1970 Campus Drive, Room 2622
Evanston, IL 60208
Tel: (847) 491-2173
Fax: (847) 467-7899
kbethel@northwestern.edu

Suzanne Dietzel

Baker University Center
403 Athens OH 45701-2979
Tel: (740) 593-9625 | Fax: (740) 593-9574
dietzel@ohio.edu
Tel:(205) 348-5065 | Fax: (205) 348-1388

Alisha Knight

Washington College
300 Washington Avenue,
Chestertown, Maryland 21620
aknight2@washcoll.edu

Trudier Harris

University of Alabama
Department of English
Box 870244
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0244
48raven@comcast.net

HBW

The Project on the History of Black Writing
...Preserving and Promoting Black Writing

Project on the History of Black Writing

The University of Kansas
Department of English, Wescoe Hall
1445 Jayhawk Blvd Room 3001
Lawrence, KS 66045-7590
www.hbw.ku.edu
www.projecthbw.blogspot.com