



Smithsonian

## Robert Frederick Smith Summer 2022 Internships Offsite at Amistad Research Center

### INCREASING DIGITAL ACCESS OF ORAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS (1 POSITION)

#### Amistad Research Center – New Orleans, Louisiana

The Amistad Research Center (ARC) is committed to collecting, preserving, and providing open access to original materials that reference the social and cultural importance of America's ethnic and racial history, the African Diaspora, human relations, and civil rights.

Audiovisual holdings at the Amistad Research Center include more than 8,000 individual moving images and sound recordings. Collections include oral history interviews, concert recordings, documentary films, television programs, home movies, news footage and other material. The Robert F. Smith intern will work with ARC staff to gain understanding and experience with digitization hardware/software and web-based platforms to help increase discoverability and access to an oral history collection in the Center's holdings.

#### **Position Description:**

The Amistad Research Center holds the papers of Tom Dent, a New Orleans-born poet, essayist, playwright, teacher, and oral historian. The collection of Dent's personal papers provides a rich documentary source in the areas of African American literature and theater, the Civil Rights Movement, and the society and culture of New Orleans. It is a strong, and often consulted, source for the study of discrimination and racism in the United States, community organizing, the Black Arts Movement, and Southern history.

The intern will work with the Research Services Department and the Curator of Moving Images & Recorded Sound in a project that will focus on increasing digital access to a series of oral history interviews of civil rights workers in Mississippi conducted by Tom Dent from 1978 to 1983. This subsection of the Tom Dent papers contains 47 individual narratives in standard audiocassette form of interviews. Topics covered throughout the narratives include the beginnings of the Movement in Mississippi, civil rights workers activities and living conditions, harassment and violence against the community, politics, the 1964 Freedom Summer, the Freedom Democratic Party and Fannie Lou Hamer, as well as CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) and SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) personnel and programs. The collection also includes narratives that detail the state of racial progress at the time of the interviews 15 to 20 years later in small Mississippi towns.

#### **Sample of Intern Duties:**

- Assisting with content analysis and metadata creation for oral history collection related to the 1960s Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi
- Analyze content, research, and write descriptive summaries and metadata for digital moving images and/or recorded sound
- Production of transcripts of oral histories using Otter.ai software
- Digitization of manuscripts, photographs, and recorded sound content from Amistad's holdings
- Research content related to digitized items, including research into ARC's archival collections
- Enrichment of archival finding aids with content descriptions to aid discovery of collections
- Creation/Enrichment of Wikipedia pages, blog posts, and social media posts on civil rights workers included in the oral history collection

**Learning Outcomes:**

- Understand best practices in description and digitization of cultural heritage collections across a variety of sound and moving image formats
- Experience using an Epson flatbed scanner and Photoshop for digitization of archival materials
- Learn policies related to providing access to audiovisual materials
- Introduction to the use of content management systems, specific to archival work and accessibility of collections, including TMS Collections and ArchivesSpaces
- Learn policies and procedures for handling and long-term preservation of archival collections
- Understand how digitization and curation impact multiple aspects of the operations of a small to mid-sized cultural heritage institution
- Understand how copyright and intellectual rights determine access to cultural heritage collections

**Prerequisites:**

- Demonstrated interest in African American history and culture
- Interest in community-facing archives, libraries, and museums
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills
- Able to work independently and as part of a team
- Interest in exploring and developing technological skills
- Detail-oriented with strong analytical skills

**Work Environment:** With a small staff, the work environment at the Amistad Research Center fosters collaboration among staff while also valuing independence and goal-oriented task assignment and completion. Important to this position is the ability to communicate well with staff and supervisors, ask questions as needed, the ability to work independently toward stated deadlines, respect of sensitive materials, and an empathy toward the people, places, and events depicted in Amistad's collections. As the Robert F. Smith Internship Program will allow for a hybrid (in-person and remote) work environment in 2022, the intern may split their time between work at Amistad and remote.

**Tentative Schedule:** Flexible

**COVID-19 Vaccine Requirements:** Per policies of Amistad Research Center and our host institution, Tulane University, all staff are required to provide proof of vaccination for COVID-19 or complete an exemption form. All staff, including interns, are required to take part in Tulane University's surveillance testing regardless of vaccine status. While Tulane University has become a mask-optional campus, at this time, Amistad still requires masks while in the Center.

**Eligibility:** Must be a United States citizen

**Safety:** June-November is hurricane season in New Orleans. In the event of a voluntary or mandatory evacuation, NMAAHC will coordinate a flight or other transportation to the intern's home base if necessary.