Digital Products

The result of the digitization work will incorporate registered .tiff and .jpg images for each item and searchable .pdf files for all text documents that can be created as searchable .pdf files, i.e., those created with typewriters or similarly legible text. All image products will meet FADGI standards. Identification metadata will be included for each using the Dublin Core Metadata Standard and are intended to meet the needs expressed by the various users. The digital product will be hosted on the open-source content management system (Omeka S).

It will be freely available to archives, service providers and cultural institutions for access and/or archiving, and to the public. Because this project includes six institutional partners (five HBCUS plus NMAAHC), we will also develop a schema and crosswalks for harmonization of standards, including MARC and the Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard (METS) to ensure that all data produced through the digitization process is fully linked and fully searchable.

The software platform that the project will be built on—Omeka S—is an open-source web publication system for universities, galleries, libraries, archives, and museums. It supports a local network of independently curated exhibits sharing a collaboratively built pool of items, media, and their associated metadata and easily allows for the addition of other sites to the project.

Created at RRCHNM and now managed by the non-profit corporation Digital Scholar, Omeka S has a robust community of users, including archivists, librarians, metadata specialists, public history sites, museums, and libraries. All code for the platform resides in GitHub and is constantly being updated by the team at Digital Scholar with input from the community of users. Omeka S is designed for projects like this one and is especially good about making all metadata visible to users and available for use through linked open data.

Sustainability of Project Outcomes and Digital Content

As mentioned above, all digital files created through this project will be stored on the RRCHNM servers at George Mason University until such time as NMAAHC is ready to transfer the final products to their servers.

All data will be stored on the open source Omeka S software platform. Using Omeka S as the publishing platform and functional modeler for the data products provides long term sustainability of the data as well as a high degree of flexibility when new partners wish to add their data to the project. Omeka Classic, the earlier version of the Omeka platform created in 2008, has been downloaded more than 250,000 times and is being used in more than 50 languages.
Omeka S launched in 2017, and we have chosen it for this project because we anticipate that over time other graffiti houses will want to join the project and the Omeka S platform is designed for that sort of distributed partnership model. It is also important to us that Omeka S user interfaces are designed to contemporary accessibility standards so are available to assistive technologies and web archiving tools. As an open-source project, all relevant code for Omeka S and its various themes and plugins are available on GitHub.

Founded 27 years ago, RRCHNM is sustained by ongoing financial support from the Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, who provides funding for RRCHNM faculty and for three core staff positions—systems administrator, grants manager, and office manager. RRCHNM has an endowment of almost $4 million that provides additional funding for our operations and over the past five years our new grants and contracts have averaged just over $1 million per year. This financial strength offers assurance of our ability to maintain the data created in this project until such time as NMAAHC is ready to ingest it.

RRCHNM maintains its own servers which are housed in George Mason University’s secure data center with a backup server rack located in RRCHNM’s facility. These servers are all Dell products with an average age of less than three years. RRCHNM replaces its servers on a five-year staggered cycle in order to ensure the greatest possible sustainability of its data products.

All work created at RRCHNM is always open source and open access in perpetuity. Since the founding of RRCHNM in 1994, the Center has made a commitment to creating only open source/open access projects in order to provide the widest possible access to all of its products.