The African Studies Association will hold its 55th annual meeting in Philadelphia on November 29th through December 1st, 2012. The theme for the conference is “Research Frontiers in the Study of Africa.”

ALC and CAMP will meet on Friday, November 30th from 8:30am-6:15pm and the ALC-sponsored panel will be on Thursday, November 29th from 2:30-4:15.

The theme of the ALC panel will be “New Digital Resources in African Studies Scholarship.” The panel will address the uses and development of new (technology-enhanced) forms of disseminating research—social networks, blogs, Twitter, podcasts, etc.—as well as digitized resource material.

The panel will be chaired by Esmeralda Kale, Northwestern University Africana Bibliographer and incoming chair of ALC. The panelists will include Mariam Conteh-Morgan (Ohio State University), “Researching Africana through New Media;” Peter Limb (Michigan State University), “Podcasting Africa Past and Present;” Jason Schultz (UC-Berkeley), “Web Archiving of Government & NGO Websites;” and Meley Mulugetta (York University, Toronto) “The Ethiopic Manuscript Imaging Project (EMIP).” [Dr. Mulugetta’s presentation is dependent on the availability of Skype at the conference hotel.]
ity to collaborate and transform (added DLF);

- To create a context to share findings, enhance and develop a larger dialogue and discussion from the local Africana Librarians Council ALC experience of Area Studies librarianship to a larger group, such as a potential conference addressing area studies needs for the 21st century;
- To document colleagues experiences (who have expressed difficulty in promoting and supporting the needs of Africana Studies researchers and learners as well as those who have not had such experience);
- To assess proposed and existing library re-organization models, consider potential configurations, articulate/demonstrate negative/positive consequences and develop data/responses;
- To document best models and propose new models in light of change in production, dissemination and access of knowledge and ongoing scholarly communication;
- To consider trends (grant support, library organization models, other models) to determine what might help to influence and preserve our work in the "age of austerity" and beyond.

At this point, we would like to invite you into this process to consider, comment, and forward suggestions. Please feel free to comment on or suggest other goals.

The survey we propose could contribute toward data that could become the basis of an ALC panel/article which could help to articulate the framework of a potential conference and address concerns of our colleagues. We have begun to create goals/categories from which we would like to develop survey questions.

We have also explored ideas that might potentially link our concerns with broader dialogues and potential partners who value the goals we do. We have discussed frameworks/vision for a potential conference that may plant seeds for future articulations that may preserve and support our goals. We have discussed particular projects and technological innovations that ALC has participated in which could be developed to articulate arguments and recommendations. We have considered documentation of these to support our goals, within current library/higher education trends and with respect to broader sustainability goals that may also involve partners outside of the library context.

There have been several conferences in the past 8-10 years addressing the future of Area Studies. Perhaps we want to help create or shape an upcoming conference? As Marion mentioned in the Spring, Bloomington may be collaborating towards a conference on this topic based upon the Spec Kit. The need to create a space for our own dialogue before participating in separate conference was voiced by several. One suggestion was that we consider a mini-pre-conference at the upcoming ASA meeting in Philadelphia either scheduled before or during our meeting to brainstorm and vision together.

We would like to hear from you! We invite all ALC members to be participants in the creation of the survey and in the overarching dialogue. Please feel free to comment or answer the following questions and send to dlafond@albany.edu:

The ALC/CAMP Spring 2012 meeting will be held in Berkeley at the campus of the University of California at Berkeley from April 25th through April 27th. More details will available at the Fall 2012 ASA meeting and through the ALC listserv.

Peter Limb Honored with Distinguished Faculty Award at MSU

Peter Limb epitomizes the figure of the academic librarian-scholar. He has made notable contributions to Africana librarianship and the study of the history of South Africa. Since his arrival at MSU in 2001, Limb has solidified the stature of the Africana Library as an international resource for the studies of Africa. In the words of an esteemed historian of South Africa, Limb "is the leading Africana bibliographer in the world, a gold mine of information on almost any topic relating to African politics, history and literature."

As adjunct faculty in the Department of History, Limb has taught numerous and well-received undergraduate classes and graduate seminars. He has co-chaired or served on the dissertation committees of Ph.D. students in South African history, mentoring three to completion.

Limb energetically pursues unique materials for MSU Libraries’ internationally recognized Africana Studies Collection. He is an extraordinarily productive collection builder who has immensely improved what was already one of the country’s top Africana collections by emphasizing primary materials, new media, and non-trade materials. Through the contacts he has cultivated with vendors and scholars and through trips to Africa and Europe, many rare or poorly distributed resources, such as African dissertations, have been acquired. Further, the papers of eminent researchers and important organizations have been donated to the MSU libraries as a result of Limb’s initiative and collecting drive.

(Text edited from award announcement.)

Dan Reboussin Receives 2012 CRL Primary Source Award for Access

Dan Reboussin, Head of the University of Florida (UF) Libraries’ African Studies Collection, has received the 2012 CRL Primary Source Award for Access for his efforts to create effective access to the Jean-Marie Derscheid Collection.

The Derscheid collection encompasses a rich set of manuscripts relating to pre-colonial and colonial-era Burundi, Eastern Congo, and Rwanda.

These unique and rare materials document the history of the region. They were created and collected by Jean-Marie Derscheid, a zoologist and conservationist who undertook historical research on Rwanda and the Eastern Congo from 1924 to 1939.

Reboussin worked to enhance access to and preserve the microfilm collection. He ensured long-term scholarly access to the materials by securing permission from Derscheid’s heir to distribute the collection and by creating a complete, verified, item-level index. This year, Reboussin led a project to digitize the Derscheid manuscript collection to ensure ongoing access.

(Text edited from announcement.)

Handwritten note identified from 1610, Kitara, Buganda. From the Jean-Marie Derscheid Collection, University of Florida.


London Recruits, cont... Many of the volunteers were members of the Communist Party of Great Britain, socialists or anti-imperialists of some stripe. They risked their lives and freedom by transiting letters, leaflets, banners and other material through South African customs, with the material hidden in hollowed out bottoms of luggage. While carrying letters, they would buy stamps and re-post the letters to their intended recipient. This allowed for the gradual rebuilding of connections among ANC activists in the country and became a vehicle through which policy questions... Some of the “recruits” carried “bombs” that would propel leaflets all over the intended area, with the leaflets carrying the slogan “The ANC Fights.” These activities, for a period of time, were often the only public presence of the ANC in South Africa and delivered an important rebuttal to the apartheid regime’s propaganda of the ANC’s demise. These activities were not without danger. One “recruit,” Alex Monumbaris (Egyptian-born, but of Greek ethnicity) was arrested for smuggling ANC members back into the country. He was sentenced to ten years in prison, but managed to escape after nearly serving eight years. Longtime ANC leader Pallo Jordan noted, in a foreword to the book, “Working in self-contained cells, that were unaware of each other, under the guidance of a small unit operating out of London, these dedicated women and men helped the liberation movement to rebuild its capacity inside South Africa at a time when repression had all but extinguished the embers of resistance.”

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One geographic area where African retentions are easily observable is in the low country areas of South Carolina among the Gullah people. Linguists, such as Lorenzo Dow Turner and historians, such as Peter Wood and Judith Carney have examined aspects of this from their own disciplinary perspectives.

Wilbur Cross, an editor and author, has written a very readable book which tells the story of the Gullah people and culture. Opening with a trip to Sierra Leone by fifteen residents of the Carolina low country, Cross interweaves scholarly accounts with current testimony to paint a picture of Gullah culture as it exists today in South Carolina and its roots in West Africa. One of the people who made the trip to Sierra Leone remarked: “It was as though the community in which I was brought up back on St. Helena Island, South Carolina, had been lifted up and transported to Africa.” Much of the rest of the book addresses subject such as food, religion, language, folk medicine, and music. In each of these chapters the author draws on academic sources, but mixes them with contemporary interviews and observations.