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## **Benefiting from Digital Evolution: The Carberry Collection of Caribbean Studies**

*By Jane Darcovich, University of Illinois at Chicago*

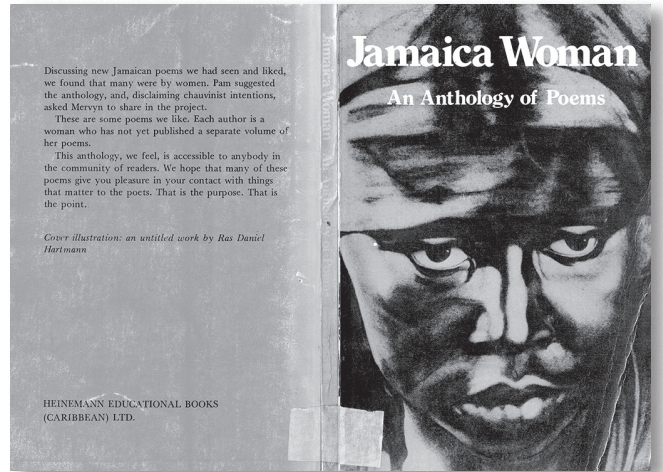
The Carberry Collection of Caribbean Studies, held in the Special Collections Department at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Library, comprises many out-of-print and rare first edition volumes by Caribbean authors, many published in the United Kingdom in the post–World War II era. The collection is a key resource for the study of the Caribbean diaspora during this time period.

The Carberry Collection is a good example of a print collection that has benefited from the process of incrementally providing online access through a variety of venues. By tracing the path of this process, we can gain some understanding of the dynamics of transformative change and the enhancements provided by digitization for a primary source collection.

### **Background**

The UIC Library purchased the personal library of H. D. (Hugh Doston) Carberry (1921–1989) in 1997, creating the Carberry Collection of Caribbean Studies. H. D. Carberry was a former chief justice of the Court of Appeals of Jamaica and a nationalist poet in his youth.<sup>1</sup> The Carberry Collection consists of twentieth-century postcolonial English-language literature and nonfiction by Caribbean authors, numbering just under 1,000 volumes. As a discrete unit, the collection represents the creative output of what has been called the Boom Era, when many Caribbean writers immigrated to Britain to work under more favorable conditions for writing and publishing.

Upon acquisition, the collection was fully cataloged, creating MARC records to provide multiple points of access for researchers. Subject headings were carefully assigned to each volume, a practice not always followed when cataloging fiction collections.<sup>2</sup> A recent analysis of the collection lists over 280 topical subject headings. Cataloging the collection as a unit ensured consistency, thereby allowing the tracing of themes and topics across the collection. Finally, each catalog record includes the full name of the collection in both the Notes field (500) and the Added Entry–Corporate Name field (710), making it easy to retrieve information about all items in the collection from the library’s online catalog.



### **Benefits of Digitization**

Bradley Daigle rightly views the digital transformation of libraries as “an iterative process that has been underway for years and will continue long into the future.”<sup>3</sup> He believes decisions to create digital collections encompass three main threads: “a clearly defined research need, preservation factors may be involved, or, there is a strong organizational desire to put this content online in order to brand it as their own.”<sup>4</sup> With the Carberry Collection, elements of all three factors are in play.

Over 600 of the illustrated book jackets from the Carberry Collection were selected for the original digitization project in 2004. This project made the collection more visible through a web-searchable FileMaker Pro database while also preserving the fragile paper objects. Along with the images, the database contained a wealth of added curatorial content in the form of textual information about the works, authors, and book jacket imagery. When available, the names of the visual artists and designers were noted. Original artwork from nearly 70 artists, illustrators, graphic artists, and designers was represented, including Milein Cosman, Charles Mozley, Guyanese artist Denis Williams, and Afro-Caribbean artist and author Namba Roy. The visual portrayals of the Caribbean contained in this corpus of imagery—albeit depictions used by the largely British publishers as a means to market the

books—provide insights into the perspectives on culture and gender from which they are derived. In addition, as visual objects, the book jackets provide a wealth of material for historians of graphic design.

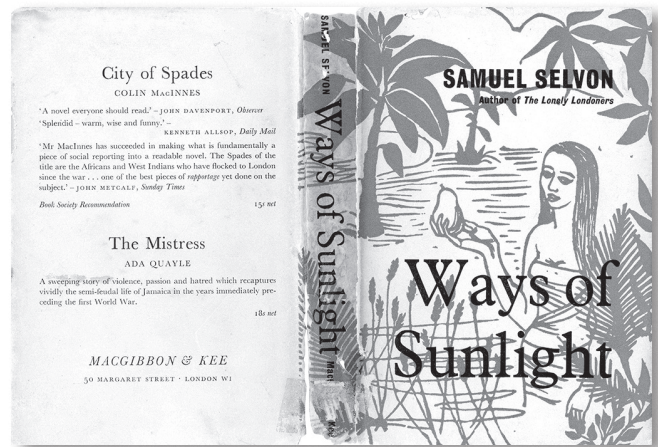
In 2009, a selection of 1,567 images from 380 book jackets in the Carberry Collection were made openly available online through the Consortium of Academic Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI) Digital Collections site.<sup>5</sup> Representative examples of 30 images from the Carberry Collection were also mounted on Flickr to reach new audiences beyond users of academic libraries.<sup>6</sup>

### **Partnering with the Digital Library of the Caribbean**

Because twentieth-century postcolonial English literature of Caribbean authors is not widely held by libraries either within or outside the Caribbean, the existence of a digital library for Caribbean research resources assumes overwhelming importance for access to and preservation of research materials in this field. The Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC)<sup>7</sup> has emerged as a primary player in this endeavor.<sup>8</sup> There is a great interest in making the Carberry Collection available through dLOC, especially in light of the unsustainability of the original FileMaker Pro site.

Founded in 2004, dLOC is an international cooperative digital library composed of 35 content-contributing partner libraries, archives, and other research groups, coordinated by Florida International University in partnership with the University of the Virgin Islands and the University of Florida. Supported in 2005 by a four-year United States Department of Education grant, dLOC developed technical infrastructure and tools using the SobekCM Digital Content Management System. dLOC stands out for its commitment to open access for its wide-ranging content, including newspapers, official documents, ecological and economic data, maps, histories, travel accounts, literature, poetry, and more, numbering over two million pages.<sup>9</sup> dLOC reports over one million user views of its open-access content per month.<sup>10</sup> The Carberry Collection complements existing content in dLOC such as digitized full-text books from other time periods, texts in languages other than English, and images of book covers.

The UIC Library has formally joined dLOC as a partner, with recognition of our future intentions to digitize the full text of selected books in the Carberry Collection. A



digitization plan will be worked out in conjunction with the University of Florida's Digital Library. Within dLOC, copyright clearance and the payment of any associated fees are the responsibility of the contributing institution. However, dLOC has already obtained copyright clearance from some of the authors represented in the Carberry Collection, and our partnership will allow us to digitize the full text of books by these authors under their existing agreements.

Preparations are underway to amalgamate the metadata and digital image content from the original FileMaker Pro database and the CARLI Digital Collections site for inclusion in dLOC. Metadata will include the full MARC records from the library's Voyager system, with additional fields added for Curator Notes and Jacket Artist or Designer Name, taken from the original FileMaker Pro database. dLOC staff will upload our metadata into the dLOC system.

dLOC has a sustainability plan should unanticipated operational difficulties be encountered in the future. Based upon a strong business model implemented in 2011, procedures are in place that will allow dLOC to continue in situations of minimal funding, assuring continued access to all its resources including published scholarly content.<sup>11</sup> The UIC Library will maintain local backup copies of the Carberry Collection and is investigating options for implementing a digital preservation program using a Digital Asset Management system.

Future development of the Carberry Collection within dLOC will involve working with faculty stakeholders to determine in what ways this digital content can best be enhanced, to take advantage of dLOC's robust func-

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tionality as both a digital library and a digital publishing system. New possibilities exist for developing curated digital collections and exhibits, creating new forms of digital scholarship, and collaborating with publishers and scholars to digitize additional holdings.<sup>12</sup>

### Conclusion

The various Carberry Collection digital projects demonstrate an evolution in the collection's digital accessibility, an ongoing process that will continue to see many changes in the future. Our original FileMaker Pro database is no longer sustainable, and our other online systems for the Carberry Collection do not allow the content to be widely discoverable, nor do they support expanded features such as online exhibits. This situation, combined with the limited availability of primary source resources for Caribbean studies, makes a cooperative international digital library assume overwhelming importance for the Carberry Collection.

The UIC Library partnership with the Digital Library of the Caribbean presents opportunities to further develop and enhance the Carberry Collection. The presence of the Carberry Collection in dLOC will also increase its discoverability and expand its usage to a much broader range of students and researchers, allowing it to contribute more widely to the scholarly understanding of diaspora studies.

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### Notes

1. Nancy Cirillo, Linda Naru, and Ellen Starkman, "The Caribbean Library in Diaspora: Perspectives from Scholarship and Librarianship," in *Caribbean Libraries in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Changes, Challenges, and Choices*, ed. Cheryl Peltier-Davis and Shamin Renwick (Medford, NJ: Information Today, 2007), 236.
2. C. Denise Stuempfle, "Voices from the Margin: An Exploration of Themes in the Libros Cartoneros Collection at the Indiana University Libraries and Their Subject Treatment," in *Popular Culture: Arts and Social Change in Latin America: Papers of the Fifty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, June 16–19, 2012*, ed. Lynn M. Shirey and Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials, Inc. (New Orleans: SALALM Secretariat, Latin American Library, Tulane University, 2014), 21.
3. Bradley J. Daigle, "The Digital Transformation of Special Collections," *Journal of Library Administration* 52, nos. 3–4 (2012): 261, DOI:

- 10.1080/01930826.2012.684504.
4. *Ibid.*, 253.
5. University of Illinois at Chicago, Carberry Collection of Caribbean Literature, CARLI, accessed January 19, 2015, [collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm4/index\\_uic\\_car.php?CISOROOT=/uic\\_car](http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm4/index_uic_car.php?CISOROOT=/uic_car).
6. H.D. Carberry Collection of Caribbean Studies, Flickr, accessed January 19, 2015, [flickr.com/photos/uicdigital/sets/72157613819881222](http://flickr.com/photos/uicdigital/sets/72157613819881222).
7. Digital Library of the Caribbean, accessed January 19, 2015, [dloc.com](http://dloc.com).
8. Shamin Renwick, "Caribbean Digital Library Initiatives in the 21st Century: The Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC)," *Alexandria* 22, no. 1 (2011): 4–6.
9. Fact Sheet for Digital Library of the Caribbean, accessed January 19, 2015, [dloc.com/AA00001499/00001/pdf](http://dloc.com/AA00001499/00001/pdf).
10. Laurie N. Taylor, et al., "Scholarly Publishing in the Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC)," in *Library Publishing Toolkit*, ed. Allison P. Brown (Geneseo, NY: IDS Project Press, 2013), 351.
11. *Ibid.*, 353.
12. *Ibid.*

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