

ORIGINS OF COLLECTING AFRICAN STUDIES AT THE UF GEORGE A. SMATHERS LIBRARIES

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This summer I undertook primary research in the University Archives investigating the history of UF's African Studies collections with the goal of learning more about UF Libraries' participation in the Farmington Plan. My predecessor Peter Malanchuk recalled that UF collected Sierra Leone publications under this 1954 federal Public Law 480 "Food for Peace" program, but he didn't know why the Libraries had selected this small West African country. Reading published works along with original and digitized manuscripts, I conducted interviews with retired librarians and former CAS directors. This work uncovered details of the origin of African Studies library collecting at UF, giving a better appreciation of the diverse collections under my curation.

Formal UF ties to the Caribbean date from 1930, preceding institutional interest in Africa. Stanley West (Library Director, 1946-1967) traveled frequently in the Caribbean and chaired the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) Farmington Plan Sub-Committee on Latin America. In 1960, he responded to an "African Interest Questionnaire" from the ARL Joint Committee on African Resources, stating UF interest was "an extension of our Caribbean program." One archival

document shows he sent this form to a Jamaican librarian, who completed it for him! Despite repeatedly expressing interest to the ARL Farmington legacy committee, the Libraries showed slight success in collecting Sierra Leonean materials. West complained to the Graduate Dean in 1964: "it is so hard to establish any permanent relationships with the book stores and government agencies in these countries."

Even before moving to Gainesville in 1905, many Caribbean students studied at Florida's Land Grant agricultural college because both regions share similar environmental challenges. Florida's economy depends on supporting the agricultural production of African species (ninety percent of the state's pasture grasses come from Africa, for example) while mitigating diseases and exotic invasive pests originating on the continent. Today, both the Latin American and African National Resource Centers (NRCs) emphasize UF's unique strengths in tropical life sciences. Interdisciplinary tropical conservation and development programs grew out of projects in the Amazon, but have since supported extensive collaboration across both Latin America and Africa. The Libraries provide access to interdisciplinary research publications relating to both regions, with

extensive manuscript collections documenting over 80 years of wildlife conservation programs in Africa.

Director West's complaint may have been well timed. That year political science professor Manning J. Dauer, along with faculty including Irving R. Wershow (a linguist with federal government experience who later served as CAS director) successfully proposed African Studies NRC funding from the federal Title VI program. Just one year earlier, the Libraries hired Barry C. Bloomfield, a librarian at the London School of Economics who later headed Asian Studies collections at the School of Oriental and African Studies, India Office Library and Records (now at the UK National Archives), and British Library. Emeritus Social Sciences Bibliographer Ray Jones recalls Bloomfield bringing new levels of collecting knowledge to the Libraries, supported by Dr. Margaret Goggin, then head of Public Services (later acting Director of Libraries, 1967-1968), along with bookstore owner Irving Kallman, both of whom had extensive experience collecting foreign materials. Former CAS Director Hunt Davis notes that Dauer's powerful support was a key early component in the Center's success, helping to garner library resources that faculty and students needed to pursue excellent teaching, learning, and research in African Studies.

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