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The Carberry Collection: Transformation and Discoverability

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The Carberry Collection: Transformation and Discoverability

Abstract

The Carberry Collection of Caribbean Studies, comprised of many out-of-print and rare first edition volumes by Caribbean authors held in the Special Collections Department at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), is a key resource for the study of the Caribbean diaspora during the second half of the twentieth century. The collection has benefitted from both extensive outreach and digital exposure, including a project to digitize the fragile book jackets and subsequently make these images available through three online databases. The UIC Library has just joined the Digital Library of the Caribbean and the collection of book jacket images will also be hosted there, providing wider discoverability. Tracing the path of the iterative process for digitization and access provides an understanding of the dynamics of transformative change and enhancements for this unique collection.

Keywords

Caribbean literature, cultural studies, ethnic studies, visual studies, design, illustration

Author Bio & Acknowledgements

Jane Darcovich is Liaison Librarian for Architecture and Art at the Richard J. Daley Library, University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). She previously served as the Director of the Visual Resources Library at UIC. A VRA member since 2000, she has served the Association in various capacities including Treasurer, Co-Chair of the Development Committee, and Chair of the Midwest Chapter.

The contemporary Caribbean is a region characterized by diaspora. The historic diaspora fueled by colonial powers' economic investment in the sugar industry brought slaves and later indentured laborers to the Caribbean. Modern waves of diaspora, starting in the late nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century, saw the emigration of Caribbean peoples to the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, and other countries. The twentieth century also saw the rise of independence struggles and nationalist movements in much of the region.

Availability of resources is a major issue when conducting research about the postcolonial Caribbean. Fragmentation of collections of primary source materials and conditions of inaccessibility exist because of an interrelated network of factors. Primary source collections for the research and study of the postcolonial Caribbean are not always held within the nations or regions in which they were created or whose cultures they represent. Instead, much of the Caribbean's historical information is housed in libraries outside the region. In addition, the geography of the region plays a role in the inaccessibility of collections housed in Caribbean institutions. Travel costs within the region are high, and it is not feasible for researchers to travel from one location to another in order to view primary source materials.¹ A recent book devoted to the topic of literary research on postcolonial literatures in English of former British colonies in Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia acknowledges this situation of "unevenness and often unavailability of both primary and secondary materials" as an intrinsic challenge to the study of postcolonial literatures.²

The Carberry Collection of Caribbean Studies, held in the Special Collections Department at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Library, is comprised of 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. Many Caribbean authors immigrated to Britain to take advantage of economic conditions which supported a publishing industry for Caribbean publishers. For this reason, the collection is a key resource for the study of the Caribbean diaspora during that period.

The Carberry Collection is a good example of a print collection which has benefitted from both extensive outreach and digital exposure, and which is now at the brink of its next major digital transformation. By tracing the path of this iterative process for digitization and access, we gain an understanding of the dynamics of transformative change and the enhancements provided for a primary source collection.

Acquiring and processing the print collection

Starting in 1993, Professor Nancy Cirillo was one of a group of humanities faculty involved in an initiative to develop courses in Caribbean Studies at UIC, reflecting an interest in developing curricula around issues related to postcolonialism and diaspora. Aligned with this effort, she worked with UIC Library faculty on efforts to build a collection of English-language works from the Caribbean, one which would complement existing Chicago-area collections--the Africana Collection at Northwestern University Library and the Southern Asia Collection at The University of Chicago

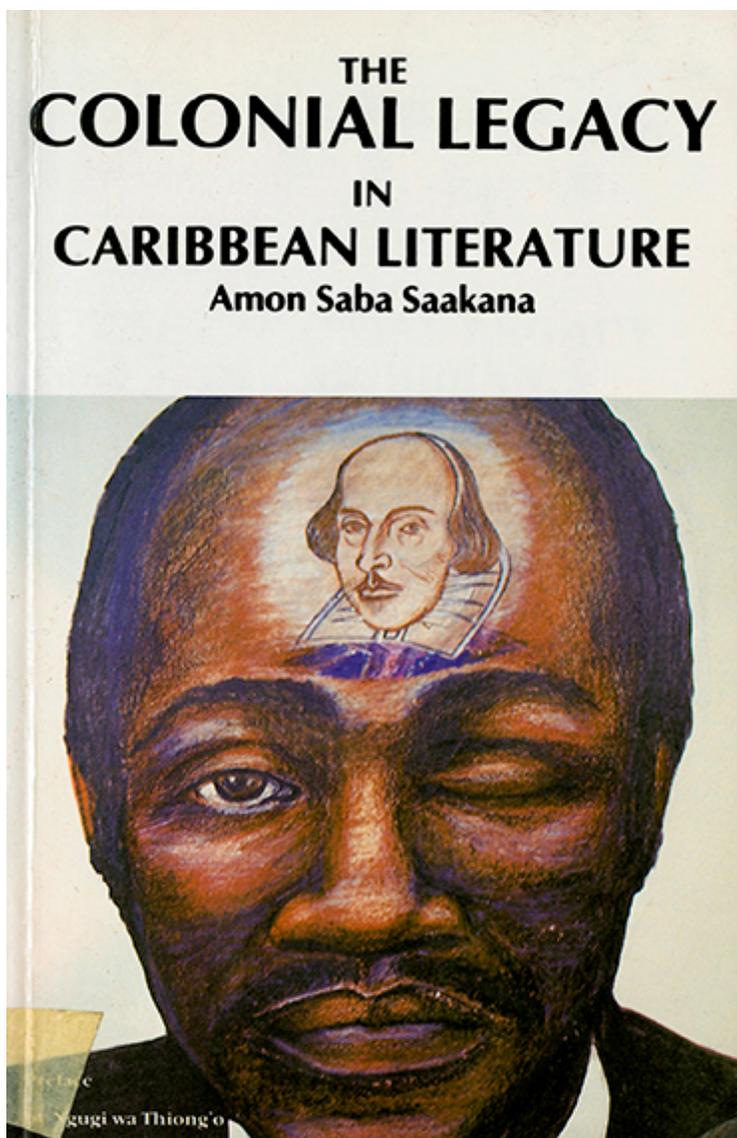
Library. However, initial investigation revealed that very little was available from commercial sources.

Fortunately, Jamaican publisher Ian Randle notified us of the availability of the Carberry Collection for purchase. It fitted the bill of what was sought, a collection of twentieth-century postcolonial English-language literature and non-fiction written by Caribbean authors, numbering just under 1,000 volumes. As a discrete unit, the collection represented the creative output of what has been called the Boom era, when many Caribbean writers emigrated to Britain to work under conditions more favorable for writing and publishing. The collection was further distinguished by its provenance as the personal library of H. D. (Hugh Doston) Carberry (1921-1989), former Chief Justice of the Court of Appeals of Jamaica, and a nationalist poet in his youth.³ Working closely with two library faculty members, John M. Cullars and Stephen E. Wiberley, Jr., Professor Cirillo played a key role in bringing the collection to the UIC Library in 1997, and has continued to be its champion since then.

An immediate task after acquisition was the cataloging of the collection. This task was approached with the aim of providing multiple points of access for the researcher. One strategy was the careful assigning of subject headings for each volume in the collection, a practice not always followed when cataloging fiction collections.⁴ A recent analysis by UIC library staff lists over 280 topical subject headings applied to the collection. Cataloging the collection as a unit ensured consistency throughout the process, thereby allowing the tracing of themes and topics across the collection. Finally, to make the collection more easily discoverable as a whole, each catalog record includes the full name of the collection--H.D. Carberry Collection of Caribbean Studies (University of Illinois at Chicago) ICIU--in both the Notes field (500) and the Added Entry-Corporate Name field (710). This way, the entire group of catalog records for the Carberry collection can be easily retrieved from the library's online catalog.

Exhibitions and Events

Following the acquisition of the collection by the University Library, a series of events was organized to celebrate and publicize it. A symposium entitled "The Caribbean: Memory, Imagination, Print" was held at UIC in the fall of 1997, featuring talks by authors Michelle Cliff, Rachel Manley (daughter of former Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley), and noted Jamaican publisher Ian Randle. A week-long screening of Caribbean films and a Caribbean book fair were held in conjunction with the symposium. In addition, an exhibition *Selections from the H. D. Carberry Collection of Caribbean Studies* opened in the Library's Special Collections Department that October, and remained on view through the spring of the following year.⁵ Among the many visitors to the exhibition was the Nobel Prize winning Caribbean poet and playwright Derek Walcott.



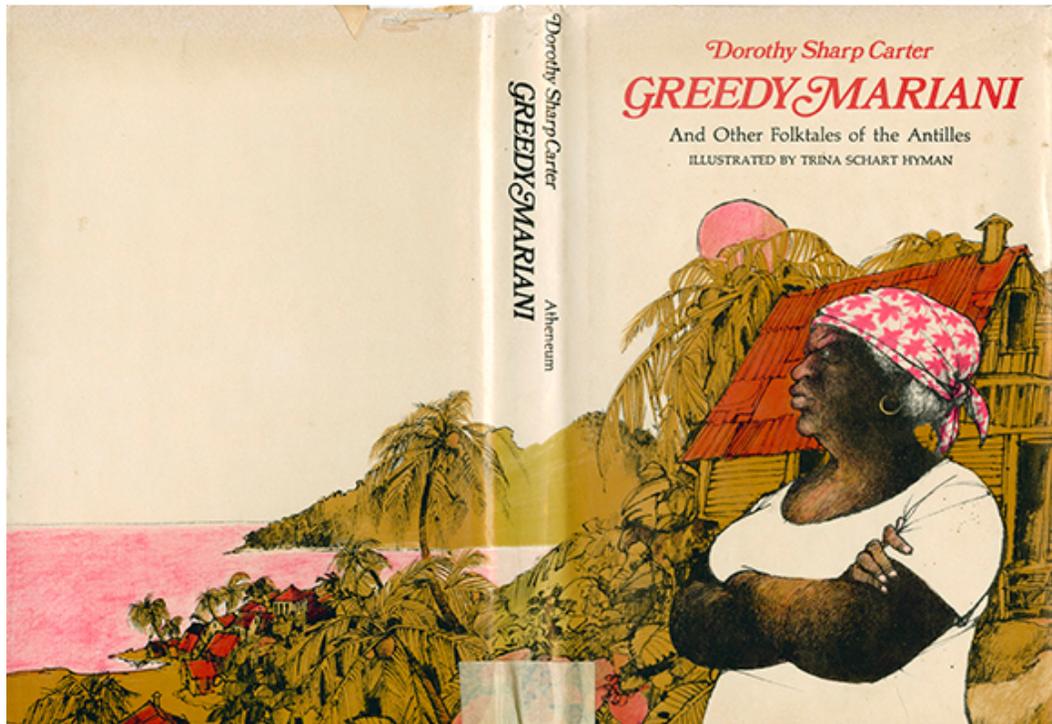
Amon Saba Saakana. The Colonial Legacy in Caribbean Literature. 1987. H.D. Carberry Collection, University of Illinois at Chicago Library, Special Collections.

In 2006, the UIC library organized and presented a group of six public programs featuring art, music, performance, and literature of the Caribbean, which again highlighted the Carberry Collection. A select number of volumes from the Carberry collection were included in the UIC Library's 2012 exhibition *Commerce in Human Souls: The Legacy of the Atlantic Slave Trade*⁶ which opened in the fall of that year. Displayed alongside primary source materials from two important collections held by our Special Collections department, the Sierra Leone collection and the Atlantic Slave Trade Collection, these selections dramatically described some of the political, economic, and social consequences of the slave trade and diaspora on the populations of the modern Caribbean.

Digitization

Bradley Daigle (2012) rightly views the digital transformation of libraries as “an iterative process that has been underway for years and will continue long into the future.”⁷ He sees archival collections as having the most to gain from this transformation, exploiting these technologies “to expose and foreground special collections content in dynamic and vibrant ways”.⁸ His assessment of the impetus behind making selections for digital collection building encompasses 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.”⁹ With the Carberry Collection, elements of all three factors are at play.

One part of the impetus behind the original project to digitize the book jackets in the Carberry Collection was to document them and create digital counterparts for these fragile paper objects. There continues to be a great impetus to strive to make the collection more visible and accessible, so that it may better serve the community of Caribbean scholars and students at institutions worldwide. As the custodian of a postcolonial collection from a region which endured exploitation at the hands of numerous outside colonial and postcolonial political powers, the library has a tremendous responsibility to share this resource with the cultures and nations which created it.



Greedy Mariani and other folktales of the Antilles. Selected and adapted by Dorothy Sharp Carter. Illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman. 1974. H.D. Carberry Collection, University of Illinois at Chicago Library, Special Collections.

Over 600 of the illustrated jackets of the Carberry Collection books were selected for a library digitization project in 2004. These digital images were made accessible in a web-searchable database created in FileMaker Pro, entitled “Images of the Caribbean Diaspora: Book Jacket Art” which, in addition to images of the book jackets and flyleaves themselves, contains a wealth of added curatorial content in the form of textual information about the works, authors, and book jackets themselves. The names of the visual artists and designers who created the book jackets were recorded in the metadata, when this information was available. Original artwork from close to seventy different artists, illustrators, graphic artists, and designers is represented, including examples from 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.

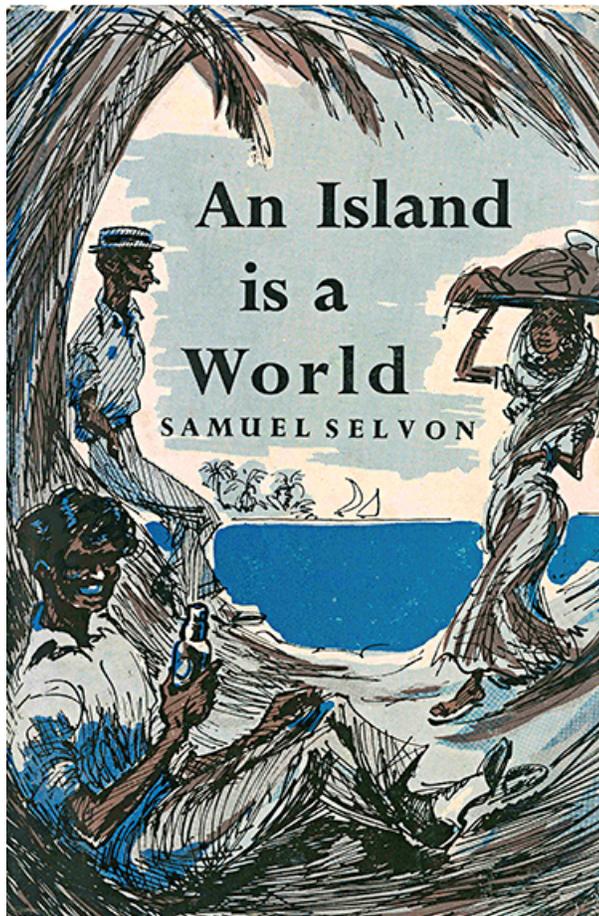
In 2009, a selection of the Carberry Collection book jacket art was also made openly available online on the Consortium of Academic Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI) Digital Collections site (http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm4/index_uic_car.php?CISOROOT=/uic_car). This situates the collection within the wider environment of the digital collections of all CARLI academic institutions, currently numbering eighty-six. Three hundred and eighty books were chosen for display in this repository, represented by a total of 1567 individual images, with front and back cover images, and flyleaf images counted separately. The metadata display for each item contains a link to the Library’s online catalog record for that volume.

Also in 2009, representative examples of a number of UIC’s digital collections were mounted on Flickr (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/uicdigital/sets/72157613819881222/>) as a way of reaching new audiences beyond users of academic library resources. Thirty images from the Carberry collection were mounted here, and the collection is one of fifty-five of UIC’s digital collections represented on Flickr, including some from the Library of the Health Sciences.

Recent developments and dLOC

An examination of the current humanities landscape at UIC reveals new area studies centering on diaspora, immigration and sexuality in the postcolonial context that have begun to move forward. Paula Allen-Meares’ Chancellor’s Cluster Initiative, launched in 2011, resulted in the selection of five funded “cluster” areas for the development of interdisciplinary curricula and programs, all within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. One of these is Diaspora Studies.¹⁰ Faculty and curricula in this area will examine a wide range of interrelated themes, such as the issues of the flow and production of knowledge, and development of post-national identities viewed through the lens of cultural products. Another relevant new cluster is Global Urban Immigration,

where areas of study may include the consequences of “brain drain” when intellectuals or professionals move from poorer to wealthier countries, and the causes and consequences of immigration on the home country in regions throughout the world, including the Caribbean.¹¹ A third cluster, The Racialized Body, covers a wide area, including the examination of how systems of racial categorization are formed and transformed through encounters with the racialized bodies of diasporic communities. This fall semester, a new faculty hire arrived whose focus is on Postcolonial Sexuality Studies, a budding field forging avenues for exploration of the effects of globalization through the lens of racial and sexual politics. These new areas of study and scholarship demonstrate a continuing and developing research need, and expand the potential for use of the Carberry Collection for teaching and research.



Samuel Selvon. An Island is a World. 1955. H.D. Carberry Collection, University of Illinois at Chicago Library, Special Collections.

Because of the paucity of primary source resources noted earlier, and the fact that these resources are not widely held by libraries either within or outside the Caribbean, the existence of a cooperative international digital library assumes overwhelming importance for access to and preservation of research materials in this field. The Digital Library of

the Caribbean, or dLOC (<http://www.dloc.com>), which the UIC Library has recently joined as a partner, has emerged as a primary player in this endeavor.¹²

Founded in 2004, dLOC celebrated the tenth anniversary of its official inception this year. Coordinated by Florida International University, dLOC currently includes thirty-five content-contributing partner libraries, archives and other research groups and reports over one million user views per month.¹³

dLOC stands out for its commitment to open access for its content, which aligns with one of the guiding values expressed in the UIC Library's Strategic Plan.¹⁴ More importantly, because of the issues surrounding availability and access to Caribbean resources both within the region itself and worldwide, this commitment assumes even greater significance for researchers and students of the culture and heritage of this region.

In contrast to this approach, a number of publishers are now active in the digitization arena, and in some cases are entering into partnerships with libraries to digitize their content in exchange for allowing the library to make that content available according to specified limited terms.¹⁵ Alexander Street Press offers a digital full-text collection of Caribbean Literature – poetry, fiction, and non-fiction from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in English, French, Spanish, and various Creoles - for a permanent access fee of about \$28,000 or via an annual subscription fee of about \$4,000. Not yet complete when the collection was first made available in 2010, it then offered 380 titles written by 244 different authors.¹⁶ A downloadable bibliography listing 553 titles is currently available on the Alexander Street Press web site (<http://alexanderstreet.com/node/198>). As a point of comparison, in 2009 dLOC provided access to over 6,000 titles.¹⁷

Beyond the technical processes involved with the preparation of the metadata and digital objects for ingest into dLOC, part of the future development of the Carberry Collection within dLOC will involve working with faculty stakeholders to determine ways in which this digital content can best be enhanced. Supported in 2005 by a four-year U.S. Department of Education grant, dLOC developed infrastructure and tools using the SobekCM Digital Content Management System to allow it to act as both a digital library and a digital publishing system. Exciting 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.¹⁸

There are also preservation and sustainability advantages associated with content hosted in dLOC. Their sustainability plan, operational since 2011, is based upon a strong business model that will allow dLOC to continue in situations of minimal funding, assuring the continuity and permanence of access to all its resources, including published scholarly content.¹⁹

Conclusion

The various digitization projects with the Carberry Collection provide an example

of an iterative process with a long history and one that will continue to see many changes in the future. Our current online systems for the Carberry Collection do not allow the content to be widely discoverable, nor do they allow for expansion to include 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 access, preservation, and development of research materials in this field.

The UIC Library plans to use its partnership with the Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC) to further develop and enhance the Carberry Collection. As well, the presence of the Carberry Collection in dLOC will increase its discoverability and expand its usage to a much broader range of students and researchers, allowing it to contribute more widely to the discourse generated by diaspora studies.

¹ Shamin Renwick, "Caribbean Digital Library Initiatives in the Twenty-first Century: the Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC)," *Alexandria* 22(1) (2011): 3-4; and Hannah Francis, "Digital Libraries: opportunities and challenges for the English-speaking Caribbean," *Information Development* 24(2) (2008), doi:10.1177/0266666908091128.

² H. Faye Christenberry et al., *Literary Research and Postcolonial Literatures in English: Strategies and Sources. Vol no. 11.* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 191.

³ For a detailed description of the Carberry Collection, see Nancy Cirillo, Linda Naru, and Ellen Starkman. "The Caribbean Library in Diaspora: Perspectives from Scholarship and Librarianship," in *Caribbean Libraries in the 21st Century: changes, challenges, and choices*, ed. Cheryl Ann Peltier-Davis and Shamin Renwick (Medford N.J.: Information Today, 2007), 236.

⁴ 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.

⁵ An exhibition catalog and checklist was written by John M. Cullars, Associate Professor and Bibliographer for the Humanities at UIC's Daley Library. A copy of the catalog is held in UIC's Special Collections Department.

⁶ An accompanying exhibition catalog was published: Nancy R. Cirillo, *Commerce in human souls: the legacy of the Atlantic slave trade: an exhibit of rare books and manuscripts from Special Collections at the University of Illinois at Chicago*. (Chicago: University of Illinois at Chicago, 2012).

⁷ Bradley J. Daigle, "The Digital Transformation of Special Collections," *Journal of Library Administration*, 52:3-4 (2012): 261, doi: 10.1080/01930826.2012.684504.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 245.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 253.

¹⁰ "Diaspora Studies," University of Illinois at Chicago. College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, accessed July 28, 2014, <http://www.las.uic.edu/faculty-staff/cluster-initiative/diaspora-studies>

¹¹ "Global Urban Immigration; Year One: Senior Position in Emigration: A View from Home," accessed July 28, 2014, <http://www.las.uic.edu/faculty-staff/cluster-initiative/global-urban-immigration>

¹² For an annotated list of other digital initiatives focused on the Caribbean, see Renwick, 4-6.

¹³ Laurie N. Taylor et al., "Scholarly Publishing in the Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC)," in *Library Publishing Toolkit*, ed. Allison P. Brown (Geneseo: IDS Project Press, 2013), 351.

¹⁴ "UIC University Library Strategic Plan 2013/14 ver.2", last modified September 5, 2014, <http://researchguides.uic.edu/strategicplan>

¹⁵ Valerie A. Harris and Ann C. Weller, "Use of Special Collections as an Opportunity for Outreach in the Academic Library," *Journal of Library Administration*, 52:3-4 (2012): 298-299, doi: 10.1080/01930826.2012.684508

¹⁶ Holly Ackerman, "Four digital collections of Latin American literature," *Charleston Advisor*, 11(4), (2010): 6

¹⁷ Brooke Wooldridge, Laurie Taylor, and Mark Sullivan, "Managing an Open Access, Multi-Institutional, International Digital Library: The Digital Library of the Caribbean," *Resource Sharing & Information Networks*, 20(1) (2009): 40, doi:10.1080/0737790903014534

¹⁸ Taylor et al., "Scholarly Publishing in the Digital Library of the Caribbean." 353

¹⁹ Ibid.

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