



Robert W. WOODRUFF LIBRARY

Atlanta University Center

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Woodruff Library of the AUC Preparing Morehouse King Collection for Research *New Processing Team Hired to Organize Collection for Scholarly Access*

The archival staff of the Robert W. Woodruff Library (RWL) of the Atlanta University Center (AUC) is steadily progressing toward making the Morehouse College Martin Luther King Jr. Collection available for scholarly research. Through the work of a four-member processing team, the papers could be available to researchers as early as the fall of 2008.

In September 2006, the Woodruff Library of the AUC became the custodial home of the 7,000-10,000 items belonging to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., following their rescue from auction the previous June. The Morehouse King Collection, which includes many of Dr. King's original manuscripts, writings and sermons and his personal library, was purchased on behalf of King's alma mater, Morehouse College, for which Woodruff serves as the sole academic library.

Upon the collection's arrival at the Woodruff Library of the AUC, consultants and archival staff inventoried the materials shipped and developed a plan for processing, preserving, conserving and preparing the collection for scholarly access. Full implementation of that plan began in May with the closing of *I Have A Dream: The Morehouse College Martin Luther King Jr. Collection*. Staged January 15-May 13, 2007, this recording-breaking Atlanta History Center exhibit of 600 items from the collection was viewed by more than 72,000 visitors.

The staff of the Archives & Special Collections Department of the Woodruff Library of the AUC has been supplemented with a team of two archivists, a cataloger, graduate assistant and project manager hired exclusively to process the Morehouse King Collection. Brenda Banks, the chief consulting archivist for the collection, is project manager for the team charged with completing the arrangement and description process necessary for public access. At present, the team is re-housing items in appropriate and uniform alkaline boxes and folders, surveying the physical condition of collection materials that may need conservation treatment, sorting items into appropriate organizational structure (by subject and/or format) and preparing the collection's finding aid and catalog records.

Scholarly access will be enhanced with the creation of a digital (online) finding aid that will be available to anyone with Internet access. Items are not being digitized at this time, but that is a consideration for future plans. Staff salaries, supplies, conservation fees and training associated with the preliminary work for this project is being funded by a grant to the Woodruff Library from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

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“We have assembled a dedicated and talented group of professionals to accomplish the challenging task of organizing the King Collection for scholarly access,” said Woodruff Library CEO & Director Loretta Parham. “We’re thrilled with the progress they are making and confident that the high archival standards exhibited by staff working with the collection thus far will continue.”

Parham said the new staff also will positively impact work on other collections housed within the Woodruff Library archives. With staff dedicated solely to processing the Morehouse King Collection, other RWWL archivists, curators and technicians can now focus their efforts on the variety of other collections within the department.

Also of significance is a collaborative planning partnership formed with the Howard Gotlieb Archival and Research Center of Boston University and The Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute at Stanford University, which also hold King collections. The Woodruff Library and the AUC’s ongoing dialogue with these institutions is focusing on the collaborative development of digital finding aids that would allow researchers to simultaneously search the holdings of each King collection. A proposal to fund full implementation of plans being discussed is now under consideration.

For more information on the archival work associated with the Morehouse College Martin Luther King Jr. Collection, contact the Woodruff Library of the AUC at archives@auctr.edu or 404-978-2052.

About the Library

Constructed in 1982, the Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center is an independent entity organized and operated for the exclusive benefit of its member institutions—Clark Atlanta University, the Interdenominational Theological Center, Morehouse College and Spelman College. With a combined enrollment of nearly 10,000 students, these colleges and university represent the world’s largest consortium of historically black institutions of higher learning.

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