Appalachian State University: Digitizing the Appalachian Consortium Press Publications
The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Grant for the Humanities Open Book Program

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Description

The Appalachian region of the United States is unique and diverse; and over the years, misunderstandings and stereotypes have evolved that fail to capture the richness of its diversity. Grants like the Humanities Open Book Program allow this richness to become visible and to be explored in greater depth - and by a wider range of people - than was possible before.

The Appalachian State University Libraries holds the largest collection of works related to Appalachian Studies, including a complete collection of works published by the Appalachian Consortium Press (ACP). When the Consortium ceased operations, the archives, collections, and in some cases, the rights to the material were given to Appalachian State University. The Libraries applied for and received a two-year grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in 2016 to work in partnership with the UNC Press to digitize and reissue 73 works published by the Appalachian Consortium Press, considered founding and seminal works in the field. Sixty-nine of the works, containing monographs and conference proceedings, were added to Appalachian State University’s Digital Collections, JSTOR and the Internet Archive, will soon be added to HathiTrust and will be harvested by DPLA. They are available freely on the website of the Libraries and print formats are distributed by the University of North Carolina Press.

Intellectual Significance of the Collection

The Appalachian Consortium Press was founded in 1973, making it the first publisher devoted to Appalachia. The Press published scholarly books and reference materials, including the first contemporary and comprehensive bibliography of the region (Bibliography of Southern Appalachia), oral histories, environmental studies, and poetry.

Among the Appalachian Consortium’s important and pioneering publications were the proceedings of the early Appalachian Studies Conferences, the proceedings of the Linear Parks Conferences, and the proceedings of the Blue Ridge Parkway’s Golden Anniversary Conference. The proceedings of the annual Appalachian Studies Conference (ASC) warrant particular attention for bringing together scholarly research about the region that would otherwise have been dispersed in various disciplinary journals. The ASC proceedings presented research on
labor and the economy, urban migration, local and regional history, literature, folk culture, religion, and the environment. Many of the scholars (for example, Helen Lewis, Myles Horton, Stephen Fisher, Phillip Obermiller, Ronald Eller, John Inscoc, Grace Edwards, Howard Dorgan, Paul Salstrom, and Richard Drake) featured in these early published papers would later become prominent leaders in Appalachian Studies.

The Appalachian Consortium Press also published the first scholarly overview of the nascent discipline of Appalachian Studies, An Appalachian Symposium (edited by former Appalachian Journal editor Jerry W. Williamson), and pioneering and now indispensable scholarly works such as David Whisnant’s Modernizing the Mountaineer and Helen Lewis et. al.’s Colonialism in Modern America. These works introduced a new wave of scholarship on Appalachia that took the field beyond descriptive studies to an examination of the role of the region as a supplier of resources dominated by larger, outside influences. These fundamental works are still essential resources for understanding Appalachian Studies and the region, especially as it grapples with its future after coal.

Other Consortium publications now out-of-print will interest current scholars for comparative purposes and for a deeper understanding of the region and its role in American history and culture. Too Few Tomorrows: Urban Appalachians in the 1980s edited by Phillip J. Obermiller and William W. Philliber brought together articles examining the movement of Appalachian natives in search of work after World War II to the urban centers of Michigan and Ohio. Jock Lauterer’s Hogwild: A Back-to-the-Land Saga provides insight into the counterculture communal movement in the 1960s and 1970s by tracing the story of six families homesteading on 300 acres in North Carolina. In addition to these monographs, the Consortium published two significant works of poetry that focused on Appalachia and its people: Jeff Daniel Marion’s Vigils: Selected Poems, and Jim Wayne Miller’s The Mountains Have Come Closer. Complementing these two volumes, Rita Sims Quillen’s Looking for Native Ground: Contemporary Appalachian Poetry analyzes the work of four regional poets, Jim Wayne Miller, Fred Chappell, Jeff Daniel Marion and Robert Morgan.

In summary, the Appalachian Consortium Press published multidisciplinary scholarly works in history, literature, photography, music, sociology, folklore, and environmental studies that together provided a holistic view of the region. The Appalachian Consortium dissolved in 2004, and thereafter, the works that it published were no longer marketed and sold. The W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection at Appalachian State University holds the Appalachian Consortium Records and the complete collection of Consortium publications.

**History and Overview of the Publisher**

The Appalachian Consortium was a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to preserving the cultural heritage of Southern Appalachia. From its incorporation in 1971 to its dissolution in
2004, the Appalachian Consortium’s objectives were to “(1) engage in the documentation, preservation, and interpretation of southern Appalachia through research, publications, sponsorship of conferences, symposia, and exhibits, development and dissemination of professional expertise and educational programs and activities; (2) facilitate programs of Appalachian and comparative regional studies at educational institutions.”

The Appalachian Consortium, Inc. and the Appalachian Consortium Press came into being at the infancy of what would become the interdisciplinary field of Appalachian Studies. Individuals at several universities and colleges in the Appalachian region researched and documented local history and culture in the decades prior to the War on Poverty and the attention that it drew to the region. Yet, collaborative research and documentation efforts did not begin until 1970. In the spring of that year, Appalachian State University President H. W. Wey asked Cratis Williams and W. H. Plemmons to develop a model curriculum in Appalachian Studies. They in turn prepared a proposal for support from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, as did two to three other schools in Western North Carolina. Dr. William Archie, the Executive Director of the Foundation, suggested that the schools “get together” and come back to the Foundation with a collaborative proposal. Building on this suggestion, leaders from Appalachian State University, East Tennessee State University, Lees-McRae College, and Mars Hill College began a series of meetings in the fall of 1970 to form a consortium with area service organizations to salvage, preserve, and perpetuate the region’s heritage. Western Carolina University soon joined the effort as did other institutions in the region. Appalachian State University provided space for the offices of the Consortium and supplemented its staffing.

The Consortium produced curriculum workshops and materials, and worked with the 4-H organization to foster knowledge of the Appalachian environment and lifeways. The Consortium also co-sponsored the New River Symposium, “History Goes Public: Researching and Interpreting Local History in Western North Carolina” (supported by funds from the North Carolina Humanities Committee of NEH); the Linear Parks Conferences; and the original Appalachian Studies Conferences (ASC). The ASC eventually led to the formation of the Appalachian Studies Association, its annual conference, and its scholarly publication, The Journal of Appalachian Studies. Perhaps one of its most important contributions, the Consortium provided the opportunity for scholars from different institutions of higher education and other service organizations to exchange and collaborate on ideas in the emerging area of Appalachian Studies. Similarly, the Appalachian Consortium Press brought together in a single publisher interdisciplinary, scholarly works focusing on the region.

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The Press was an important tool in advancing the Appalachian studies field, publishing the formative works on Appalachia as well as the conference symposia. One of the most influential participants in the Consortium’s history and the field of Appalachian studies was Cratis Williams. He has been deemed the “Father of Appalachian Studies” for this life-long work of teaching, researching, and promoting Appalachia’s culture and history. He was employed at Appalachian State University 1942-1976 and was instrumental in establishing the Appalachian Studies degree program, which now includes a graduate minor, a graduate certificate, and an M.A. in Appalachian Studies. Williams said of the Appalachian Consortium Press, “Our press is the most important resources we have for fueling the enthusiasm of our people for their cultural and historical traditions and for encouraging the participation of our many colleagues and universities in Appalachia in curriculum developments and research.” Reviving these important works and making them widely and freely available with the support of the Humanities Open Book program will renew the enthusiasm for a new generation of Appalachian studies scholars.

**Workflow**

Our first step in the project was to hire a Digital Project Manager (Ryan Ingerick) and student assistant (Brittney Maslowski and Evan Wallace) to research and obtain copyright permissions, prepare the books and metadata, and create the online collection in Omeka. Then we completed the following tasks:

- Acquired copies of the books for digitization—We purchased books from Amazon that could be unbound for digitization so that we did not have to destroy our copies. This proved more economical than doing preservation digitizing.
- Created a metadata spreadsheet for digitization—We created a metadata spreadsheet for the books that was reviewed and approved by the UNC Press. This included new author bios and book descriptions.
- Researched and obtained copyright permissions
- Presented at Appalachian Studies Conference—Pam Mitchem discussed the project as a part of the conference panel “Building Digital History: The Challenges and Rewards of Community Collaborations.”
- Added content to Omeka, Internet Archive, and JSTOR

Since the university did not own the copyright for all of the publications, we created a workflow for locating the copyright owners and procuring permissions to digitize and make the books available. This process was divided into two stages.

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Stage one involved identifying who owned the copyrights for each of the works, the contact information to seek the copyrights, and which of the works could be considered “Orphan Works.” We began by searching the Appalachian State University archives for contracts and correspondence between the ACP and authors. Of the 73 works, there were 31 contracts within the archives. Following the search of the ASU archives, we searched the United States Copyright Office (USCO) public catalog. We were able to determine the copyright holders for 28 works through the USCO. Several of the copyrights on file overlapped with contracts held in ASU’s archives. At this point, we assumed that any copyright not listed in the USCO database, or on file in the ASU archives, were owned by the author. We then began an extensive search to determine the location of the authors to ask permission for use of their work. Stage one and stage two were carried on simultaneously.

The first step of stage two was to determine which authors were deceased and which were living. We used several databases to make this determination. Ancestry.com was the starting point for all of the searches when simple Google searches failed. Much of the information regarding authors and their whereabouts came from Ancestry. When Ancestry proved unsuccessful we moved to the Census Bureau data. At this point, we began to compile a list containing contact information for the authors and editors. At the end of stage two, we had determined that 33 authors, editors, or descendants owned copyrights that we were seeking and that 12 works were either orphaned or likely orphaned.

Our next step was to compose a letter with the help of General Counsel seeking copyright permission from the authors and descendants who still owned the copyrights. In total, 33 permissions letters were sent out via US mail and email. Only three authors refused to give us permissions and 14 letters were returned to us as undeliverable.

The library/press partnership

The Libraries first submitted the grant proposal to digitize the Consortium publications without a partnership with a university press. At the time, we assumed that we would outsource the digitization of books to a vendor and put all of the files online ourselves. When we were asked to seek a university press partnership, the answer was easy. Because an established relationship with the University of North Carolina Press already existed, their leadership immediately accepted the invitation to become a partner. UNC Press had formed its Office of Scholarly Publishing Services (OSPS) in August 2015 with a mission of working with partners in the University of North Carolina System on publishing projects. With the support of then Dean of the Libraries, Joyce Ogburn, John McLeod had visited our campus to talk with various groups about the services they could offer to faculty for publishing their work or to other units of the university, such as the Turchin Center for the Visual Arts. Because this new office existed and
the dean had cultivated a relationship, the Press was well positioned to take on a large-scale project and was eager to work with the Libraries. From the Press’ perspective, this type of publishing project was an excellent early test case for the OSPS and the type of work it was envisioned to handle.

For the Libraries, the partnership provided a trusted process for the digitization and design of the digital and print versions of the books, guidance in publishing norms and standards, a point of sale for the print on demand copies, and the management of royalties. The Press also served as a source of information to share with others (such as format information for HathiTrust), a conduit to vendors to place the items in their collections (and in the case of JSTOR, to open a conversation about a new partnership - see below). Although one member of the Libraries’ team had experience both with library and university press publishing, the others had none; the Press was patient in coaching and explaining their needs.

Benefits

One of the benefits of receiving this grant is that it allowed the Libraries to examine the assumptions and processes underlying the work of the Digital Scholarship and Initiatives Team, develop stronger relationships with partners, and learn more about the materials being digitized and the perspectives of the community stakeholders.

When the Libraries first conceived the grant, we knew that there were materials that would add great value to the corpus of digital documents then available in Appalachian Studies. In the course of the grant, we learned more specifically about the views and needs of the stakeholders who participated in forming the field of Appalachian Studies. Fortunately, many were supportive and gladly gave permissions where needed; however, there were a few who withheld permissions or were difficult to find. Overall, we were satisfied with the number and scope of the books we were able to include in the project.

The growth of the knowledge of the graduate students involved with the grant was rewarding to witness and foster. The multiple dimensions of copyright are rarely understood by students. The grant was a learning opportunity for copyright understanding and also in experiencing the different attitudes authors have toward sharing their work or receiving revenue. The publishing and copyright knowledge they gained will serve them well in their careers. They grew as scholars and in their facility to structure and conduct a digital project. One has decided to enter the library and archives field and another is continuing in graduate school to pursue digital scholarship. Moreover, they taught each other and the library faculty what they already knew in relation to their studies in history and the technology we chose to use. They were colleagues in the entire process of the grant.
We close this section with one author’s story. Upon contact with the author, he expressed concern that he was never granted the ownership of his work and was thinking of creating a new edition. He stated that he had tried to get this issue settled with numerous university officials, but reached no resolution. Research in the Consortium archives and consultation with University Counsel revealed that he was granted ownership in 1993. Upon sharing this news, and a copy of the contract granting the author sole rights, he was ecstatic to achieve closure on this outstanding concern. He granted the Libraries permission to digitize the work. Other authors were very excited to have their work available again, though no individual story stands out.

**Challenges**

Every step of the way the Libraries team was conscious of the perspectives and sensitivities of Appalachian Studies scholars and the wider community of donors and other researchers. Some background is helpful to understanding this approach.

Appalachian Studies is a fairly new field, and many of the people that formulated the discipline are still alive, some still active in research. As a scholarly group it remains small, but many ardent Appalachians treasure, and guard, their history and stories. Trust is essential in the community, and the administration of the Appalachian State University had made two key decisions that led to strained relationships.

The Appalachian Consortium was dissolved in 2004 by Appalachian State University, claiming lack of funding. Many members protested, but to no avail. All of the remaining funds and records came to the Appalachian State University. The rights to the publications held by the former Appalachian Consortium Press also became the property of the University. After great success for decades, the demise of the Consortium was a source of contention.

The second case is the shuttering of the Appalachian Cultural Museum in 2011. Also due to lack of funds, Appalachian State University closed the Museum and dispersed the collections. The local community reaction was swift and disapproving. Donors were upset that the objects they had donated specifically to the museum would be moved elsewhere. A university committee was formed to determine the disposition of the collections with the result of some remaining at the University and others were scattered among other cultural heritage and educational institutions. The Libraries hold the records of the Museum and some of the collections.

Given this history, the grant team was concerned that nothing in the project raised concerns among the scholars and individuals in the Appalachian community. The Libraries are considered a good faith player in the field at large, a reputation we strove to protect. Relationships are also very important to acquiring additional research materials, papers, photographs, and the like, and the Libraries did not want to lose the trust of present and potential donors.
Over the course of the project, we took several key steps to draw in and consult the community at large.

- Fred Hay and Norma Riddle were founts of information about past events and relationships as we looked for copyright owners and tested assumptions.
- We contacted former members of the Consortium to alert them to the scope and intent of the project. The advisory board composition drew from individuals and institutions previously associated with the Consortium.
- When we discovered that the College of Arts and Sciences held the remaining rights, we established contact right away and sought their advice and assistance. We scrupulously researched their files, in addition to the ones held at the Libraries, for any information that would facilitate the identity of rights holders or any unforeseen issues.
- We also contacted the Appalachian Studies Association to inform them that we planned to digitize the early proceedings of their conference, which were published by the Consortium.
- To introduce the project and establish a relationship, personal calls were made to the authors or their agents.
- We conducted outreach and communication via community newspapers, local historical societies, and other similar outlets.

Bearing in mind the history of the university and its relations with the community, we also strove to avoid the perception that the University was profiting from the sales of the books or exploiting assets of the authors or former consortium. To achieve this goal, the Libraries chose not to receive royalties from the sales of the print copies; however, consultation with university officials revealed that the University had to accept royalties from the sales where it held the rights and had to distribute royalties to the authors who retained copyright. In conjunction with the UNC Press, we decided on a price that was basically cost recovery. Some authors were very pleased that they were to receive royalties, while others were more sanguine, with the latter being more focused on having their work revived and available.

We further engaged the community through a forum on October 27, 2017 entitled “Appalachian Online: Celebrating the Birth of Appalachian Studies.” It celebrated recently digitized collections that included the Consortium press books (https://library.appstate.edu/digital-scholarship-initiatives/appalachian-consortium-press-publications), Appalachian Land Ownership Survey Records, 1936-1985 (http://omeka.library.appstate.edu/collections/show/78), and Katuah: A Bioregional Journal of the Southern Appalachians (http://omeka.library.appstate.edu/collections/show/79). The symposium was well received, further demonstrating the Libraries’ commitment to the field, its founders, and the community.
Another challenge involved the technology. Omeka is the content management system used by our Special Collections for their digital collections. Our current Omeka template was a challenge in itself. We hired Evan Wallace, a graduate assistant, to help recode the simple page to add the design we wanted. We created records and added the PDF copies in Omeka, however Omeka does not support Epubs. We debated embedding an Epub reader in our Drupal system and linking the Epubs to the Omeka content but decided to put them in Google Drive, providing a link in Omeka so that they could be downloaded. We also provided links to the print on demand option in the UNC Press catalog. Our library hired a new developer to focus on digital projects toward the end of the grant period, so there was not time to pull him into the project.

**Additional research and outreach**

The newly digitized books can serve as open educational resources both locally and wherever topics related to Appalachian Studies are taught. A next step is to publicize further within the field the availability and potential use of the project books. We plan to submit paper proposals to professional (such as CNI) or discipline-specific conferences (such as Appalachian Studies Association) in the coming year. We are submitting a Project briefing to CNI for the December 2018 meeting.

In addition, with so much new content now available in digital form, the opportunity presented itself to do more than the grant addressed to enhance visibility and discovery of Appalachian Studies materials in general. The existing library/press partnership contacted JSTOR to initiate a project to take advantage of the visibility of these seminal materials to advance discovery and access of research into the Appalachian region, its culture, geography, and history.

Two questions were of interests: 1) how can the material about Appalachian Studies and the region be made more prominent; and 2) could the project goals dovetail with the JSTOR Labs’ interest in reimagining the monograph?

JSTOR Labs responded positively, leading to a collaboration to determine whether and how the addition of the monographs published by the Appalachian Consortium Press has enhanced the discoverability and usability of materials related to Appalachian Studies and the region. We hope to demonstrate that the recent inclusion of books and proceedings with the exiting journal articles provides more powerful search results, enhanced discovery, more complete literature reviews, and more comprehensive text analysis results. As a starting point, the project group will review search results and may create a thesaurus for Appalachian Studies for JSTOR to employ. The collaboration with JSTOR has allowed us to add to the project team other library faculty with expertise in archives, metadata and cataloging, which will no doubt be a growth opportunity for them and give them further insights into how to expose and discover Appalachian Studies research.
If feasible, the project will investigate whether and how content such as reference materials and finding aids can create a robust digital portal to Appalachian Studies and increase the visibility, research, and understanding of the region by scholars and other interested parties.

To date, the project has not followed the path we originally envisioned but has revealed helpful information about the assignment of terms to JSTOR content and the workings of the Text Analyzer Tool. It is premature to report on our results, but we plan to wrap up the project this fall and to report on the results when the project is completed.

Conclusion

As we were able to accomplish all the objectives outlined in the grant, we consider the project a success. The biggest challenge was getting permissions from the authors, but our success rate was far greater than we had hoped. We can say with confidence that the approach we took with the project generated goodwill with authors and the community. We also gained a stronger, long-term working relationship with UNC Press and a spin-off project with JSTOR Labs. Having gained experience and established workflows for this type of project, we feel more confident in seeking similar projects in the future.

We are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the Humanities Open Book Project and to increase access to foundational materials for Appalachian Studies. We could not have accomplished the goals of the project without the funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the partnership between the Libraries and the UNC Press.

Resource List


Northington, Sandra Lynn and Jacob Matovu. (May 5, 1988). *A Historical Review of the Appalachian Consortium*. UA.5001: Appalachian Consortium Records, University Archives, Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C., USA.

Parker, Clinton. (n.d.) *Preserving Southern Appalachia’s Diversity*. UA.5001: Appalachian Consortium Records, University Archives, Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C., USA.