

A Rapidly Escalating Demand: Academic Libraries and the Birth of Black Studies Programs

Author(s): Steven A. Knowlton

Source: *Libraries: Culture, History, and Society*, 2020, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2020), pp. 178-200

Published by: Penn State University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/libraries.4.2.0178>

REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/libraries.4.2.0178?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Penn State University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Libraries: Culture, History, and Society*

JSTOR

A Rapidly Escalating Demand

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES AND THE BIRTH OF BLACK STUDIES PROGRAMS

Steven A. Knowlton
Princeton University Library

ABSTRACT: In the late 1960s, many universities created Black Studies programs in response to student demands. Because of the rapidity with which Black Studies became a discipline on campus, academic libraries faced challenges related to building collections and providing services for students when little time was available to plan for the changes. Within the context of political debates of the day, both within and outside of library administration, the responses of academic libraries to student demands leaned toward supporting a “liberal” vision of Black studies as an academic discipline similar to other disciplines, and away from supporting a “radical” vision of Black studies as a means of community empowerment. This article examines the responses of four academic libraries—at New York University, Rutgers University, Princeton University, and the University of Pennsylvania—to the advent of Black Studies on their campuses between 1966 and 1971.

KEYWORDS: academic libraries, Black studies, African American studies, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, 1960s, African American students

Introduction and Historiographical Review

Throughout the academic year of 1968–69, a multiracial group of radical students led a campus strike at San Francisco State College, presenting “non-negotiable demands” for the creation of a Black studies department, to be led by Black faculty members with open admissions to all Black students interested in attending, and free from oversight by university administrators. Among their targets was the library: at various times protesters barged into reading rooms and pushed students out of their seats, set fires in restrooms, broke windows, called in bomb threats, left “stink bombs” (small vials of noxious-smelling and nauseating liquid) in the stacks, exploded small fireworks in the library,

doi: 10.5325/libraries.4.2.0178

Libraries: Culture, History, and Society, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2020

Copyright © 2020 the American Library Association’s Library History Round Table

damaged the card catalog, and relocated books.¹ When the strike was settled, a Black studies program was instituted, and from the shores of Lake Merced the technique of direct action against universities to demand Black studies programs spread to campuses around the nation.

Libraries were by no means the most common locus of protest activities, but they certainly were the site of some. In just the academic year 1968–69, there were several direct-action events in campus libraries, involving mass checkouts of books, occupation of reading rooms, and pushing of library materials onto the floor.²

The year 1969 saw a peak in activism among African American college students aimed at reforming higher education, but the protests remained an important part of campus life into the early 1970s and have continued to the present day. Demonstrations took many forms, from occupation of campus buildings, to strikes and boycotts, to arson and threats of violence—and the demands of protesting students were varied, from increased enrollment of African American students and hiring of more African American faculty to community participation in campus expansion planning. One of the most lasting reforms on many campuses has been the creation of formal programs of African American studies, which was often called Black studies in the parlance of the day. These programs were often put into place within months of the protests.

Calls for improved library services for African American students were sometimes found among the list of demands presented by protesting students. In the context of the creation of new academic programs, many academic librarians faced what Jessie Carney Smith noted was “a rapidly escalating demand for . . . black studies and for supportive library collections.”³ This study examines four East Coast universities, three private and one public: Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey (which operates campuses in New Brunswick, Newark, and Camden); Princeton University; the University of Pennsylvania (Penn); and New York University (NYU).

The protests of 1968–1972 came in the context of remarkably swift change for college-age African Americans. Between 1960 and 1970 the number of African Americans enrolled in college nearly doubled, and most of the growth came through African American students matriculating into universities which previously had been almost entirely white.⁴ At the same time, in the broader African American youth culture, the political movement for Black Power and the social movement for Black cultural pride were supplanting the integrationist efforts that had culminated in the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965

Voting Rights Act. Wayne Glasker suggests that African American students, motivated in part by these ideologies and in part by the estranging experience of, often for the first time, being immersed in a white cultural milieu, sought the means by which they could affirm their cultural affinity while obtaining the benefits of a college education on a culturally white campus.⁵ Black studies was one way of achieving this goal.

Fabio Rojas calls Black studies “the movement that became an institution,” and the almost instantaneous (by academic standards) creation of Black studies programs shows that they were often put in place not due to considered deliberation by university administrators, but rather in response to the demands of students; some administrators were no doubt simply seeking to contain disruption, while others were genuinely convinced by the arguments of student protesters of the need for Black studies.⁶

Although there were numerous campus protests throughout the 1960s, the largest wave of demonstrations by Black students on majority-white campuses was triggered by the assassination of Martin Luther King on April 4, 1968. Although he had become a figure of waning influence over African American students, his death was nonetheless a shock. Rather than viewing it as the act of a depraved individual, many African Americans perceived it to “symbolize the intransigence and totality of white racism,” as William Exum wrote.⁷ In addition to leading to riots in over 100 American cities, the murder of King also spurred student activists to demand changes on campus.

The movement for Black studies came at a time when the academy in general was seized by tensions between a hard-won mid-century liberal consensus about the aims and governance of universities, and radical agitation against liberal policies in favor of identity-based affiliation, student control of campus governance, and alignment with leftist economic and social aims. Librarians manifested the same tensions in their public statements and policy decisions; the great question of the day, which was writ small in the decisions made around library services for Black studies, was which ideology would prevail.

The demands for Black studies were seldom couched in terms of adding an additional interdisciplinary department to the existing university structure. Rather, they called for creating a department controlled by Black people to study the condition of Black people in order to equip graduates to serve their communities. This was a deviation from the universities’ (only recently adopted) standards that all qualified students should be able to pursue any program of study, and universities often resisted the most radical racial-affiliation aspects of the demands.

The radical–liberal tension is evident in the discussion of library services for Black studies. Advocates of Black studies, such as John Mack, wrote to explain what was wanted: “The answer is simple—control. . . . How can you have a black studies library without black people making decisions about what is relevant?”⁸ On the other side, liberals white and Black maintained that librarians of good will and responsibility could use library collections to bridge racial divides in the service of individual improvement. William S. Dix, head librarian of Princeton University, spoke for many in his 1969 inaugural address as president of the American Library Association: “What are you and I as librarians going to do to . . . prevent the drift further toward two societies, Black and white, separate but unequal? . . . The real action lies in the approach to understanding, and understanding is our business.”⁹

For library historians, this topic is also of interest because it positions the library within the debate between a liberal vision of equality of access and opportunity and a radical vision of Black control over higher education for Black students (and, as a corollary, Black control over information resources about and for Black people). The resolution of those tensions both reflected contemporary library practices and shaped their future operations. The debate also highlighted differences within the academic library community between those who advocated for librarians to seize the initiative of proactive librarianship for social change, and those who viewed the library as an agent of its university, which was therefore beholden to the dictates of university administrators.

The historiography appropriate to this study focuses on the very questions of liberalism versus Black power, and the agency of academic librarians. While this work appears to be the first to focus on academic libraries addressing Black studies, numerous scholars have examined the Black studies movement, and others have explored the history of academic libraries.

Anthony Orum wrote a very early history of the movement while it was still happening (1972) and observed that the liberal orientation of elite white campuses made them susceptible to change through protest as their ideals were challenged, while conservative campuses were more willing to engage in tactics that shut down protest before it became effective.¹⁰ Ibram Kendi (writing as Ibram Rogers) offers a comprehensive look at the Black campus movement, and finds that while Black student activists did not succeed in bringing about a revolution in the organization of higher education, they did “rewrite the racial constitution” of the academy, placing students of color in a permanent position of a group whose interests must be considered by

administrators; in this sense, he argues that the classical liberal position came to a compromise with advocates of racial identity politics.¹¹ Noliwe Rooks argues that the philanthropic support of Black studies programs by the liberal Ford Foundation had the effect of orienting the curricula and structures of such programs toward a liberal point of view, with the unintended consequence that many of the Black students now entering elite universities are first- and second-generation descendants of recent immigrants from Africa or the Caribbean, rather than the descendants of enslaved Americans who originally instigated the creation of the programs.¹² Fabio Rojas, using sociological methods, found that the institutional longevity of Black studies programs was related to the extent to which the curricula and governance of the programs conformed to traditional academic expectations; the most radical programs were the least likely to endure.¹³

More local studies exist as well. In Stefan Bradley's work on the Black campus movement in the Ivy League, he emphasizes that the tension between liberalism and radicalism can also be seen in the context of the failure of liberal institutions to make their campuses as welcoming for Black students as they were for whites; Bradley sees the successful demands for Black studies as an adaptive response of liberalism to observed shortcomings.¹⁴ In his study of Penn, Wayne Glasker characterizes Black students' perception of the liberal project as one of "assimilation," which would rob students of important aspects of their identity; the revolt against assimilation was, in part, a defense of self-identity and therefore another corrective to the misguided assumptions of liberal university administrators.¹⁵ William Exum's study of NYU highlights the paradoxes of the Black campus movement, in that the liberal atmosphere emphasizing individual freedom of thought and action was moved to reform through collective behavior.¹⁶

Historians of academic libraries have examined the relationship of libraries to their larger institutions. Orvin Lee Shiflett finds that librarians have, generally, expressed attitudes that mirrored those of university administrators. It was largely during the emergence of the mid-century liberal consensus in the academy that libraries embraced freedom of inquiry as a core principle, and libraries remained an apparatus of the university, having "neither power nor dignity" of their own.¹⁷ Arthur Hamlin, however, focuses on the emergence of librarians as actors with agency due to the development of a bureaucracy that provided layers of insulation between top university administrators and library directors. In matters of technology, collection development, and service models, librarians were largely free to develop as they saw fit, as long as the faculty

remained satisfied; however, Hamlin recognizes that pressures from university administrators did influence decision-making within academic libraries.¹⁸

An examination of the mid-1960s state of library services will show how academic libraries were positioned to respond to demands for more materials on Black studies, and a consideration of the rhetoric used by student protesters will demonstrate the role that libraries played in the scholarly aspirations of African American students. The decisions made by campus administrators around demands for library services, and the librarians' own reactions to such decisions, can also shed light on the campus environment in which Black studies was being established.

Libraries' Growing Support for Black Studies, pre-1969

However African American students viewed their academic libraries, there is no doubt that those libraries were making efforts to collect materials relevant to Black studies, but starting from a level that would be considered appallingly low in 2018. For perspective, an assessment of Penn's Black studies collection in 1970 found that its 2,500 titles were "extensive."¹⁹

Even before the 1960s a number of institutions had specialized collections in African American materials, such as the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection at Yale University, and some nonacademic research libraries such as the Schomburg Collection of the New York Public Library and the Library of Congress had built similar collections. Nonetheless, many academic libraries were "caught napping" (in the words of Jessie Carney Smith) when the demand for Black studies materials was made by protesting students.²⁰ For example, it was not until the student strike at San Francisco State, librarian Barbara Anderson reported, that her colleagues developed a strategy of "anticipating problems and pressures" by making note of growing interest in Black studies materials and ordering them before formal demands were issued.²¹

There was tremendous growth in the publishing of materials about African American topics from the early 1960s, and concomitant growth in the attention librarians paid to this sector of the book market. Librarians seized the opportunity to begin offering bibliographies to aid users in finding African American materials. *Bibliographic Survey: The Negro in Print* began as a serial in 1965, while important single-volume works *The Negro in America* and *The Negro in the United States* emerged in 1965 and 1966. A facsimile of the Schomburg Collection's catalog was published in 1962, and the book-selection guide *Choice* began regularly featuring lengthy articles on African American

materials in 1967.²² These works, aimed at white librarians, supplemented regular reviews published in the NAACP's *Crisis* magazine, and the serial *Index to Periodicals by and about Negroes*, published since 1946 for audiences of primarily African American librarians.

One of the most notable aspects of the growth in the supply of Black studies books was the explosion of the facsimile reprint market. Starting in 1968 with the Arno Press forty-four-title series on *The American Negro: His History and Literature*, thousands of out-of-print works were photographed for offset printing, and sold in large sets to libraries. Mainstream publishers entered the market as well, with companies such as Random House and Time-Life publishing anthologies of African American writers.²³

The reader will note that, while librarians were actively organizing information about Black history and culture from the early 1960s, the mainstream publishing world did not aggressively enter the market until 1968. The unrest of 1967 and 1968 proved a shock to many liberal whites who had thought that the breakthrough legislation of 1964 and 1965 would prove a turning point in race relations. But as African American librarian E. J. Josey (who later founded the Black Caucus of the American Library Association and was the first Black man to serve as president of the ALA) noted, "The millennium did not come after the passage of [civil rights laws]. Actually, life in the ghetto is just about the same."²⁴ Autumn Womack notes that the first Arno Press collection, which was published with the subvention of the *New York Times*, was "a carefully and strategically constructed archive" designed to show that the establishment recognized the claims of Black people to a place in American history—and to perhaps extend the appeal of liberalism during a time when Black Power radicalism was waxing.²⁵

There was also some dissent even from the liberal approach to collection building for readers interested in Black studies. Librarianship, after all, encompassed many conservatives as well as liberals; as late as 1962 there was debate over whether segregated branches of the American Library Association should be allowed to affiliate with the national organization.²⁶ A typical response is from Eli Oboler, who wrote, "I can't understand why libraries, mainly run by rather sober and responsible people, should become so panic-stricken because they don't have enough books on Black studies to support the course, or information about the Black minority, when they also certainly lack books on a great many other vital topics."²⁷

Princeton University stands as an example of a library proactively assembling a collection of Black studies material from the mid-1960s. By 1966

increasing enrollment of African American students, accompanied by an increase in research on Black studies topics, led University Librarian William Dix to conclude that additional resources would be needed to improve the African American collection. While monographic holdings covered about 90 percent of titles listed in standard bibliographies, primary source collections were lacking.²⁸ Grants from charitable foundations, along with regular library funds, were gathered to provide \$32,250 (around \$251,000 in 2019 dollars) for collection building between 1966 and 1969. Purchases included newspapers and clipping files in microfilm, bibliographies, and ephemeral material for vertical files. A part-time curator of the “American Negro Project,” Ann Slevin, was appointed, dividing her time with reference duties. The material was originally housed in the main Firestone Library near the reference desk. Following the “regularization” of the collection, a budget line was added for Black studies materials, and by 1969 the university could boast that its “resources in the area of Negro history and culture are rich and will be getting richer.”²⁹

Penn also enlarged its collection even before the formal establishment of its Afro-American studies program. In 1971 the director of libraries noted that “in recent years, we have increased our coverage of Afro-American materials to keep pace with the interest and with the steadily increasing output” and that “we have not had to limit our purchases in Afro subjects for lack of funds, although we do try to be selective and exercise prudence.”³⁰

Student and Faculty Demands for Library Support of Black Studies

However, few libraries have the resources of Princeton, and students elsewhere called for changes in library support for Black studies. In most cases, these demands were acceded to much more readily than were other demands—perhaps reflecting either confidence in the library’s ability to absorb changes in collection development priorities, or else an unthinking assumption that the library had room in its budget. Libraries were also urged to think beyond print material and to include audiovisual resources.³¹

While student demands for Black librarians to serve their communities were not often given support by administrators, Black librarians themselves testified to the need for such personnel. James Wright noted that “those working in the black community must clearly understand what the black community means by community control and black power, they must have an understanding of black culture, and the total plight of the black man in America.”³²

In a brief moment of solidarity after King's assassination, the majority-white Rutgers College Student Council urged "the Rutgers College Library Committee and the University Librarian to insure that ethnically diverse periodicals and publications are purchased and circulated."³³ Later that month, the Black Organization of Students at the Newark campus demanded "greater variety of literature of contemporary Black Authors in the University Library and Book Store."³⁴ When reiterating their demands, the Newark students were more expansive:

Our . . . proposal is that the John Cotton Dana Library establish a separate reading room that would contain books and other materials written by and dealing with Black people. At present, our library has a marked deficiency in the aforementioned material. With a growing awareness of Black contributions to the American society, it would appear that Rutgers–Newark would deem it imperative that this situation is rectified.³⁵

In response, the Board of Governors suggested that a committee, consisting of faculty and Black and white students, should be "set up to select the books and periodicals."³⁶ There is no evidence that any library staff were consulted about the feasibility of adding more titles to the collection. In February of 1969 Black students at the Camden campus issued their own list of demands—and two involved the library: "we demand that the new library addition be named after Brother Paul Robeson," and "we demand that a black section be set aside in the now existing University Library and name it after Dr. Ulysses Wiggins. Composition: books; filmstrips; records; tapes; periodicals."³⁷ Wiggins was the president of the Camden chapter of the NAACP from 1941 to 1966, and Robeson was a graduate of Rutgers who achieved international renown as a singer and actor while pursuing activism on behalf of African American civil rights; during the 1950s his career was practically ended when the Department of State revoked his passport for alleged "Communist sympathies." These demands were referred to the college librarian and the Building Names Committee.³⁸

In some cases, it was not students who demanded improved collections, but rather the faculty who were responding to calls for a more inclusive curriculum. At NYU, student response to the death of King took the form of a proposal to the University Senate to create a Black Studies Institute; the Senate approved on April 11, but called for a committee to guide its establishment.³⁹

When that committee met in December 1968, one of its priorities was the establishment of a library within the institute. Members noted that the Black studies collection in the main library “right now is in very bad condition” and felt that an independent library could be of benefit beyond NYU because “there was no place in this nation where someone who wanted to do research in depth . . . could find the material and work.” (The Schomburg Collection did not offer enough breadth of topical coverage.)⁴⁰ A library remained a priority as planning for the institute proceeded: in March 1969 committee members broadened their vision to include archives of prominent African American organizations.⁴¹ Administrative temperance, however, moderated these ambitions, as the president of NYU suggested that, since the university was building a new library, “could not the library arm of the institute actually be housed in the Bobst Library?”⁴²

When the formal proposal for the Institute for Afro-American Affairs was complete, it included the institute serving as “a setting for the development of archives and library facilities”; the library would “allow for serious interdisciplinary study in depth of black men and their experience in Western Civilization.”⁴³ A curator and an assistant curator were thought to be sufficient staff to perform these functions:

1. Establish relationship with Schomburg Collection;
2. Acquire books and manuscripts on [topics of African American history];
3. Build library collections on [topics in worldwide Black Studies];
4. Archives [including realia and memorabilia].

A film library and an audiotape library were also proposed as part of the institute, and the total expense for all library functions was budgeted at \$100,000 per year.⁴⁴

Princeton initiated its Afro-American Studies program not in response to demands from students, but rather because administrator Carl Fields, the first African American to serve as a dean anywhere in the Ivy League, sought “to provide an opportunity for coordinated study of the history, culture, and current situation of [African Americans]” that would “not be intellectually isolated,” but built “out of existing courses in several departments.”⁴⁵ Among the “prime needs” identified by the committee coordinating the establishment of the department was “a building up of library materials, especially primary sources.”⁴⁶ While the library had been focused on collecting African American

materials, the global nature of the curriculum led the university librarian to concede that it was

necessary for the Library to expand its collections on the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa so that they may support, at least in certain fields, fairly intensive research. The older materials are perhaps reasonably obtainable in one form or another, but unfortunately the primary sources for the new African countries are difficult to obtain and their cost will be high in staff time in relation to their actual purchase price.⁴⁷

Administrative and Library Responses to Demands

As the historiography of the Black studies movement indicates, there was tension on campus as responses to student demands were formulated. In many cases, libraries attempted to adapt their collections and services in ways that responded to the radical demands for African American-centered library spaces. In others, traditional methods of librarianship along the liberal model were expanded to encompass more African American materials. Many well-intentioned efforts were constrained by limited resources. And some libraries quite simply took the conservative line and rejected the demands as inappropriate for an academic library.

Acceding to Radical Demands

Several libraries saw fit to set aside separate study spaces for Black studies materials; none were reserved exclusively for the use of African American students, but the space was one in which students could be surrounded by evidence of African American achievement and be likely to encounter other students interested in the same topics.

In 1969 a separate reading room for African American studies was established on the third floor of Princeton's Firestone Library; it housed a "core collection of reference books, current periodicals, newspapers, [printed] library catalogs, and a circulating collection of 3,000 books."⁴⁸ Slevin helped students find materials scattered throughout the general collection by preparing a 216-page typed guide to "Holdings on the Afro-American."⁴⁹

Dix had no objection to the collection being housed in a separate room, as collections for other programs were: "Whenever possible we have tried to find a small separate room where a core collection of reference books and special

reserves can be kept for each of these programs. It helps give the programs a sense of visibility, a sense of use.” However, he did note the challenge that “we are not at all clear yet here as to what the literature of Afro-American studies is or ought to be.”⁵⁰

In February 1969 the Rutgers–Camden campus librarian discussed with colleagues from other universities the demand for a separate section of the library for Black studies materials. He was concerned that “separating out materials often leads to their *not* being used.”⁵¹ After some months, the Library Committee of the Camden faculty reported favoring “the establishment of a Black Studies Collection to be named after . . . Wiggins.”⁵² Before the end of the year, the Wiggins collection of more than 2,000 titles, housed on the main floor of the library, was in place. In 1973 the librarian in charge reported that, contrary to expectations, “the collection is heavily used and, although there was some skepticism in the beginning about making a separate collection . . . we have found it to be more than advantageous.”⁵³

Incorporating Black Studies Materials into the Main Collection

Less controversial within the libraries was the effort to increase holdings of African American materials through traditional acquisitions practices and through seeking expanded funding from outside sources such as the Ford Foundation. The connections between private universities and deep-pocketed donors in some cases made this effort more painless on those campuses than it was in public universities.

At Rutgers, a May 1968 press release noted that “the university library system has taken steps to increase its holdings in black literature and it will present exhibits and lectures . . . [in] the fall term.”⁵⁴ The next year, shortly after the Camden demands were issued, Rutgers president Mason Gross wrote to student leaders that “the University agrees to acquire the library resources material pertaining to Black history and culture.”⁵⁵ The faculty concurred but also noted “that a considerable and varied library collection in Black Studies has already been assembled.”⁵⁶

While university administrators made commitments on behalf of the libraries, it fell to the librarians themselves to make the demanded changes, and they responded with varying levels of cooperativeness. It is not clear if the 1968 student council request was the impetus, but by late 1968 Rutgers libraries were active in the provision of information for Black studies. For example, Albert Blaustein compiled a documentary history of *Civil Rights and*

the American Negro, and the Rutgers Library also sponsored a talk on Afro-American history by Dorothy Porter, director of the library now known as the Moorland–Spingarn Research Center at Howard University.⁵⁷

The same year, the Ford Foundation offered a joint grant to Rutgers, Princeton, and Lincoln University, a historically Black institution in Oxford, Pennsylvania, to develop cooperative Afro-American Studies programs. “Exchange of materials” from each library was included in the planning, as were funds for new acquisitions at each university.⁵⁸

Rutgers librarians conscientiously spent their Ford Foundation grant money. Among the purchases made from these funds were microfilmed journals including *Negro Digest*, *Freedomways*, *Phylon*, and an index to the Schomburg Collection. Faculty teaching Black studies courses were solicited for ideas about new purchases. Faculty voices were given great weight because “Black studies is now being glutted with a lot of mediocre and irrelevant materials and we should be selective.”⁵⁹

Further south, in February 1969, a group of African American student activists at Penn joined with their white counterparts to occupy the administration building for six days. They objected to the university expanding into neighboring communities without giving something back to African American residents.⁶⁰ Over the next two years no fewer than five committees considered the form a Black studies program should take. Although students had not included library materials in their lists of demands, the report of the Wilf Committee in March 1969 recommended “equipping libraries of black literature, black music and other source materials.”⁶¹ Within a month, unnamed parties had solicited gifts from alumni to establish a fund “to start such a library in Black studies.”⁶²

At Penn in the summer of 1969, the director of libraries, Warren Haas, reported that “the library has bought anything with intellectual content . . . which roughly translated into buying any books that came to the library’s attention.” As well, Haas noted the library’s willingness to field suggestions not only for new titles but for additional copies of works already held. The Black Studies Program began operations in the academic year 1971–72, with the provost pledging “library funds allocated . . . [over] several years.”⁶³ In 1973 the library applied for and was awarded a federal grant of \$5,000 “to strengthen its collection in black studies.”⁶⁴ At Penn, book selection was “done by members of the library staff as well as interested faculty and students,” who were encouraged to select works in broader fields that were useful to Black studies.⁶⁵

Coping with Institutional Constraints

In some cases administrators and librarians professed a desire to expand service for Black studies but ran into institutional constraints of personnel and budget. The record does not distinguish between genuine inability to comply with mandates and refusal camouflaged as bureaucratic difficulties.

As seen in earlier exchanges, Rutgers administrators seemed to take for granted the library's ability to meet the demands of students. However, the easy promises of campus administrators to increase library holdings in Afro-American materials ran into the hard fact that at Rutgers "the increase in staff has not kept pace with the increase in the book fund for several years" and a new commitment on the part of the library would not be welcome.⁶⁶ The university librarian, Roy Kidman, reported,

The gap between demands being made on this Library and the resources given it, is so great that it is gradually becoming impossible to function in a responsible way. . . . It appears there is no operating mechanism for rational consideration of and setting of priorities for academic programs. . . . In the worst of circumstances it appears that Library support is being used as a method for making programs legitimate.⁶⁷

In 1971 Kidman resigned, citing the fact that the administration had brought into question "the extent to which professionals in the library are being permitted to establish priorities for the system," although the immediate dispute was over staffing levels, not collection development.⁶⁸

At NYU the Institute of Afro-American Affairs went into operation in the fall of 1969 without any librarians or archivists on staff. The first year's budget for the entire institute was only \$112,000—when the library alone had been planned for \$100,000. Instead, \$3,000 was budgeted to hire library consultants for twenty days at \$150 per day.⁶⁹ It was settled that "the most extensive library in the United States about Afro-Americans" would be "housed in the new Bobst Library . . . and have a prominent place in the development of that library facility."⁷⁰ Despite these challenges, by October institute staff had begun negotiations with civil rights lawyers Samuel Pierce and Constance Baker Motley about their archives and acquired audiotapes of speeches by Malcolm X and begun to transcribe them, along with applying for a Ford Foundation grant.⁷¹

The Institute continued to work with library staff in 1970, reporting that they initiated discussions on including their envisioned library within Bobst

and made plans to develop lists of titles to be acquired.⁷² Discussions between institute staff and Dean of Libraries George Stone become “more intensive” in 1971 as the opening of Bobst approached.⁷³

Financial support for the institute’s library plans never materialized. The Ford Foundation grant provided less than a third of the money applied for, and none of it went to library activities or materials.⁷⁴ By 1972 firm plans for the institute’s role in the library were agreed upon. Rather than an independent library, there would be an Afro-American Room in Bobst Library, which would contain “among other things such as magazines and paintings, a file of all the Afro-American material in the Library.” The institute would contribute its own collection. Library officials said that “the cataloguing system of the Library” prevented the gathering of all the Afro-American books in one room.⁷⁵

The library administrators, on the other hand, did not evidence prioritization of Afro-American titles. In a planning study conducted in 1972, no note is made of the Afro-American Room.⁷⁶ By 1973 the institute had accepted the incorporation of the “Institute’s library into the overall University library,” although the delayed opening of Bobst Library meant that “this particular phase of the Institute’s program has not proceeded as rapidly as expected.” Furthermore, institute staffers were independently preparing bibliographies and lists of reading materials in response to research queries and had assembled a library of “basic research material” in its offices.⁷⁷ The envisioned greatest library in the world for Afro-American studies had become a study room that was not even comprehensive of NYU’s own collection.

While none of the campuses studied in this article saw demands for African American librarians to serve Black studies collections, it is clear from other literature of the time that most protesters saw hiring them as desirable. However, the limited number of African Americans with master’s degrees or other credentials created a bottleneck in the supply of librarians available to work in university libraries—and the liberal position of providing equality of treatment, including equality of expectations for librarians, led to the hiring of white librarians for the field of Black studies, or folding Black studies into the duties of already-hired librarians. For example, lists of African American employees at Penn from around 1973 and 1975 show only two library employees in each year, and each of them was employed in a general capacity, such as reference or circulation.⁷⁸ Nationally, as late as 1977, fewer than 40 percent of academic libraries had a staffer with dedicated duties involving Black studies materials.⁷⁹ And the writings of librarians at the time indicate that

it was often white librarians who were dealing with the new demands for Black studies materials. Amy Doherty, reflecting on the writings of students demanding Black studies programs, noted that while “such words may make white America uncomfortable, it is imperative that we really listen to and understand what is being said. Only then can we go on to create an environment that can be mutually hospitable for both blacks and whites.”⁸⁰

Conservative Responses

As well as taking the form of perhaps legitimate budgetary or administrative shortfalls, some refusals of student demands were simply stated by librarians who felt that currently offered services were sufficient. In response to the Camden students’ demand that “the community be granted access to existing University facilities,” Dean Ernest Lynton noted that “the entire South Jersey Community is presently granted reading room use in the College Library.”⁸¹

At Penn, Haas “firmly rejected” the creation of a seminar room on several grounds. He valued the dispersal of interdisciplinary works among the titles in the stacks; he held that seminar rooms were reserved for graduate curricula, and their collation of basic research materials was useful only in fields for which all researchers use a common set of sources—and Black studies was not such a field; and a bibliography and acquisition list being prepared for the fall semester to be distributed at the reference desk would serve the needs of Black studies students as well as a seminar room. And he also objected to establishing an audiovisual resource center; he believed that the expensive equipment would “quickly be either stolen or vandalized.”⁸² (However, under a new director, in 1975 the library established a seminar room in the main library.)⁸³

The Legacy of Early Efforts to Support Black Studies in Academic Libraries

Looking back at the period between 1968 and 1972 may provide a sobering view of the library’s place in the mental world of students agitating for change and administrators responding to them. While many Black student protests had certain demands they shared, library reform was by no means a common priority. And in the face of demands for library collections or services, administrators seldom saw fit to defend the work their librarians had already done, but rather chose to quickly promise changes on library-related issues. Nonetheless, the value of library collections to the academic mission of new

Black studies programs is clear through the insistence of faculty that library support form part of the implementation of new curricula.

The effect of the library on students' perceptions of the university is mixed. There is often silence in the historical record, but in 1999 the Princeton Program in African-American Studies compiled brief statements from its alumni. Of the dozens of entries, only two mention the library, but both use favorable terms: "I loved studying in the library, looking for rare and old books, making notes, thinking about what was written, putting them into my own words." And, "The African American reading room in Firestone became the intellectual home I needed. The resources of the library proved to be invaluable."⁸⁴

At every phase of the creation of Black studies programs in the four universities under discussion, we see that librarians, through personal inclination or in response to institutional mandates, often made sincere efforts to meet the student demands for Black studies materials. However, the efforts were made with a professional understanding grounded in mid-century liberal ideals that informed librarianship. Materials were purchased and services were expanded, but all within the libraries' pre-existing policies and approaches, which emphasized individual responsibility and initiative. And where demands were not met, it was largely on the grounds that the demands conflicted with existing policy. Such policy, or budgetary and personnel constraints, often served as a convenient reason to resist making the changes that were demanded. And, while it is difficult to determine from extant documentation, it does not appear that any of the libraries in this study hired African American librarians specifically to serve as selectors or reference librarians in the field of Black studies. The radicalization of the campus stopped at the library door.

Reflecting on the historiography of the Black studies movement, one finds that the trends identified in studies of the larger movement are reflected in libraries' responses to it. Just as, in Rogers's observation, the movement forced universities to make accommodations for the interests of African American students, libraries also have maintained and grown their collections for Black studies. However, just as the universities channeled the demands for Black studies programs into traditional academic structures, so also libraries have largely supported Black studies by assigning collecting and research duties to existing personnel. Similar arrangements may still be observed in most academic libraries. Whether this reflects Shiflett's contention that libraries are creatures of the university administration, or Hamlin's notion that librarians are motivated to keep faculty satisfied, is a judgment that requires more

evidence than is available in this study. Both models can account for the liberal mindset prevailing as academic libraries responded to demands for support of Black studies.

There is some correlation between the financial situation of a library and its willingness to accommodate Black studies programs. In part this may be an example of a virtuous cycle in which well-resourced institutions had the ability to invest in personnel and infrastructure, which in turn allowed them to make the case that philanthropies should support programs likely to succeed; libraries that were strapped for resources had little capacity to create such growth opportunities. In other cases, however, institutional conservatism about ideas such as separate reading rooms and audiovisual materials overrode concerns about meeting the expressly stated desires of students.

There are many reasons that African American studies programs across the United States now take the form that they do, and that few of them resemble the radically open, community-oriented programs envisioned in 1968 and 1969. Much more powerful forces than the library shaped them in the liberal image of the academy. But to the extent that libraries had a role, the prevailing liberal ethos of academic librarianship, which can be seen to have been exercised mostly in good conscience by the librarians of four East Coast universities under trying circumstances, was certainly a pressure that countervailed against the radical demands of the student protesters.

STEVEN A. KNOWLTON is Librarian for History and African American Studies at Princeton University. His historical research has been published in *Libraries: Culture, History, and Society* as well as *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, *West Tennessee Historical Society Papers*, and with University of Kentucky Press. His other research interests include librarianship for African American studies, vexillology (the study of flags), and creative methods of collection assessment. An earlier draft of his article in this volume was recognized with the Justin Winsor Library History Essay Prize for 2019.

NOTES

1. Barbara Anderson, "Ordeal at San Francisco State College," *Library Journal* (April 1, 1970): 1275–80.
2. A number of incidents are discussed in Ibram Henry Rogers, "The Black Campus Movement" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 2010), 160, 215, 240.
3. Jessie Carney Smith, "Librarianship and Black Studies—A Natural Relationship," in *Library and Information Services for Special Groups*, ed. Joshua I. Smith (New York: Science Associates/International, 1974), 202.

4. Theodore Cross and Robert Bruce Slater, "Only the Onset of Affirmative Action Explains the Explosive Growth in Black Enrollments in Higher Education," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 23 (1999): 110–11.
5. Wayne Glasker, *Black Students in the Ivory Tower: African American Student Activism at the University of Pennsylvania, 1967–1990* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 16.
6. Fabio Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 1.
7. William H. Exum, *Paradoxes of Protest: Black Student Activism in a White University* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985), 54.
8. John B. Mack III, "Black Studies and the Library," *Illinois Libraries* 52 (September 1970): 643.
9. William S. Dix, "Libraries and the Need for Understanding," *ALA Bulletin* (July–August 1969): 968–69.
10. Anthony M. Orum, *Black Students in Protest: A Study of the Origins of the Black Student Movement* (Washington, DC: American Sociological Association, 1972), 72.
11. Ibram H. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965–1972* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 4.
12. Noliwe M. Rooks, *White Money/Black Power: The Surprising History of African American Studies and the Crisis of Race in Higher Education* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007).
13. Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies*.
14. Stefan M. Bradley, *Upending the Ivory Tower: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Ivy League* (New York: New York University Press, 2018).
15. Glasker, *Black Students in the Ivory Tower*, 176–78.
16. Exum, *Paradoxes of Protest*.
17. Orvin Lee Shiflett, *Origins of American Academic Librarianship* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing, 1981), 221.
18. Arthur Hamlin, *The University Library in the United States: Its Origins and Development* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).
19. Allen P. Happe, "Educational Racism and Black Studies in American Higher Education," M.S.T. thesis, Lancaster Theological Seminary, 1970.
20. Jessie Carney Smith, "The Impact of Black Studies Programs on the Academic Library," *College and Research Libraries* (March 1972): 93.
21. Anderson, "Ordeal at San Francisco State College," 1276.
22. Donald C. Dickinson, "Books in the Field: Black Bibliography," *Wilson Library Bulletin* (October 1969): 184–87.
23. "Arno Press Launches Series about the American Negro," *Publishers Weekly* [PW], March 11, 1968, 35; "Facsimile Reprinting," *PW*, December 30, 1968, 31–36; "Random House to Publish Afro-American Anthology," *PW*, September 23, 1968, 80; "A 640-page 'Chronological History of the Negro in America,'" *PW*, December 2, 1968, 26; "The Paperback Best Sellers of the Year 1968," *PW*, March 10, 1969, 36; "NAL to Reprint Afro-American Series," *PW*, June 2, 1969, 106.
24. E. J. Josey, "Overdue: Black Aspirations, White Racism, and Libraries," *Wilson Library Bulletin* (September 1969): 97.

25. Autumn M. Womack, "Reprinting the Negro Past," unpublished manuscript. Available on request from Dr. Womack, amwomack@princeton.edu.
26. Wayne A. Weigand, "Any Ideas? The American Library Association and the Desegregation of Public Libraries in the American South," *Libraries: Culture, History, and Society* 1, no. 1 (2017): 1–22.
27. Eli M. Oboler, "Overdue: The Irrelevance of Relevance," *Wilson Library Bulletin* (April 1970): 869.
28. Emily Belcher, "Afro-American Studies Resources in the Princeton University Libraries," *New Jersey Libraries* 25 (Fall 1992): 29–31.
29. Ibid.; Sheldon Hackney to Barnaby C. Keeney, September 26, 1969, Office of the President Records (Record Group AC 193) (hereafter Princeton President's Records), Series 1, Box 38, Folder 4, Afro-American Studies Program, 1968–69 folder, Princeton University Archives (hereafter PUA).
30. Richard De Gennaro to Martin Meyerson, June 7, 1971, University of Pennsylvania Office of the President Records (Record Group UPA 4) (hereafter Penn President's Papers), Box 312, Black Study Reports folder, University of Pennsylvania Archives (hereafter UPA).
31. Jeanne Noble, "Dream Things That Never Were and Say, Why Not?" *ALA Bulletin* (September 1968): 965.
32. James R. Wright, "Overdue: Staffing Inner-City Libraries," *Wilson Library Bulletin* (June 1971): 987.
33. Richard McCormick, *The Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 24–25; Rutgers College Student Council Minutes, April 8, 1968, Records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross) (hereafter Gross Papers), Box 21, Folder 6, Black Students, 1968–1971, Rutgers University Archives (hereafter RUA).
34. Black Organization of Students, List of Grievances and Demands, April 19, 1968, Gross Papers, Box 21, Folder 6, Black Students, 1968–1971, RUA.
35. Black Organization of Students, memorandum, April 19, 1968 in *ibid.*.
36. Charles H. Brower to Richard Schlatter, April 23, 1968, in *ibid.*
37. Black Student Unity Movement of Rutgers, List of Demands, February 17, 1969, Records of the Rutgers University Dean of Student Affairs (Earle W. Clifford, Jr.), Record Group 15/F2 (hereafter Clifford Papers), Series I, Box 5, Folder 11, Black Students, February 1969–December 1971, RUA.
38. Memorandum, Ernest Lynton to Faculty and Students, College of South Jersey, February 17, 1969, Records of the Office of the Dean of Livingston College, Ernest A. Lynton, Record Group 21/A0/04 (hereafter Lynton Papers), Series I, Box 2, Folder 11, Black Studies. 1969, RUA.
39. Martha M. Jones, History of the Institute for Afro-American Affairs, New York University, 1969–1972, page 1, Institute for Afro-American Affairs Records, Record Group 9.8 (hereafter IAAA Records), Box 21, IAAA History/Research 1972 folder, New York University Archives (hereafter NYUA).

40. Minutes, Meeting of Organization Committee, Institute in Honor of Martin Luther King Jr., December 9, 1968, IAAA Records, Box 19, IAAA Organizational Proposal Correspondence 1969 folder, NYUA.
41. Rough transcription, Minutes of MLKI meeting, March 14, 1969, in *ibid.*
42. Rough transcription, MLKI meeting, March 21, 1969, in *ibid.*
43. Organizational Proposal for an Afro-American Institute at New York University in Honor of the Late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., April 23, 1969, in *ibid.*
44. The Institute of Afro-American Affairs at New York University, Position Statement by Roscoe C. Brown Jr., Director, April 24, 1969, in *ibid.*
45. Carl A. Fields, "A Time of Adjustment: The Early Years of the Black and Minority Presence at Princeton—Part II," *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, April 25, 1977, 20.
46. Robert F. Goheen to F. Champion Ward, January 27, 1969, Princeton President's Records, Series I, Box 38, Folder 4, Afro-American Studies Program, 1968–69, PUA.
47. Annual Report of the Library for the year ending June 30, 1969, Library Records, Box 72, Annual Reports 1969–1970 folder, PUA.
48. Belcher, "Afro-American Studies Resources."
49. Ann D. Slevin, *Princeton University Library: A Selection of Holdings on the Afro-American* ([Princeton, NJ]: Princeton University Library, 1970).
50. William Dix, quoted in Guy R. Lyle, *The Librarian Speaking* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1970), 24–25.
51. Minutes of Council of New Jersey State College and University Librarians meeting, February 25, 1969, Records of the Rutgers University Provost and Vice-President (Richard Schlatter), Record Group 15/A2 (hereafter Schlatter Papers), Box 23, Folder 3, Library, 1965–1970, RUA.
52. Office of the Dean of the College of South Jersey, memorandum to faculty and students, April 17, 1969, Clifford Papers, Series I, Box 5, Folder 11, Black Students, February 1969–December 1971, RUA.
53. Jewel D. Berry, *Wiggins Collection, Rutgers University Camden Library: A Bibliography of Materials on Black Studies* (Camden, NJ: Rutgers-Camden Library, 1973), [3].
54. Rutgers News Service, Press Release, May 21, 1968, Gross Papers, Box 21, Folder 6, Black Students, 1968–1971, RUA.
55. Mason Gross to Mr. Warren and Mr. Jones, February 27, 1969, Clifford Papers, Series I, Box 5, Folder 11, Black Students, February 1969–December 1971, RUA.
56. Rutgers College Faculty Meeting Minutes, March 4, 1969, Rutgers College Faculty Minutes (Record Group 23/2), Box 53, Folder 4, Rutgers College Faculty Meeting Minutes, 1969, RUA.
57. "Congratulations!," *Rutgers University Libraries Newsletter*, October 1968, RUA; "News of the Library," *Rutgers University Libraries Newsletter*, December 1968, RUA.
58. Henry R. Winkler to Richard Schlatter, October 15, 1969, Schlatter Papers, Series II, Box 7, Folder 8, Black Studies Program, Various Correspondence, 1969–1971, RUA.
59. Jim Douglass to Livingston Black Faculty, November 12, 1970, Lynton Papers, Series I, Box 2, Folder 9, Black Steering Committee, 1970–1971, RUA.
60. Glasker, *Black Students in the Ivory Tower*, 52–53.

61. Report of the Committee on the Goal of Higher Education on Programs for Black Students and Afro-American Studies, March 6, 1969, Penn President's Papers, Box 312, Wilf Report folder, UPA.
62. University of Pennsylvania News Bureau, press release, March 28, 1969, Penn President's Papers, Box 231, Black Admissions, 1970–1975 folder, UPA.
63. Roger H. Walmsley to Donald M. Stewart, May 25, 1971, Penn President's Records, Box 312, Black Study Reports folder, UPA.
64. "\$5000 for Black Studies Collection," *University of Pennsylvania Almanac* 20, no. 6 (October 2, 1973): 8, UPA.
65. Richard De Gennaro to Martin Meyerson, June 7, 1971, Penn President's Papers, Box 312, Black Study Reports folder, UPA.
66. Rutgers University Library Annual Report, 1966/67, Record Group 40, Box 1, RUA.
67. University Library Annual Report, 1968/69, Record Group 40, Box 1, RUA.
68. Rutgers University Library Faculty Executive Committee minutes, March 16, 1971, Rutgers University Library Faculty Records, RUA.
69. Plans for M.L.K. Institute on Afro-American Affairs, August 19, 1969, IAAA Records, Box 19, IAAA Background Information 1969 folder, NYUA.
70. Background Information on the Institute of Afro-American Affairs, September 29, 1969, in *ibid.*
71. Progress Report on the Institute of Afro-American Affairs, October 9, 1969, and proposal for support of the Institute of Afro-American Affairs at New York University, January 13, 1970, in IAAA Records, Box 19, IAAA Progress Report 1969 folder, NYUA; Malcolm X Research 1969, tape transcriptions, IAAA Records, Box 19, NYUA
72. Progress Report, Institute of Afro-American Affairs, September 1, 1969–March 31, 1970; Institute of Afro-American Affairs Plans for 1970–1971; and Institute of Afro-American Affairs Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda, February 17, 1971, all in IAAA Records, Box 19, IAAA Progress Report 1970 folder, NYUA.
73. Roscoe C. Brown, memorandum to Institute staff members, March 30, 1971, IAAA Records, Box 19, IAAA Background Information 1969 folder, NYUA.
74. Final Report to the Ford Foundation, Grant No. 70-253, 1970–1972, August 15, 1972, IAAA Records, Box 21, Final Report of the Ford Foundation 1972 folder, NYUA.
75. Martha M. Jones, History of the Institute for Afro-American Affairs, New York University, 1969–1972, page 38, IAAA Records, Box 21, IAAA History/Research 1972 folder, NYUA.
76. "The Elmer H. Bobst Library and Study Center: An Operational Analysis and Five-Year Planning Study," New York University Records of the Office of Deputy/Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (Eleazor Bromberg) (Record Group 6.1), Box 27, Bobst Library folder, NYUA.
77. Institute of Afro-American Affairs Annual Report 1972–1973, August 1, 1973, IAAA Records, Box 21, IAAA Annual Report 1973 folder, NYUA.
78. Black Faculty and Administrators, undated (circa 1973), and Black Faculty and Administrators, August 27, 1975, Office of the Provost General Files, 1924–1994 (UPA 6.4), Box 66, Folder 4, Black Presence, 1973–1975.

79. Ann Knight Randall, "African American Resources in American Libraries" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1977), 242.

80. Amy S. Doherty, "Black Studies: A Report for Librarians," *College and Research Libraries*, November 1970, 383–84.

81. Black Student Unity Movement of Rutgers, List of Demands, February 17, 1969, Clifford Papers, Series I, Box 5, Folder 11, Black Students, February 1969–December 1971, RUA; Memorandum, Ernest Lynton to Faculty and Students, College of South Jersey, February 17, 1969, Lynton Papers, Series I, Box 2, Folder 11, Black Studies. 1969, RUA.

82. Judy Teller, An Analysis of Selected Areas in Black Studies at the University, Penn President's Records, Box 312, Black Study Reports folder, UPA.

83. Afro-American Studies Program Annual Report, July 16, 1975, Penn President's Records, Box 311, Afro-American Studies Center, 1970–1975 folder, UPA.

84. Brian Taylor and Danielle K. Taylor-Guthrie, in *Alumni/ae Concentrators' Memoirs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, Program in African-American Studies, 2000).