



*Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board  
Arrangement and Description of the Payne African Methodist Episcopal Church Archive*

**2015-2016 Final Report  
Shaneé Murrain, Director of Library Services and Archivist**

**Summary of Project Activities and Accomplishments**

Payne Theological Seminary received funding of \$1,960.00 from the Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board to purchase Re: discovery Software Inc. (RSI)'s Proficio Elements archival management software to inventory, arrange, describe and create electronic finding aids for two significant primary source collections by and about the seminary and African Methodist Episcopal Church denomination, The George A. Singleton and Bishop Reverdy C. Ransom Collections. This proposal describes the significance and depth of scholarship afforded by the African Methodist Episcopal Church's official repository, and the urgent need to arrange, preserve, and make the collections fully accessible to researchers.

In the past seven months, Payne has been working on *Arrangement and Description of the Payne African Methodist Episcopal Church Archive* project and making significant progress toward our goal of reprocessing and arranging more than 10 linear ft.<sup>1</sup> of holdings from our special collections. Collection arrangement and keeping up with the demand for housing materials (Hollinger boxes and acid-free folders) were our biggest challenges over the course of the grant period. The number of items to be rehoused was underestimated. A substantial number of the Hollinger boxes in Singleton Collection counted in the planning stage were found to contain more documents in folders than was noted on the finding aid; therefore additional folders were required for arrangement. The previous level of processing arranged multiple documents<sup>2</sup> in one folder and an arbitrary number of folders in each box, including subject inconsistency within folders throughout the collection. Arrangement work within individual folders was not done. There were neither series or subseries arrangement nor identifiable hierarchy in the physical collection or legacy finding aid. The legacy finding aid prepared in 2011 did not offer much assistance for the classification for items within either collection as many items within folders did not correspond to the titles given to folders. To put it bluntly, we were more

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<sup>1</sup> Linear feet were determined by counting Hollinger boxes labeled "George A. Singleton Collection/Reverdy C. Ransom Collection". We found that additional items were in unlabeled boxes and were collapsed within other collections and unmarked archival boxes/folders of varying sizes.

<sup>2</sup> Items were found within folders that were not listed among the contents or noted on folder tabs



challenged than we imagined and the arrangement required to gain an intellectual assessment of the two collections necessitated that the project team come up with a more realistic timeline for reprocessing. As predicted in the original grant application, the collection would have to continue to be processed at the item level.

In the original contract, we were committed to April 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015 time range for the completing project activities. The project officially started on May 6, 2015, when Payne ordered Proficio Elements Software including perpetual license use for two concurrent users with technical support and software maintenance for 12 months.

An unanticipated challenge was the need to purchase additional software for the computer on which Proficio Elements would be installed. After attempting to install Proficio on the new visitor computer in the archives room, we learned that Windows needed to be updated. The desktop computer was originally fitted with Windows 7 which was incompatible with the collection development software. Payne ordered the Windows 8.1 software upgrade June 9, 2015. Payne's IT person visits the campus once a week; therefore the full software launch was pushed back until the end of June. The project team attended a webinar orientation for the Proficio software on June 30, 2015. The delay of the software installation proved not to be a major setback because it gave us more time to reprocess a sufficient number of items arranged by series to enter into the system during the demonstration and during "learning curve" phase of working with the software.

## **Activities and Results**

Payne has been actively implementing the work plan designed by the Seminary Archivist. The work plan methodology has four key components.

**1: Planning and Preparation:** Upon receipt of the OHRAB award in March 2015 Payne sought to hire a part-time (20 hrs. per week) archival intern to join the project assist with the processing work. Prior to receiving the OHRAB award, a local volunteer Michele Tollie performed basic reprocessing 5 hrs. per week. Payne vetted 3 candidates after posting the job ad to Society of Ohio Archivists and Society of American Archivists listservs, sharing widely at a Wilberforce University job fair and advertising with local churches. Due to a low response rate, recruitment of a complimentary candidate took longer than anticipated. Local history professor and Payne supporter Dr. Kevin McGruder, Antioch College, recruited sophomore history major, Ciana Ayenu, to apply for the internship. Payne hired Ayenu who started in the position on June 8, 2015. (Attachment 1: Ciana Ayenu Curriculum Vita)



## 1. Archive Organization:

The project team hit the ground running after Ayenu's hire and immediately began working to measure extent of collection in linear feet according to number and size of Hollinger archival boxes. The Singleton Collection measured **4.5 linear feet**<sup>3</sup> (11 Hollinger archival boxes). The extent of the Ransom Collection amounted to **5 linear feet** (12 Hollinger archival boxes) with four 24x18 two-inch binders containing additional letters and speeches. After accurately accounting the physical extent of the collection, the project team combed the collections for duplicates, photocopies, and copy prints of materials. Less than 10 duplicates were located, however rusted paperclips and staples were found in abundance. Documents were generally in good condition and did not require preservation beyond rehousing in acid-free folders.

## 2. Description

Based on the contents of the folders in each collection, the project team created new record groups, series and subseries structure and decided it best to process down to the folder level in anticipation for user access in the electronic finding aid. *Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACs) Second Edition* was consulted to ensure items were accurately described and organized. (Attachment 2: Bishop Reverdy C. Ransom Series, George A. Singleton Collection Series) Ciana's primary task was to create collection, folder, and item level catalog records in Proficio Elements software for each object in Singleton and Ransom collections. (Attachment 2: Screenshots from Proficio Elements Software of Ransom and Singleton Collection)

## 4. Marketing and Information Sharing:

The development team at Payne Theological Seminary redesigned the institution's website in May 2015. In accordance with the OHRAB grant timeline, a dedicated archives project site was created on the Ransom Library homepage to provide central location for the legacy finding aid, links to Princeton Theological Commons and AME Church sites general information about African American Historical Collections. On May 20, 2015 the Seminary published a press release announcing the grant award and project plans (Attachment 3: Press Release Library Awarded an OHRAB Grant from Payne Theological Seminary)

## Self-Assessment

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<sup>3</sup> The project team used the Leatherby Libraries, Chapman University Linear Footage Calculator <http://www1.chapman.edu/library/archives/linearfootage.html>



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At the end of the grant period 14 linear feet of material had been processed and 673 records had been added into Proficio Elements. According to our estimates the Ransom collection is 80 percent processed. Three binders of speeches and letters still await rehousing. The Singleton Collection is 60 percent processed with the bulk of the *AME Review*, Business/Civil/Educational Files, Military and *Christian Recorder* subseries cataloged. The photos, postcards and map subseries await rehousing and cataloging. This leaves two electronic finding aids remaining to be created and uploaded, and two MARC records to be created.

The greatest impact of the project has been the enhanced access to collections through physical access, as well as through web-access to finding aids. The availability of the legacy finding aid on the archives website has allowed greater discovery for researchers. Since the legacy finding aid became accessible on the archives website the library has received questions from four researchers requesting to view documents listed on the inventory. Researchers include:

- Two A.M.E. ministers wishing to view Ransom newspaper clippings and speeches
- A doctoral candidate from the University of Minnesota looking for the Hallie Q. Brown Papers (searched Brown's name in the legacy finding aid)
- A historian from the University Washington doing research on Daniel Payne

We have been very satisfied with the process and outcome of the OHRAB grant project. Although we were initially concerned that we had been overly optimistic by committing to processing over 300 c.f. of records, once the project got underway, things went smoothly and by following minimal or basic processing guidelines, we were able to quickly and efficiently process our collections in much less time than anticipated. We are a small repository staffed by an intern and "lone arranger," and within the next few months will have completely cataloged our two special collections.

### Outcomes

The *Arrangement and Description of the Payne African Methodist Episcopal Church Archive* project has identified four outcomes and has achieved the following results to date:

1. Arrange, describe, and preserve the Bishop Reverdy C. Ransom and Rev. George A. Singleton Collections according to Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACs), national practices, and standards for institutional archives.

**Result:** Complete. A comprehensive records inventory with descriptive record groups series, subseries and item level structure has been produced for each collection according to DACs and EAC in Proficio Elements.



- 2. Create two electronic finding aids Encoded Archival Description Document Type Definition (EAD DTD) with search capability, using Proficio Elements archival management software.

**Result:** In progress. Electronic Finding Aids will be created after both collections are completely reprocessed and all the accompanying descriptive data is cataloged in Proficio.

- 3. Enhance access for researchers by delivering electronic finding aids on the Web through a single portal, the Princeton Theological Commons (Payne Theological Seminary and AME Church Archive), which federates special collections of materials from theological libraries and archives across the country, in an integrated searchable database .

**Result:** In Progress. Since uploading the legacy finding aid to the archives website Payne has seen an increase of archival transactions related to the two special collections.

- 4. Create two MARC catalog records for the Reverdy C. Ransom and George A. Singleton collections, providing bibliographic access for users of WorldCat, OCLC’s union catalog, and OPAL consortium and OhioLINK, the Payne Library’s online public access catalog.

**Result:** In progress. Payne is working with complete processing and edit finding aid using Proficio Elements. After electronic finding aids are complete, the project team will announce their availability in professional literature, denominational publications and press releases to educational institutions and theological organizations and promote online access to collections. Anticipated completion date: June 2016.

**Expenditures** (See Attachment 4: Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board 2015 Grant Financial Report For Period 4/1/2015 to 9/30/2015, Attachment 5: Matching Funds Support Report)

Description	Receipt Identifier	Date of Purchase	Price (US\$)
Proficio Elements Software	A-4605	05/06/2015	\$1,692.00
Microsoft Windows 8.1 Pro Pack	A-5605	06/09/2015	\$95.48
Gaylord Archival Supplies	F-5605	11/17/2015	\$180.93



## Conclusion

The Seminary will continue to implement its designed work plan with an expectation that all established goals and outcomes will be achieved. Payne's *Arrangement and Description of the Payne African Methodist Episcopal Church Archive* project has moved at a steady rate and is positioning the Seminary as an authority on collection development and archival management efforts in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The Seminary is grateful for the Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board investment and is looking forward to achieving all of the established project goals and outcomes. We are most appreciative for this fruitful partnership that directly serves Payne students, students at other colleges and seminaries, church historians, and church leaders, American Christianity scholars, African American historians, other Methodist traditions, and more. In addition, the project also developed a significant dimension as a training opportunity for undergraduate students. Since working on the project, Ciana has completed four archival exhibitions related to the contents of the collection (physical and digital) and authored three blog posts. Ciana is seriously considering a career in the archives going so far as to gift the project team a holiday card including the following reflection, "I am so happy doing the work that I'm doing and I'm excited to continue in the field in the future."

## Attachments

1. Ciana Ayenu Curriculum Vita
2. Screenshots from Proficio Elements Software of Ransom and Singleton Collection
3. Press Release *Library Awarded an OHRAB Grant* from Payne Theological Seminary (May 20, 2015) <http://www.payne.edu/files/2733/File/NEWS%20RELEASE%20-OHRAB%20Grant--.pdf>
4. Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board 2015 Grant Financial Report For Period 4/1/2015 to 9/30/2015
5. After Photos A and B from Ransom Library Archives demonstrating the increase in the number of Hollinger boxes after rehousing. Old boxes have "Payne Seminary" labels. New boxes are labeled with Post-It notes and will be relabeled upon project completion.
6. Singleton and Ransom Collection Finding Aid Categories (Series, subseries)
7. OHRAB Expense Receipts
8. Matching Funds Support Report