

## Cooperate, Preserve, Share: Improving access to primary source materials from Africa

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### Abstract:

*This paper is a case study of the Cooperative Africana Materials Project (CAMP), (formerly the Cooperative Africana Microfilm Project) a collaboration of higher education institutions based in North America, Europe and Africa. It was established by the Africana Librarians Council (ALC), a coordinate organization of the African Studies Association (ASA) and the Center for Research Libraries (CRL) a library consortia based in Chicago. The project was created to improve access to research materials, especially rare primary source resources from Africa through cooperative acquisitions and preservation. This paper provides a brief history of CAMP, describes current and recent CAMP projects in Uganda, Liberia and Senegal and surveys selected collections; including manuscripts, newspapers in English and African languages, government documents, political ephemeral from South Africa and personal papers like the Tubman papers from Liberia. It also discusses the successful methods used to foster collaboration focusing on its collaborative efforts with African partners.*

**Keywords:** library cooperatives, preservation projects, African Studies collections, digitization, international cooperation.

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### Introduction

Libraries have traditionally engaged in cooperative relationships to provide users access to a greater collection of resources than they would normally have access. One important characteristic of a

dynamic library is meeting the needs of its users by enabling access to a vast amount of information resources. Koop (1997) traces the development of resource sharing through library cooperation to Melvil Dewey. He noted that Dewey wrote about library cooperation in an 1886 issue of *Library Journal*. There are different types of cooperative relationships in the form of networks, consortia or cooperative arrangements. Activities shared takes many forms; interlibrary loan, metadata, storage, collection development, funding and preservation. The scope could be international, national, multi-state, statewide, regional, local or a cluster of libraries focused on a narrow need. Structurally it could be by formal or informal agreement.

CAMP -- founded in 1963 -- is a cooperative collection development and preservation initiative between Africana libraries. Members contribute annual fees; the pooled funds are used to purchase microfilm sets and for preservation projects. It is focused on the narrow need of improving access to research materials to support the study of Africa. Easterbrook (2007) noted that “shared information and cooperative efforts are critical to success” in building African Studies collections. It is a collaboration of the Africana Librarians Council and CRL a cooperative research library which acquires and provides access to rare library materials to its membership. CAMP works with libraries, archives and scholars both in the United States and in Africa to identify collections for preservation. It was the first of the area studies group collections administered by CRL commonly known as the AMP’s. The others are Southeast Asia Materials Project (SEAM); LAMP (formerly known as the Latin American Microform Project); Middle East Materials Project (MEMP); South Asia Materials Project (SAMP); and Slavic and East European Materials Project (SEEMP).

CRL administers the project including collecting dues, maintaining financial records and processing materials (Boylan, 1986). CAMP membership in 2015 consists of forty- six institutions and two African affiliate members. Membership is open to any institution with a library and whose interest matches CAMP objectives. Members pay an annual fee and members who are non-CRL members pay a higher fee, the fees are used for acquisitions and for funding projects. Member benefits include participating in elections, borrowing rights through interlibrary loan; discount purchasing of positive copies of microfilm within copyright laws; and the right to propose and vote on project proposals. It is governed by by-laws and elected executive committee. CAMP meets twice a year concurrently with ALC, in the spring at a member institution and in the fall at the annual meeting of the ASA. Members deliberate and vote on project proposals to decide which projects to fund during the meetings. This paper provide a detailed overview of CAMP, focusing on the history, recent projects in Africa, selected collections and explore successful methods for fostering collaboration in preserving and enabling access to important materials of cultural, historical, political, linguistic and geographical value.

## **Laying the Foundation**

In the late 1950’s and 1960’s many African countries gained independence from colonial rule resulting in an increased awareness of the important role Africa could play in world affairs. Many institutions of higher education in North America, Europe and Africa established African studies programs. ASA was established in 1957 and its Archives-Libraries Committee later became the ALC met first in 1958 (Easterbrook, 1989). These programs quickly realized the dearth of resources in this new scholarly field of study and the need for a systematic acquisition of critical African scholarly materials to remedy the scarcity. CAMP was established in May 1963 as a cooperative project after successful discussions between the Archives-Libraries Committee of the ASA, the Foreign Acquisitions Committee, Africa sub-section of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and CRL then the Midwest Inter-Library Center. The latter appropriated funds and agreed to contribute financial assistance to be matched by member institutions (Boylan, 1986). Original membership consisted of twelve institutions. CAMP was formed with the dual objective of purchasing and maintaining a microform collection of rarely held African materials and carry on preservation of publications and archives concerning Sub-Saharan Africa. This included identifying and preserving African newspapers, personal papers, periodicals and political ephemeral.

CAMP has gone through changes since its inception. It adopted a formal organizational structure in 1971 and elected an Executive committee to implement the wishes of the members (Easterbrook, 1989). Earlier collections were obtained from the Library of Congress and from personal collections of preeminent Africana scholars in the United States. These included field notes, traditional histories and oral texts and unpublished materials. Examples are the Cameroon and Rhodesia and Nyasaland political ephemera and the Leo Kuper papers containing interviews he conducted of South Africa's black professionals for a book project. CAMP later started collaborating with institutions outside the United States most notably South Africa in the 1970's and 1980's to identify collections for preservation. Partners in Africa included the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), notable figures like Benjamin Pogrand, editor of the Rand Daily Mail in Johannesburg, University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and University of Ibadan in Nigeria. These partnerships resulted in the preservation of valuable materials. Other changes are the move towards combining capacity building with preservation projects in Africa starting in the 1990's (Shultz, 2013). Collaborative activities with other institutions like Universities and U.S. Department of Education Title VI National Resource Centers to fund projects started in 1993. In the 2000's CAMP added digitization projects in addition to microfilming, leading to the change of name to Cooperative Africana Materials Project in 2010 (CAMP, 2010). Extended affiliate memberships to African archives and libraries that have engaged in previous projects with CAMP in 2012 (Shultz, 2013).

### **Recent Projects**

Recent projects by CAMP with African partners have increasingly involved combining preservation with capacity-building. The CAMP/Title VI Archives project in Senegal was the first of such projects. It was completed in two phases – 1995-2000 and 2000-2004. Collections microfilmed include: Justice Indigène, 1838–1954: sous-série 6M; Affaires politiques et administratives du Sénégal, Serie D. The materials provide valuable insight into political, administrative, economic and social life in colonial Senegal. CAMP and Title VI supported the Liberian National Archives microfilming project and later digitization led by Indiana University from 2004–2013 (CRL, n.d.). The collection comprised the Presidential Archives, the Tubman Papers and the government papers within the Liberian National Archives. Materials were shipped from Liberia to Indiana where they were freeze dried processed and filmed. Given the scope of the archives the project coordinator successfully identified additional sources of funding to preserve the photographs that were part of the archives. Indiana University has a renowned collection of materials on Liberia so the collections of the Liberian National Archives are housed there instead of CRL. Funds from CAMP, Title VI and the British Library's Endangered Archives Program were used to digitize part of this microfilm collection, it is accessible on the internet via Indiana University, the British Library and at certain institutions within Liberia. The project provided for capacity building in Liberia in order for nationals to once again sustain and care for their national output. All the original materials were scheduled for return to the Liberia National Archives in 2013 in keeping with the agreements signed at the onset of the projects.

CAMP's most recent preservation efforts, 2010 to date, has been focused on the Uganda Archives. A project proposal by a historian of eastern Africa's intellectual cultures, at the University of Michigan in collaboration with Mountains of the Moon University was submitted to CAMP to assist with the digitization of several endangered district archives (CAMP, 2010). It includes the Fort Portal Archive, the Kabarole District Archives, the Kabarole Forestry Papers, the Archives of the Toro Kingdom, and Hoima District Archives. These varied archives have been housed in precarious circumstances under threat of the elements and other contaminants. Materials include legal procedure, tax collection, police work, elections, etc. CAMP funds are used to cover the cost of scanning equipment, staff salaries and facility rental. While decisions have yet to be made about access to these materials on the internet, it is safe to say that the images of these documents have been preserved for future scholars and Uganda.

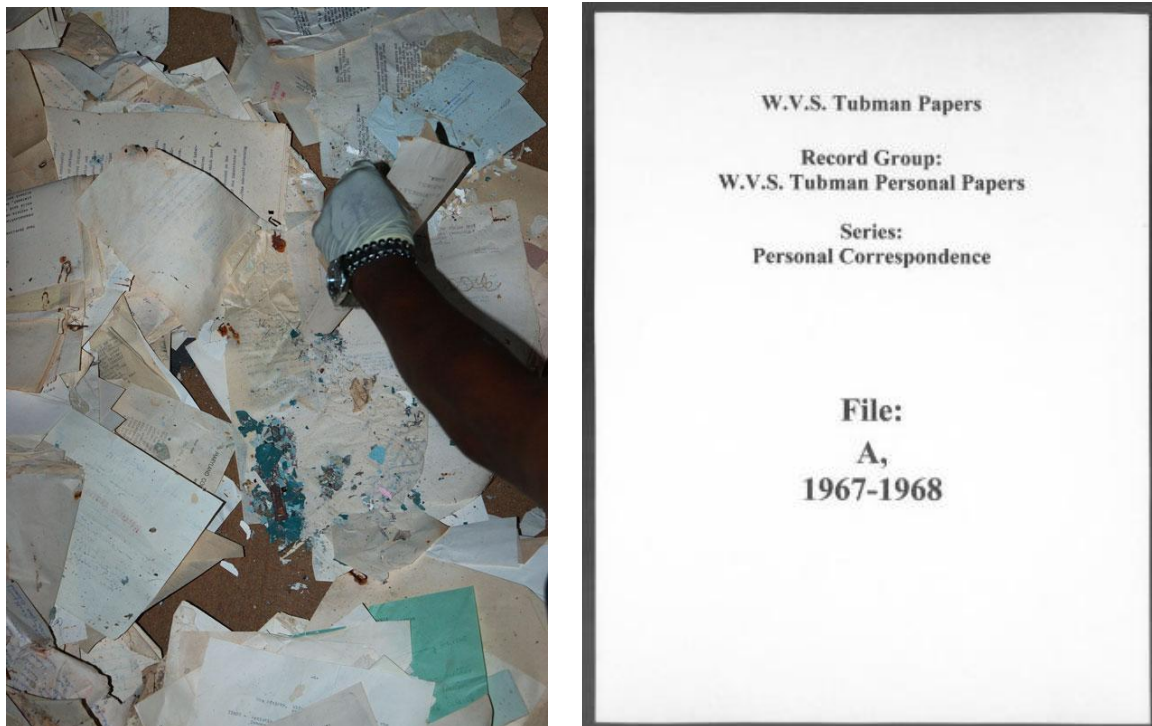


Figure 1. Tubman papers before and after digitization (Indiana University, 2007)

### Selected Collections

The materials held by CRL on behalf of CAMP are varied and wide in scope. Selected resources highlighted below touch on older and more recent projects. In order to highlight the range of materials they have been grouped by type of material.

Archival collections – Many of these were donated to CAMP for microfilming by Africanist scholars. The Carter–Karis Collection, 1882 to 1964, represents CAMP’s initial foray into archival preservation. A large part of the material was issued by African, Indian, and colored political, cultural, and labor organizations and they provide a rich history of events in South Africa during the period. Collected by Gwendolyn Carter and Thomas Karis, the collection also includes the personal papers of union leader, A.W.G. Champion and the renowned academic and diplomat, Z.K. Matthews. Parts of these were materials collected for their book: *From Protest to challenge: a documentary history of African politics, 1882-1964*, (Lohrentz, 1998). The Buganda Lukiiko archives, 1894-1918, consists of English translations of Buganda Lukiiko (parliament) proceedings and represents the inner workings of a kingdom that no longer exists in this form. Encounters with Europeans, political, cultural, and national concerns are documented. Other important archival materials are oral sources contributed by the preeminent Africanist Jan Vansina, including “historical narratives from Rwanda” (Lohrentz, 1998).

Newspapers - Newspaper preservation continues to be a priority for CAMP, many of which are newspaper collections of CAMP members. It believes that microfilm is most reliable medium for the preservation of newspapers. The selection of newspapers to preserve is governed by a number of factors such as the condition of the title at the member institution, space needs at member institutions, rareness of the item, independent coverage by the paper, and political climate within a county. These are just some of the factors taken into consideration when CAMP members meet twice a year to make decisions on which newspapers to fund for filming. Examples of newspapers in CAMP collections:

Cameroon: Cameroon Post - (Apr. 1994-Oct. 1995), Challenge - (June 1994-Dec. 1995), Dikalo – (Aug. 1994-July 1998), L'Effort Camerounais – (Nov. 1994-Oct. 1995).

Liberia Newspapers: Concord Times – (Dec. 1995-Nov. 2005), The Diary – (Feb. 2004-May 2011), Focus – (Oct.-Dec. 2011), The Monitor –(June 2006-Jan. 2010), Monrovia Daily News – (Jan. 1995-Aug. 1997).

Somali Newspapers: Ayaamaha- (2007-2008), Shacabka Warshida- (2008-2009), Mogadishu Times -(2005-2012), Qaran & Qaran Press- (2005-2007).

Malawi Newspapers: The Chronicle – (Jan. 2001 – Mar. 2005), The Democratus/Weekend Democratus – (Jan. 2005 – Oct. 2005), The Enquirer – (Jan. 2001 – Feb. 2005 ), The Malawi Standard – (Jun. 2002 – Oct. 2004).

Congo Newspapers :L’Interprete (1997-2003), Mukuba (1991-2006), Taifa (1974-1975, 1990). CAMP is committed to filming or acquiring film of Le Republicain (Mali)-1993, Les Echos (Mali), Vanguard (Nigeria).

Government Documents - The Corruption & governance in South Africa collection consists of materials from South Africa on corruption and governance related issues covering the period Sept. 1995-Mar. 2006, the period of South Africa’s political transition from the old apartheid structure to new democratic one and the type of corruption that manifested itself during this time. Collected by Marianne Camerer for her doctoral dissertation, *Testing the system -- democracy on trial: corruption and reform in democratic South Africa*, this rich resource contains “political cartoons, newspaper articles, parliamentary records, auditor general reports, commissions of inquiry, investigative reports, policy documents, conference proceedings, survey materials” and much more. In early 2003 CAMP decided to film a collection consisting of miscellaneous government documents issued by Nigeria's Plateau State published primarily in Jos, Nigeria, 1976-2009. It includes speeches; pamphlets; annual reports of ministries and commissions; statistical bulletins; budget estimates and approved budgets; "Government views and decisions"; white papers; and other items.

Members have access to the collections through interlibrary loan. CAMP member institutions, CRL members, and affiliated African libraries share these rich collections through free access to the digitized collections, and use interlibrary loan and electronic delivery for other formats. Access to digitized collections by affiliates in Africa depends on the bandwidth within each country. Collections are in the CRL catalog, and there are also several guides for collections now accessible online. Examples of these guides are the Ivor Wilks-Phyllis Ferguson collection of material on Ghana containing information before and after independence and during the rule of Kwame Nkrumah, Onitsha Market Literature, Plateau State Government Documents of Nigeria, Carter-Karis Collection, Corruption and governance in South Africa. Materials are also available in the OCLC catalog. To provide support and instructions, CRL has posted several tutorials to its YouTube channel. Loan periods for material for interlibrary loan are very generous compared to normal library interlibrary loans.

### **Fostering Collaboration**

To foster collaboration CAMP has adopted proposed best practices. A best practice proposed by Britz and Lor (2002) is to locate projects in the countries of provenance with full local control. CAMP archival projects in Africa have been carried on 100% in African countries since 1995. All phases of the National Archives of Senegal microfilming project were based in Senegal. The Senegal project -- an excellent example of capacity building -- required a high amount of commitment on the part of CAMP due to problems with acquisition of film stock, duplication process, manuals, and equipment malfunctions which slowed the filming of the materials (Simon, 2002). CAMP hired a consultant from the United States to travel to Senegal to assess the problems and train personnel of the preservation/reproduction unit of the National Archives of Senegal (CAMP, 1999). Some CAMP members also travelled to Senegal to assess the project. An official from the Archives was funded to visit UCLA, University of Iowa, and Columbia for training. The current digitization project with MMU in Uganda is based in Uganda even though it has experienced problems with periodic power outages. Efforts made to include the project supervisor in Uganda in CAMP meetings by satellite has been unsuccessful for the same reasons. CAMP practice follows the principles proposed by Limb (2002) that original archives remain in the country of origin or, if removed, usable copies or the

originals should be repatriated back to home country. Materials from the Liberian Archives project is scheduled to be returned to Liberia. CAMP funded the microfilming and return to Namibia of original SWAPO documents held at the Yale University Manuscript and Archives Division (CAMP, 1998). Britz and Lor also proposed that research libraries involved with cooperative schemes be generous and allow African scholars and libraries access to microfilm sets and digitized materials. CAMP policy requires that the African institution retains the master negative of microfilms, CAMP gets a positive copy and when possible obtains a negative master (CAMP, 1998). It has recently invited interested African institutions to be affiliate members so that they can fully benefit from CAMP.

The willingness of both the African partner and CAMP to practice meaningful and sustainable collaboration is important in fostering goodwill. This can be achieved by strict adherence to ethical practices as well as respecting local legislation. Britz and Lor (2002) noted that by 1988 forty-two African countries had instituted laws to prevent the export of cultural property. Such laws can sometimes hinder preservation efforts, however CAMP does recognize their importance. CAMP approved a proposal to fund the digitization of the district inspector reports in the Arquivo Historico de Mocambique documents (AHM) in 2010 (Irele & Johnson, 2010). However the project could not proceed because of the strict cultural heritage laws regarding export of national cultural heritage in Mozambique. Concerns arose within the membership of CAMP in 2014, regarding the Uganda collaboration. Part of the funding requested was to digitize personnel files in Hoima District Archives (CAMP, 2014). In the United States these files are considered confidential, and, because it would be against U.S. law to make them openly available, members subsequently voted to exclude those files from the project. CAMP members rejected a proposal to microfilm the Skweyiya Commission Transcripts on Corruption in Bophuthutswana because ownership could not be determined, and members suggested the collection be offered to the South African Archives (CAMP, 1998). Cooperative preservation ventures between north and south have at times been characterized as a new form of cultural theft (Pickover, 2005). CAMP does its best to eliminate the perceptions of foreign scholars exploiting African resources and the unequal flow of information from the south to the north. While the original intent was to improve access to Africana materials for scholars of Africa, it has now evolved to include capacity building and training of librarians and archivists in Africa.

Finally a sustained level of activity, adoption of innovative practices and flexibility in accepting new emerging trends and technology has helped CAMP in fostering collaboration. Its flexibility to change has helped it to transform the collections from solely microform to include digital collections by recognizing the importance of digitization. It continues to fund microfilm projects but has spent large amounts of its recent budget on digitization projects in Africa. It is also open to fund the digitization of materials that had been previously funded for microfilming. An example is the digitization of the microfilm collection of the Tubman papers held at Indiana University, Bloomington. Aside from cooperating to build, preserve and share collections CAMP has succeeded in combining the expertise of leading Africana librarians and faculty who work in close collaboration to identify important materials for the study of Africa (Boylan, 1986). CAMP proposals most often originate from scholars who have done research in Africa and they remain closely connected to the projects. CAMP collaborates with varied partners; experts, other U.S. institutions, and African institutions to maximize resources. Effective communication between member institutions is ensured with its semi-annual meetings to consider proposals, discuss, and report on new developments. A listserv is used to share information in between meetings.

## **Conclusion**

CAMP has been a successful cooperative as evidenced by the size (over 10,000 bibliographic entries in CRL's catalog) and the diversity of collections (CRL, n.d.). The strengths of CAMP's collections are its newspapers, ephemera, and political materials, especially about Southern Africa. The digital and microform collections form a large pool of historical, political, linguistic, economic, and geographical data and primary source materials. Users in member libraries have access to the vast collections and libraries can avoid the high costs of acquiring, processing, and storing the materials locally. CAMP has transformed itself from a cooperative project between North American institutions

to one that builds capacity in Africa by providing equipment and training, as well as preserved collections. The success of CAMP can be attributed to the methods used to foster collaboration among its members and partners, its flexibility to change, and the willingness to work with other groups like Title VI universities to maximize resources and promote cooperation through the pooling funds as well as the expertise of its members, including librarians and scholars.

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