

History Infrastructure Group Recommendations

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Summary

Over the past several months, the History Infrastructure Group has met biweekly to address President Kim Cassidy's [charge](#) to "[develop] a sustainable model for supporting student, faculty, and staff projects to document, share, and preserve histories of the College, its constituents, and initiatives of significance led by College community members." The committee mined our own institutional knowledge, sought perspectives from colleagues across the College, considered work at other colleges and universities, and regularly communicated with the Telling Histories Group through a liaison, Kristin Weaver, who served on both groups.

Our initial goal was to provide a preliminary catalogue of existing projects related to the histories of the College as well as information on how to access this work. The resulting catalogue can be viewed in [Appendix A](#) and is also integrated into recommendations offered in the "Pathways" section of the report.

Our second and more substantial task was to propose an integrated model for supporting current and future work related to the histories of the College. While some of this work is currently distributed across campus, we believe that a full-time staff person would be best positioned to coordinate the work and to improve student access to the essential training and necessary resources for exploring Bryn Mawr histories and their legacies. We have also proposed allocating funding to support and grow student work through the Pensby Center. Finally, the integrated model includes an annual budget to support a rotating portfolio of projects related to the College's history.

Rationale

As the College approaches its 135th anniversary, we have begun to acknowledge our complex history, but what work has been done is scant and scattered. There is a great deal of energy, but it is inchoate. Passion outweighs training and capacity. Courses related to the History of the College and training in archival methods are offered too infrequently and sporadically for students to take advantage of them in a systematic way. The work of training and mentoring students in these methods frequently falls outside of defined staff and faculty job responsibilities. All of this work takes time, planning, coordination, energy, and ongoing communication, and those need to be recognized appropriately.

Through these recommendations, we seek to create infrastructure and systematic approaches that improve access to the resources, training, and funding necessary to more fully understand our histories and both celebrate and repair their legacies. We recognize that no one event or program or person can bear all of the weight of this work. At the same time, without dedicated staff whose explicit responsibility it is to coordinate this work, efforts may remain scattered.

Therefore, we recommend a model in which a full-time staff member would coordinate and support new and ongoing efforts related to the history of the College. We recognize that committing funding to support this work may well mean diverting resources and discontinuing other programs or activities. We also recognize that it takes time and energy to recruit excellent colleagues, and that the impacts of such colleagues may take time to manifest. We see this as a long-term effort to make deep change, but we have also recommended some more immediate changes, as part of an integrated model, to support student research projects.

There have been many projects and programs that uncover the past, include often excluded voices and stories, and acknowledge the complexities that continue to surface. These projects and programs include but are not limited to the Social Justice Partnership Program, the Pensby Fellowship program, The Albert M. Greenfield Digital Center for the History of Women's Education, the Black at Bryn Mawr Project, the Oral History project, and the Community Day of Learning (see [Appendix A](#) for a more comprehensive list). The College contributes resources to support this important work, and the model we are proposing ensures that we continue to learn from and support this work as we move forward. The staff member we propose will extend the work of existing programs by building on what we have learned, supporting this work in classrooms, and promoting this work at an institutional level.

In short, we propose collecting and making more transparent the work that has already been carried out, providing access to the methodological and technological training necessary for producing and sharing high-quality research, and dedicating funding to enable varied projects whose creative specificities we cannot predict but for which we can plan.

Recommendations

Components of a Sustainable Model: Staffing, Training, and Ongoing Financial Support

Staffing, Service, and Release Time

In order to ensure continuity and expand our capacity to support this work, we recommend moving toward hiring a full-time, dedicated staff position. To further distribute this important work, it will be necessary to revise job descriptions and support service for faculty.

- Create a full-time, dedicated staff member who might:
 - report to the Seymour Adelman Director of Special Collections in LITS
 - work in close collaboration with the Pensby Center Director
 - lead the College Histories Steering Committee
 - organize regular and consistent training for students interested in conducting research on the histories and legacies of the College including through oral histories and archival research (e.g. a faculty member or an external group, such as the Science History Institute, might provide training)
 - teach one course per year
 - coordinate and publicize list of courses that teach methods or content related to College histories and legacies
 - mentor students working on projects related to the history of the College
 - liaise with Alumnae/i Relations to connect with alums
 - conduct outreach and raise awareness about the pathways for students
 - afford the College an opportunity to diversify the staff
- Revise staff job descriptions to support this work:
 - acknowledge that additional responsibilities to support this endeavor cannot be added to staff workloads without releasing from other duties
- Recognize Service
 - President's Office and Provost's Office work with the Appointments Committee to recognize faculty service in support of projects and mentoring focused on the histories of the College

Training

Faculty and staff regularly train students on how to carry out archival and historical research as well as how to engage with complex ideas, but this work is often ad hoc. This coordinated model attempts to map, extend, and make transparent the multiple pathways for how students can receive necessary training to carry out this work.

- Develop courses that engage with the College's histories and legacies through existing curricular structures such as:

- 360 courses (e.g. a continuing, rotating, interdisciplinary cluster of courses over multiple years)
- Praxis courses (e.g. oral history methods courses, digital public history courses)
- Emily Balch Seminars (e.g. Alicia Walker’s course on “Building Bryn Mawr”)
- THRIVE sessions (e.g. Matthew Ruben’s interactive session on M. Carey Thomas)
- Expand the opportunities offered through what is currently the Pensby Center by:
 - funding five fellowships and offering new support for student workers conducting research during the academic year
 - in collaboration with LITS, supporting an ongoing oral histories program that includes interviewing people from staff departments with traditionally large numbers of underrepresented minorities and individuals from underrepresented minorities who have been pioneers in their roles as staff, faculty, students, and alums.
 - providing honoraria for faculty and staff mentorship of student fellows
 - coordinating with IRB to refine student proposals and ensure ethical principles for research are followed
 - securing funding to support Black at Bryn Mawr student tour guides and researchers
 - exploring the possibility of naming the fellowships after individuals important in the telling of our histories (e.g. Jessie Redmon Fauset, Evelyn Jones-Rich)
- Build capacity to collect oral histories by:
 - providing training and professional development for key staff and faculty
 - creating periodic on-campus training opportunities for students through courses and workshops
 - ensuring accessibility through transcription or indexing
 - working with the IRB to provide transparent and consistent pathways for oral history projects
 - developing digital infrastructure to host and stream oral histories online

Funding

Dedicated, operational funding to support projects related to the History of the College potentially administered by the College histories program coordinator with the support of a Steering Committee or Advisory Council. Because community interests will shift over time, a dedicated fund to support new forms of engaging with the College’s history would provide both the flexibility to adapt and the security to sustain projects proposed by community members. Example proposals might include:

- Digitization projects (e.g. of *College News*, *Alumnae Bulletin*, yearbooks, etc.)
- Course development grants
- Repurposing of the Old Library alcove and other spaces
- Conference on M. Carey Thomas and the history of women’s higher education
- Memorials

- Podcasts about our histories
- Exhibitions
- Work-study projects
- Fellowships for research related to a variety of topics such as the history of Perry House, student activism, staff of color, art and artifacts, and campus spaces
- Campus signage to improve visibility for research from the Black at Bryn Mawr project

Pathways

In order to increase awareness of and access to existing resources, we recommend providing the following pathways.

For supporting learning and research projects primarily led by students and faculty that require resources from LITS and other campus offices:

- Create a web page that includes a catalogue of projects and available resources, including technology platforms and funding opportunities (drawn from [Appendix A](#)), for starting new research (maintained by the LITS Digital Scholarship, Critical Making, and Digital Collections Management team and Telling Histories Coordinator) as well as clear contact information for users wanting to learn more.
- Create an email alias (e.g. histories@brynmawr.edu) that would feed inquiries into a queue (similar to Ask a Librarian) where a small number of staff could answer or redirect the inquiry in a timely manner.
- Raise awareness about this pathway through multiple avenues (e.g. Town Halls, Daily Digest, outreach activities, etc.)

For more public-facing histories of the College developed and maintained by College Communications and partner departments:

- Revise College About Page (<https://www.brynmawr.edu/about>) to acknowledge our history and dedication to addressing our legacies.

For pathways that connect the previous two:

- Publish a web bibliography of past research, maintained by Special Collections, with a clear mechanism for how to suggest additions to the list.
- Revise College History Page (<https://www.brynmawr.edu/about/history>) to acknowledge history and link to resources including our College Archives, and the bibliography of past research about the College.

Annual Costs

Full-time staff, salary and benefits ¹	\$85,000
Pensby Center (Appendix B)	\$15,250
Projects budget	\$50,000
Total	\$150,250

¹ Benefits calculated using <https://www.brynmawr.edu/sites/default/files/Projected%20benefits%20rates%202020-24%2002132019.pdf>.

Appendix A

Catalogue of Known Projects and Programs

Title	Description
A Point of Difference	An exhibit created by Alexis De La Rosa '15 and Lauren Footman '14 that collected and shared experiences of Bryn Mawr College students and staff from Africa and the African Diaspora. The project was funded by Pensby Center internships.
Black at Bryn Mawr	A collaborative project started by Emma Kioko '15 and Grace Pusey '15 that draws from the College Archives to bring its history of racism back into colloquial awareness on campus. It also focuses on the experiences that Black and Brown students, staff members, and faculty members have had at different points in the institution's history.
Candid Campus: The Lesser Known Narratives of Bryn Mawr College	A digital exhibit created by Samone Rowe '14 during her internship with The Albert M. Greenfield Digital Center for the History of Women's Education that draws from scrapbooks from the College Archives to examine campus culture.
College Women	College Women is a searchable portal of diaries, letters, scrapbooks and photographs from the archives of the Seven Sisters schools. It was created with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities.
Greenfield Center for the History of Women's Education	An online locus of scholarship on the history of women's higher education. Active from 2011-2016, it was created with support from The Albert M. Greenfield Foundation.
History of Gender Identity and Expression at Bryn Mawr College	This digital archive was created by Emmett Binkowski '16 as the final product of a project conducted in Summer 2014 for an internship at the Bryn Mawr College Pensby Center, the college office for inclusion and diversity.

History of Women in Science Project	A collaborative project directed by Jessica Linker that reconstructs the spaces on campus where women practiced science at the turn of the nineteenth century in three-dimensional space.
In Black and White	An article by Florence Goff, retired Associate Chief Information Officer, for the <i>Alumnae Bulletin</i> which relates the history of admissions for black students at Bryn Mawr
Offerings to Athena	A book, edited by Anne Bruder, produced for the College's 125th anniversary, that provides a detailed history of Bryn Mawr College
Oral Histories pilot project	A pilot project in Spring 2019 to support students in collecting oral histories related to the history of the College and its community members.
Social Justice Partnership Program	Conceptualized in 2007 by a group of faculty, students, administrators, and staff in response to racial tensions and problematic incidents on campus, this program developed a curriculum for and supported mixed cohorts of faculty, students, administrators, and staff meeting regularly to work on communicating across differences. Folded in 2012 into the concentration in Peace, Conflict, and Social Justice Studies .
StoryCORE	Created by a TLI student consultant who was an international student and subsequently supported by the President's Office, StoryCORE is a student-led peer listening program through which students come together to talk about their experiences, share their stories, and promote and participate in an open dialogue around issues of diversity.
We Are/We Have Always Been	A project created by Brenna Levitin '16 to uncover the histories of LGBT individuals and communities at Bryn Mawr College between the years 1970 and 2000. The project was funded through the Tri-Co Digital Humanities Initiative and The Albert M. Greenfield Digital Center for the History of Women's Education.

Catalogue of Funding and Research Opportunities

Title	Description
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Archival Guides	A web page that is a great starting point for researching the College's history.
Digital Bryn Mawr Seed Grants	Opportunity for faculty, staff, and graduate students to receive funding to pursue digital projects, digital pedagogy, and professional development related to technology
Digital Scholarship Summer Fellows Program	Full-time summer fellowship opportunity for undergraduates who work on a collaborative digital scholarship project, often a project related to the history of the College.
Pensby Fellows	These annual fellowships support projects that contribute to our histories and to the College's goal of building equity and inclusion in our community.
Special Collections Internships	Summer internships offered by Special Collections for undergraduate and graduate students.
Triptych	A web platform that hosts scans of materials related to the history of the College (letters, diaries, scrapbooks, photographs, etc.)

Catalogue of Supported Technology Platforms

Title	Description	Get Help
Mukurtu	A web application to empower communities to share their digital heritage in culturally relevant and ethically-minded ways. Available through a Domain of One's Own.	digitalscholarship@brynmawr.edu
Omeka	A web application for creating digital exhibits. Available through A Domain of One's Own.	https://techdocs.blogs.brynmawr.edu/7294
Scalar	A digital publishing platform for telling multi-linear stories. Available through A Domain of One's Own.	https://techdocs.blogs.brynmawr.edu/7301
WordPress (through blogs.brynmawr.edu)	A web application for creating websites.	http://techdocs.blogs.brynmawr.edu/category/web-editing/blogs
WordPress (through digital.brynmawr.edu)	A web application for creating websites. Available through A Domain of One's Own.	https://techdocs.blogs.brynmawr.edu/7260

Appendix B

Proposed Reallocations and New Funding for Pensby Center

Expense	Cost/unit	Units	Costs
Fund 5 fellowships	\$4,500.00	5	\$22,500.00
Honoraria for mentors	\$250.00	5	\$1,250.00
Black at Bryn Mawr support	\$5,000.00	1	\$5,000.00
		Total New	\$28,750.00
		Total Allocation	\$28,750.00