

**The History of Black Writing's Black Book Interactive Project (BBIP):  
Webinars**

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History of Black Writing

“Black Book Interactive Project III”

National Endowment for the Humanities: Division of Preservation and Access  
Humanities Collections and Reference Resources

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## Project Summary

Webinars have been a key component of the History of Black Writing (HBW) Black Book Interactive Project (BBIP) Scholars Program since its inception in 2019. Offered synchronously for current BBIP Scholars, webinars were led by leading Digital Humanities (DH) scholars and practitioners. The sessions provided not only training and knowledge sharing, but also opportunities for BBIP Scholars to dialogue, raise questions, and foster community. Afterward, HBW staff added captions to the webinar recordings before they were made available to the public on HBW's BBIP website and YouTube channel. This library of 20 webinars constitutes an "on demand" training module for DH resources and skill-building, <https://iopn.library.illinois.edu/omeka/s/BBIP/page/webinars>.

## Primary Collaborators

Maryemma Graham, University of Kansas, HBW  
Ayesha K. Hardison, Indiana University Bloomington, HBW  
Jamene Brooks-Kieffer, University of Kansas  
Arnab Chakraborty, Fairfield University  
Sara Cohen, University of Michigan Press  
Ryan Dubnicek, HathiTrust Research Center  
Kaylen Dwyer, Tufts University  
Amy Earhart, Texas A&M University  
Kim Gallon, Brown University  
Kaiama Glover, Yale University  
Sarah Arbuthnot Lendt, Indiana University Bloomington, HBW  
Hoyt Long, University of Chicago  
Allison Levy, Brown University Digital Publications  
Irma McClaurin, Independent Scholar  
Erin Murray, University of Kansas, HBW  
Meleah Perez, University of Kansas, HBW  
Sarah Potvin, Texas A&M University  
Kenton Rambsy, Howard University  
Howard Rambsy, Southern Illinois University – Edwardsville  
Brian Rosenblum, University of Kansas  
Janet Swatscheno, HathiTrust Research Center  
Toniesha Taylor, Texas Southern University  
Dhanashree Thorat, Mississippi State University  
Carolina Villarroel, University of Houston, US Latino Digital Humanities Center  
Erin Wolfe, University of Kansas

## Partnerships

University of Kansas Libraries

HathiTrust Research Center

Detroit Public Library

Institute for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Kansas

African American Studies Publishing Without Walls II (AFRO PWW II)

Textual Optics Lab, University of Chicago

## Project Origins and Goals

Black authors and their contributions have been marginalized in mainstream literary canons, leading to an incomplete understanding of their impact on literary traditions and cultural history. This exclusion becomes notably more pronounced in digitally accessible sources and, as a result, digital scholarship. This lack of representation and availability not only limits scholarly research but also hinders broader access to these works by educators, students, and the public.

The History of Black Writing (HBW) is an interactive research center designed to expose students, instructors, and audiences to literature by Black authors and facilitate its study. HBW actively works, through a wide variety of public-facing events and programs, to amplify the importance of Black literature. It is HBW's mission, with these efforts, to build a collaborative research community where participants engage in dialogue about the history of Black books and the future of their recovery and preservation.

The Black Book Interactive Project (BBIP) is a digital component of HBW that endeavors to increase the number of Black-authored texts widely accessible for scholarly engagement and teaching. Launched in 2019, the BBIP Scholars Program offered two tracks for scholar-participants: Introduction to Digital Humanities (IDH) and Digital Publishing (DP). Both programs responded to the ongoing absence of digitally accessible sources for under-resourced and marginalized textual communities by providing support and models for projects exploring African American historical and literary studies. Leveraging human expertise, digital technologies, and innovative research, the BBIP Scholars Programs were designed to positively impact the vitality and sustainability of the humanities by sponsoring scholar-participants' research inquiries. The programs reflected HBW's goals for academic excellence and social responsibility as well as exemplified those practices that are highly regarded in the humanities, including interdisciplinary collaboration, ongoing exploration and identification of historically excluded and understudied materials, use of empirical evidence to challenge long held assumptions, and public engagement in promoting human understanding. Webinars were a key component of both fully virtual training programs.

HBW began utilizing webinars as part of its post-NEH Summer Institute programming in 2013, as it sought new ways of sharing knowledge with a wider public. Additionally, webinars were a way to feature speakers whose cost, whether due to their travel needs and/or required honoraria, would have been prohibitive for an in-person event.

## Project Activities, Team, and Participants

Three external funding sources supported the creation of webinars as part of the BBIP Scholars Programs:

- American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) (7/2018-9/2020) – 6 webinars
- NEH Humanities Collections and Reference Resources (HCRR) (7/2021-6/2023) – 6 webinars
- NEH Office of Digital Humanities (DHAG) (1/2022-12/2024) – 8 webinars

Funding supported honoraria for the DH scholar(s) and/or practitioner(s) who designed and led each webinar, salary for the HBW staff who coordinated the respective scholars programs, and hourly wages for students who edited the recorded webinars.

## Team

The team included HBW Founding Director Maryemma Graham and her successor, HBW Director Ayesha K. Hardison. The BBIP Scholars Programs and the respective webinars associated with each were coordinated by:

- ACLS – Sarah Arbuthnot Lendt, HBW Research Project Manager
- NEH HCRR – Meleah Perez, BBIP Scholars Program Coordinator (graduate student)
- NEH DHAG – Erin Murray, BBIP Scholars Program Coordinator (graduate student)

## Activities

To identify webinar topics, the team worked together to consider what subjects had been covered in previous webinars in conjunction with the attendees' evaluations; gaps in the BBIP Scholars Program training materials; feedback and requests from current scholar-participants about topics on which they desired to learn; leading work in DH; and more. The team also spent time exploring various digital publication journals, recent presentations and talks at conferences and events, and leveraged professional connections for emerging and recommended professionals in the field who might be interested in showcasing their work. This process required research on potential speakers' resumes and areas of

expertise, meticulous note keeping, intentional relationship building, and an ability to align HBW's mission and values with the professional work of potential presenters and their topics of interest. While it was important to organize webinars focused on topics directly connected to the work of the BBIP scholar-participants, the team also designed webinars to expand scholar-participants' perspectives and promote a multi-disciplinary, interdisciplinary approach to DH by highlighting other relevant topics.

Webinars were live, synchronous events for current BBIP Scholars. They were hosted and recorded via Zoom by the respective BBIP Scholars Program Coordinator. After the webinar, the recording was edited by HBW student staff who added opening and closing title sequences; cut out gaps, technical issues, and/or cohort-specific administrative content; and added and edited captions for increased accessibility. The videos were then shared broadly with the public on the BBIP website, as well as HBW's YouTube channel.

## Webinar Leaders

Jamene Brooks-Kieffer, University of Kansas

Arnab Chakraborty, Fairfield University

Sara Cohen, University of Michigan Press

Ryan Dubnicek, HathiTrust Research Center

Kaylen Dwyer, Tufts University

Amy Earhart, Texas A&M University

Kim Gallon, Brown University

Kaiama Glover, Yale University

Maryemma Graham, University of Kansas, HBW

Hoyt Long, University of Chicago

Allison Levy, Brown University Digital Publications

Irma McClaurin, Independent Scholar

Sarah Potvin, Texas A&M University

Kenton Rambsy, Howard University

Howard Rambsy, Southern Illinois University – Edwardsville

Brian Rosenblum, University of Kansas

Janet Swatscheno, HathiTrust Research Center

Toniesha Taylor, Texas Southern University

Dhanashree Thorat, Mississippi State University

Carolina Villarroel, University of Houston, US Latino Digital Humanities Center

Erin Wolfe, University of Kansas

## Project Outcomes

Since the launch of the first BBIP Scholars Program in 2019, HBW has created 20 webinars focused on a wide variety of DH topics. Webinar audiences included BBIP Scholars Program cohorts and advisors as well as other scholars, students, and members of the public interested in DH. Additionally, members of new program cohorts were encouraged to watch all of the previously recorded webinars. In 2024, HBW endeavored to update the older webinar recordings to bring them in line with more recent offerings by revising the opening and closing title sequences to reflect new HBW branding and changes in leaders' institutional affiliations. At this time, staff also added and edited captions to make the videos more accessible.

## Webinar List

### “Introduction to HBW Corpus and PhiloLogic User Interface”

- Presented by Hoyt Long, Textual Optics Lab, University of Chicago, and Arnab Chakraborty, Fairfield University
- Recorded February 5, 2019
- BBIP Introduction to Digital Humanities Scholars Program
- Funded by ACLS
- [https://youtu.be/3vv3DS2JZMM?si=X\\_4J1SxB9Bb3LWcz](https://youtu.be/3vv3DS2JZMM?si=X_4J1SxB9Bb3LWcz)

### “DH, Digital Archives, and Social Justice”

- Presented by Dhanashree Thorat, Mississippi State University, and Maryemma Graham, University of Kansas
- Recorded March 22, 2019
- BBIP Introduction to Digital Humanities Scholars Program
- Funded by ACLS
- <https://youtu.be/RZHV3ad81HQ?si=--RJnRb-MEoHKdIU>

### “100 Novels Project: Origins of BBIP”

- Presented by Kenton Ramsby, Howard University, and Howard Ramsby, Southern Illinois University – Edwardsville
- Recorded April 13, 2019
- BBIP Introduction to Digital Humanities Scholars Program
- Funded by ACLS
- <https://youtu.be/72ZddIK6Wfo?si=UN4IY7ofdGyfrgrN>

#### “Better Practices in Data Management”

- Presented by Erin Wolfe and Jamene Brooks-Kieffer, University of Kansas
- Recorded June 14, 2019
- BBIP Introduction to Digital Humanities Scholars Program
- Funded by ACLS
- <https://youtu.be/1DhPWQsMeYY?si=f8b85Qav-LkDoknX>

#### “DH, Technological Recovery and the Black Literary Tradition”

- Presented by Kim Gallon, Brown University
- Recorded August 9, 2019
- BBIP Introduction to Digital Humanities Scholars Program
- Funded by ACLS
- [https://youtu.be/n8UY4\\_b6Rxy?si=kYOdAsMM7uuq5qs2](https://youtu.be/n8UY4_b6Rxy?si=kYOdAsMM7uuq5qs2)

#### “Digital Humanities: Methods, Intersections, and Applications”

- Presented by Amy Earhart, Texas A&M University, and Kenton Ramsby, Howard University
- Recorded March 20, 2020
- BBIP Introduction to Digital Humanities Scholars Program
- Funded by ACLS
- [https://youtu.be/uqg4PLiw8Sc?si=QOfOMRcqKh8S\\_eIF](https://youtu.be/uqg4PLiw8Sc?si=QOfOMRcqKh8S_eIF)

#### “Digital Humanities: Introductory Concepts and Examples”

- Presented by Brian Rosenblum, Institute for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Kansas
- Recorded April 29, 2022
- BBIP Introduction to Digital Humanities Scholars Program
- Funded by NEH HCRR
- [https://youtu.be/HbPH\\_GXVGU4?si=3LQ7WQampScklost](https://youtu.be/HbPH_GXVGU4?si=3LQ7WQampScklost)

#### “Introduction to Text Analysis and Name Entity Recognition with the HBW Corpus”

- Presented by Kaylen Dwyer, Tufts University
- Recorded August 19, 2022
- BBIP Introduction to Digital Humanities Scholars Program
- Funded by NEH HCRR
- <https://youtu.be/dWx5GfcBLx8?si=FFDYyVBelbMbJdfy>

#### “Introduction to Metadata and Dataset Creation”

- Presented by Erin Wolfe, University of Kansas
- Recorded November 7, 2022
- BBIP Introduction to Digital Humanities Scholars Program
- Funded by NEH HCRR
- <https://youtu.be/neE8m58snNQ?si=Wo1Ru27PQemWqzn1>

#### “Introduction to the HathiTrust Research Center and Extracted Features”

- Presented by Ryan Dubnicsek and Janet Swatscheno, HathiTrust Research Center
- Recorded November 11, 2022
- BBIP Digital Publishing Scholars Program
- Funded by NEH DHAG
- <https://youtu.be/MOlfqeQL8pl?si=jofD-5oB1YNUysVb>

#### “Metadata Q&A”

- Presented by Erin Wolfe, University of Kansas
- Recorded March 30, 2023
- BBIP Digital Publishing Scholars Program
- Funded by NEH DHAG
- <https://youtu.be/OZqjVUUmPmc?si=unNUMrApXHILF1Lc>

#### “Black Collection Building Praxis and Black Digital Publishing”

- Presented by Kim Gallon, Brown University
- Recorded April 12, 2023
- BBIP Digital Publishing Scholars Program
- Funded by NEH DHAG
- <https://youtu.be/-uKDLuEzoRU?si=XaxroU6LERrb30MO>

#### “Things to Consider When Launching a DH Project”

- Presented by Amy Earhart, Texas A&M University
- Recorded April 28, 2023
- BBIP Introduction to Digital Humanities Scholars Program
- Funded by NEH HCRR
- [https://youtu.be/QWfXl8ty0Wo?si=vFiCTGeC8HHRf\\_8](https://youtu.be/QWfXl8ty0Wo?si=vFiCTGeC8HHRf_8)

### “Latina/o/x Digital Archives: The Communal and Transgenerational Process of Cultural Archiving”

- Presented by Carolina Villarroel, University of Houston, US Latino Digital Humanities Center
- Recorded August 25, 2023
- BBIP Introduction to Digital Humanities Scholars Program
- Funded by NEH HCRR
- <https://youtu.be/GudvIHkrQQw?si=p6HLJ5d9Tj3GmxWo>

### “Why a Black Feminist Archive? Part I”

- Presented by Irma McClaurin, Independent Scholar
- Recorded August 26, 2023
- BBIP Digital Publishing Scholars Program
- Funded by NEH DHAG
- <https://youtu.be/6ZNs9hZe7dM?si=F8AKaDPK8A1-TGhN>

### “Preserving + Sustaining Digital Humanities Projects”

- Presented by Sarah Potvin, Texas A&M University
- Recorded September 29, 2023
- BBIP Introduction to Digital Humanities Scholars Program
- Funded by NEH HCRR
- [https://youtu.be/NeJEQ82XU5E?si=RjF2sOrj7KJ\\_i5\\_7](https://youtu.be/NeJEQ82XU5E?si=RjF2sOrj7KJ_i5_7)

### “Public Humanities and Community Engagement: The Millican Massacre and Residual Violences”

- Presented by Toniesha Taylor, Texas Southern University, and Amy Earhart, Texas A&M University
- Recorded November 4, 2023
- BBIP Digital Publishing Scholars Program
- Funded by NEH DHAG
- <https://youtu.be/Ujymbx4axm8?si=xPcLgos815P1-HTF>

### “Peer Review, Copyediting, and Tenure”

- Presented by Sara Cohen, University of Michigan Press, and Allison Levy, Brown University Digital Publications
- Recorded February 9, 2024
- BBIP Digital Publishing Scholars Program
- Funded by NEH DHAG
- <https://youtu.be/y2mHBiZtKRk?si=VHUwj2XlKxrNqZe6>

### “Why a Black Feminist Archive? Part II”

- Presented by Irma McClaurin, Independent Scholar
- Recorded March 12, 2024
- BBIP Digital Publishing Scholars Program
- Funded by NEH DHAG
- <https://youtu.be/xDyAIEZ8kbs?si=Nwe2OX42ZnRhp49D>

### “Francophone Epistemologies: Caribbean Digital Praxis”

- Presented by Kaiama Glover, Yale University
- Recorded October 19, 2024
- BBIP Digital Publishing Scholars Program
- Funded by NEH DHAG
- <https://youtu.be/rvayt14cPks?si=zt8mJYz4CmDv4JOK>

## Training and Professionalization Opportunities for Students

Work on the webinars provided the opportunity for DH training, professionalization, leadership, outreach, public speaking, video and text editing, and other technical skills to HBW undergraduate and graduate student staff. University of Kansas (KU) students who worked on webinars included graduate student Coordinators Meleah Perez and Erin Murray, undergraduate students John Cardaronella and Izze Vanlandingham, and student employees of KU’s Open Language Resource Center. Murray also contributed to the writing of this white paper.

## Project Evaluation, Impact, and Continuation

The BBIP webinars were evaluated primarily by staff observations of the program’s scholar-participant engagement. Additional insight was gained from the responses shared by the Introduction to DH cohorts in their critical reflection essays, a program requirement that asked scholar-participants to reflect on their project progress and lessons learned at the program conclusion. While the scholar-participants were not asked to explicitly reflect on the webinars, several mentioned them and those responses are included below:

- “Participation in webinars facilitated engagement with cohort members and deepened understanding of digital humanities and the value of Black authored texts.”
- “I gained invaluable knowledge about digital humanities through webinars, providing a broad overview of the field.”

- "When I came into BBIP Intro to DH, I was not settled on a specific project idea, so I took the first few months of the program to delve into all the resources provided to us, most especially the archived webinars and workshops from previous cohorts."
- "Inspired by webinars and workshops, particularly on data visualization using Tableau, I developed my DH project on the lynching of Black women in America."
- "Entering the program as a DH novice, I benefited significantly from the curated resources, webinars, and mentorship, which expanded my knowledge and refined my research approach."

No constructive or actionable feedback was shared in response to the webinars that were offered.

While HBW's 2024 efforts to update and improve previously organized webinar videos were undoubtedly helpful in terms of increasing their accessibility, taking down the older versions and replacing them with enhanced videos resulted in the loss of analytic data on these earlier iterations, particularly regarding user data. HBW, however, will monitor user analytics of its "on demand" suite of webinars hereafter. These webinar recordings are intended to be a resource for BBIP Scholars as well as a broad public into the future.

In 2024, HBW moved from the University of Kansas to Indiana University Bloomington with Director Ayesha Hardison. This relocation and institutional transition require a pause on seeking additional funding for new BBIP Scholar Program cohorts, during which the HBW team will brainstorm and plan for the future of the BBIP Scholars Program and the accompanying webinars.