

**University of Florida's Languages, Literatures and Cultures and the George A. Smathers Libraries receive \$240,804 National Endowment for the Humanities grant award**  
*Online resource will create an Archive of Haitian Religion and Culture*

Gainesville, FL, August 10, 2012 – University of Florida and Duke University researchers and librarians have spearheaded a collaborative partnership project which has been awarded \$240,804 from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). This is the second largest award in Florida (and one of only 5 major grants awarded in the state) and one of 244 nationally this year. The *Archive of Haitian Religion and Culture: Collaborative Research and Scholarship on Haiti and the Haitian Diaspora* grant, led by project director Benjamin Hebblethwaite (UF) and co-director Laurent Dubois (Duke) will improve the understanding of a central Haitian and Haitian-American spiritual tradition, the Vodou religion, by gathering the audiovisual and textual sources of communities, interpreting the collected materials, expanding the holdings through a self-submission tool, and diffusing the knowledge via an open access digital library hosted within the existing Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC; [www.dloc.com](http://www.dloc.com)).

The *Archive of Haitian Religion and Culture: Collaborative Research and Scholarship on Haiti and the Haitian Diaspora* project is part of a tradition of scholarly work stretching back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that has sought to counter reductionist and racist visions of Vodou religion through ethnography, analysis of culture and music, and an exploration of the role of religion in Haiti's founding revolution (1791-1803). Such work has long turned to the central texts of worship which are Haitian Creole language songs. This three-year project will create a freely accessible multimedia digital library that uses audiovisual technologies to curate, elucidate and facilitate the advanced search of the rich primary materials of a central Haitian and Haitian-American spiritual tradition in order to promote discovery and educate a broad public.

Partnering with the researchers are the UF George A. Smathers Libraries, which are the technical hosts for Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC), and the dLOC as a whole. In addition to dLOC's 29 international partners, which includes Duke University, the *Archive of Haitian Religion and Culture* includes collaboration from researchers at the University of Notre Dame, the Schrijversvakschool in the Netherlands, the Université des Antilles et de la Guyane, and City Lore, among others.

In support of the grant, Marilyn Graf of the Archives of Traditional Music at Indiana University wrote: "The availability of this large body of work in a single location will dramatically improve access to these rare materials, a likely benefit to scholars in the fields of religion, ethnomusicology, history, anthropology, linguistics, and African Diaspora studies." Albert Valdman, Rudy Professor Emeritus of French & Italian and Linguistics and the Director of the Creole Institute at Indiana University, added: "Ben Hebblethwaite directs by far the largest program in Haitian Studies in the United States, with a major emphasis on the teaching of the culture and language of Haiti, including to second generation members of the Haitian diaspora."

Ben Hebblethwaite works as an Assistant Professor in Haitian Creole in the Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures (LLC), which includes faculty with expertise in over twenty cultural, linguistic, and literary traditions. LLC is a Department in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the largest of UF's 16 colleges and home to more than 14,000 students spread

among 42 majors and minors. Laurent Dubois works as a Professor of French Studies and History at Duke University and has published extensively on Haiti.

The Center for the Humanities & the Public Sphere ([www.humanities.ufl.edu](http://www.humanities.ufl.edu)) within the UF College of Liberal Arts & Sciences supported development of this project proposal through its Spring 2011 “Grant Proposal Development and Review Opportunity”. The UF College of Liberal Arts & Sciences also supported development of this project with a 2011 Humanities Scholarship Enhancement grant to Professor Benjamin Hebblethwaite for scholarship on Vodou religion and culture.

The *Archive of Haitian Religion and Culture* materials and digital library will be hosted by the Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC). dLOC is supported by the George A. Smathers Libraries at UF, which is the technical host for dLOC, and both the largest public and academic library in the state of Florida. The functionalities and features of dLOC and the *Archive of Haitian Religion and Culture* are supported using the University of Florida-developed SobekCM software (<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/sobekcm>).

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*The National Endowment for the Humanities: Collaborative Research*