

Contact person: Diane DeCesare Ross, Project Director/Digitization Librarian
Phone: 601-266-6493
Email: diane.ross@usm.edu

Press Release

The federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) has funded a \$463,322 National Leadership Grant for Libraries for the *Mississippi Digital Library Program*, Mississippi's first attempt to establish a collaborative digital library program. The University of Southern Mississippi Libraries will direct the grant, which is a partnership between USM, Delta State University, Jackson State University, Tougaloo College, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, and the University of Mississippi. The project will create research quality digital collections of letters, diaries, photographs, state and organizational records, oral histories, and other primary sources that provide first-hand documentation of the African-American civil rights movement. The result will be the world's largest online educational resource on this topic. In addition, efforts to provide access to electronic finding aids will provide comprehensive intellectual control for Mississippi's civil rights collections for the first time.

Through IMLS support of the Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive project in 2001, USM was able to construct a model for resolving intellectual property and privacy issues of 20th century materials not in the public domain, materials that have traditionally been avoided in prior digitization projects across the nation. The current grant will allow the intellectual property and privacy model to be further tested, and it will also provide leadership in this cutting edge field by creating an alternative model for statewide digital collaboration. In doing so, the project provides an opportunity to form lasting partnerships that pave the way to a financially sustainable digital library for Mississippi which could be applied to other subject areas and include other cultural institutions.

The Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive can be accessed online at <http://www.lib.usm.edu/~spcol/crda/index.html>. In addition, all digital materials are accessible and fully searchable through the library catalog (ANNA) by clicking on the Digital Media Archive button in the navigation bar. For more information on USM Libraries' digitization program, access the website at <http://www.lib.usm.edu/~spcol/digi/>.