



## Building *In Her Own Right*

White Paper

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*A PACSCL-sponsored project*

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# Introduction

The Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCL) received a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Humanities Collections and Reference Resources (HCRR) Implementation grant to digitize thirty linear feet of materials from thirty-one collections in twelve of its member institutions and two additional repositories documenting the history of women's civil rights and expose that and additional content on the web. The two-year grant, beginning in May 2019, was designed to ensure that a significant portion of the material would be online in the months surrounding the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the Nineteenth amendment: August 18, 2020. Additionally, collection-level records for any material not digitized by that time served as signposts for researchers seeking more timely access.

That project built on the successes of a one-year NEH Foundations grant (July 2016-June 2017), designed to identify and disseminate information about collections in Philadelphia-area archives documenting women working for their own and other's rights, 1820-1920. The content, provided on a pilot website (<http://inherownright.org/>), served as a resource for students and teachers as the nation began to look to the 100th anniversary of woman suffrage in 2020. By the time the Foundations grant ended, the site included selections from ten collections in seven institutions, centering around three themes: work and friendship across racial lines; philanthropy or self-determination in the Progressive-era city; and medical women confronting race, professionalism, and respectability.

PACSCL requested additional NEH funding to digitize more content from its member institutions and other institutions as well as to support outreach to find, digitize, and describe additional collections, particularly those documenting underrepresented populations. In Her Own Right also expanded its user audiences from high school students and undergraduates to include graduate students and scholars, by enhancing the website to include additional tools and resources supporting research use. This enabled the team to realize more fully an original core concept of the project: to provide both "retail" access (mediated content with contextualizing supporting materials) and "wholesale" access (unmediated raw material—both digitized content and metadata—for a range of future research and digital scholarship projects).

The core of project work was digitizing and describing manuscript and some printed materials, held in area institutions, irrespective of the geographic focus of the collection itself. The digitized material is served up through a robust web presence that provides access to well-described digital items; the capacity to download and manipulate the descriptive data to generate new scholarly products; and other resources that will serve students and scholars studying not only women's work leading up to the 1920 vote for woman suffrage, but countless other topics as well. The long narrative of women making incremental progress toward equality and opportunity continues to be relevant, and PACSCL is confident that this diverse material will

be of use to researchers and a general audience well after the 19th Amendment anniversary has passed.

To extend project work to document the conversations across race and class that the team began to reflect on during the Foundations grant, the Implementation proposal also budgeted time and staff to find, digitize, and describe additional collections documenting underrepresented populations. Initial research identified a number of potentially rich collections for inclusion that illuminated a broad range of activism among many groups of women. These included some groups that are underrepresented in the traditional historical narrative of women's campaign for voting and other civil rights, but the project team also hoped to find even more collections relating to these underrepresented populations and recognized that doing so would require significant outreach beyond PACSCL members. Using PACSCL's tested methodology from two Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) Hidden Collections grants<sup>1</sup> and PACSCL institution staff members trained in its process, the project team worked with small repositories in the area that lacked access tools or staff to identify "hidden voices."

This white paper, while highlighting the NEH Implementation phase of the project, also looks across 2016 to 2021, and outlines successes, challenges, learnings, and opportunities for continued project growth.

## Successes

The implementation project succeeded in meeting and exceeding the content deliverables promised in the grant proposal. The goal was to digitize 45,000 frames, and the final count came in at more than 55,000. Thirty new collections descriptions were promised, and thirty-three were delivered. Of these, the project team aimed to include collection descriptions from up to five "hidden voices" repositories: repositories, especially small repositories, not members of the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCL) and not included in the original proposal but pursued for the likelihood of their containing documentation of women from underrepresented communities. This "hidden voices" initiative was a major project component and is elaborated in greater detail in the [Hidden Voices](#) section below, but in short, the project secured seven collections descriptions from three such repositories. The project also committed to locating digital item records digitized by PACSCL members and associates prior to the beginning of this project and aggregating them on the site. In Her Own Right was ultimately able to partner with a total of five institutions to aggregate their relevant content. More information about the contributions of these participants is in the [Including Non-PACSCL members](#) section below; see Appendices for [Project overview by the numbers](#), [Statistics](#), and [Project Participants](#).

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<sup>1</sup> PACSCL received a CLIR grant for the second phase of the In Her Own Right project, 2018-2020; and the Bibliotheca Philadelphiensis Project, 2016-2019.

The project also succeeded in achieving its goals for the application and the website. An enhanced interface providing automated harvesting, more robust search and discovery functions, and the capacity for multi-user access for editorial and data enhancement launched in October 2020 (see [Project Platform](#) section below and an appendix on [End of project user testing](#)). The application code is publicly available on [GitHub](#). Textual content additions to the website included three [primary source sets](#) and nearly forty exhibits and biographical profiles, many highlighting women underrepresented in traditional history, such as [incarcerated women](#) and [Black women](#).

The project supported repositories in the creation of rich metadata and resulting faceting functionality. The “Women in Medicine” subject facet directs users to materials from eight different institutions and over twenty different collections, and a keyword search for “African American Women” returns over 350 related records.

With a multi-institutional portal, success is greater than the sum of the parts. Bringing together related materials across institutions is not only a convenience; it creates opportunities for researchers to discover new connections. One example is reconstructing the world of Sarah Mapps Douglass (1806-1882), part of a prominent activist family in Philadelphia’s free Black community in the 19th century. Few of her writings remain, but a selection lives at Haverford College Quakers & Special Collections, and it was digitized for the pilot phase of In Her Own Right. Douglass was a founding member of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society—whose records, at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, are also part of the project. Mapps Douglass was the first Black student at the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania, and records from the time of her enrollment were added to the database by Drexel. Her drawings also appear in a series of interrelated African American female friendship albums, some held at the Library Company of Philadelphia and some at Howard, and all included in the In Her Own Right database.

The project team committed to promoting and publicizing In Her Own Right to scholars and other user groups, as described in the [Outreach](#) section below. The centerpiece of this effort was the In Her Own Right symposium, held virtually on March 18-19, 2021; keynote speaker Martha S. Jones focused on Sarah Mapps Douglass (see [Symposium](#) section which includes significant content from the event). The Principal Investigators (PIs) also worked with pre-service social studies teachers to create primary source sets and lesson plans (see [Teacher Resources](#) section).

## Challenges

The In Her Own Right team faced a variety of challenges over the final NEH-funded period (2019-2021): the COVID-19 pandemic, staff turnover, unexpected delays at the technical vendor, unexpected delays or lack of capacity at partner institutions, uncertainties around capacities and commitments at “hidden voices” partner institutions, and the departure of the original NEH

project manager, to name the most impactful. These caused target dates and some interim goals to shift over the course of the grant period. The team submitted two no-cost extension requests, one in February 2021 and one in August 2021, and were grateful to have both approved by NEH, pushing the end date from April 30, 2021, to November 30, 2021. Both extensions enabled the project to reallocate some funds to extend the project manager's term, recognizing that, due to COVID-imposed closures and staffing cutbacks, many partner institutions were unable to allocate as much staff time as they initially planned, and that the project manager would be able to pick up some of that slack.

By the end of November 2021, the project had accomplished all key project goals, despite the challenges faced along the way. Difficulties posed by COVID-19, the [Aggregation model](#), [Staffing turnover](#), and [Incorporating enhanced metadata](#) are explicated below.

## COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact in several areas of the project, primarily in delaying completion of digitization. Some participating repositories were unable to complete in-house digitization until after lockdown was lifted. Others sent records to vendors, and then had to wait months to receive the digitized copies. Still others functioned with staggered staffing that extended beyond the original deadlines for the project. The project team is grateful for NEH's flexibility around budget and timing.

The pandemic also required adjustment of the "hidden voices" component. The plan had been to identify and work with small, non-PACSCL-member repositories in person. Instead, outreach consisted mainly of email and phone or Zoom communications with targeted repositories and community members. Some of the repositories originally identified for participation, minimally staffed prior to the pandemic, were unable to respond or participate; some entered into discussions but were ultimately not able to work with the project team. This resulted in less richness of content but also in a list of potential future content which other projects can build upon.

If a silver lining can be found, it is that staff members working for home in some cases were able to dedicate more time to metadata work than they otherwise would have. The In Her Own Right team always planned to hold a metadata enhancement event, but due to the exceptional attendance at a late March 2020 event, the team built on this success with a series of office hours throughout the spring and summer of 2020 (see [Expanding Capacity](#) section below).

# Outreach

## Symposium

In March 2021, In Her Own Right held a two-day symposium focusing on topics related to In Her Own Right content or women's history, 1820-1920.<sup>2</sup> Martha S. Jones, a prominent historian on Johns Hopkins faculty who studies Black women's impacts on American democracy, was featured as keynote speaker. The symposium hosted a wide-ranging variety of speakers including tenured history faculty, undergraduates, digital humanists, archivists and librarians, independent scholars, and community historians. The [conference schedule](#) is preserved on the In Her Own Right website, and links to session recordings on [YouTube](#). The most popular sessions attracted nearly 100 attendees; the symposium drew more than 750 session-views. Of the fifty-eight attendees who completed a post-event survey form, approximately a third self-identified as archivists and approximately a quarter self-identified as academics. The remaining attendees (slightly less than half of the total) described themselves with terms such as: retiree, museum professional, K-12 teacher, public humanities scholar, socially-engaged art curator, and more. Their comments included the following:

- “Wonderful conference that illustrated how complicated history is and that thoughtfully explored the complex views and actions of historic actors.”
- “This conference was inspiring on multiple levels. I was inspired by the sessions, the presenters, the organizers, and the women's stories covered in the sessions. It was such a great celebration of women—past and present. I hope it becomes an annual event.”
- “I went to the Antislavery Women session. It was valuable to me because I am currently teaching [this] era to my students & I gained a lot of information & perspectives that I can now present to my diverse students.” [Four responses mentioned plans to use the In Her Own Right website for future classes.]

## Conferences

The In Her Own Right team presented about the project at a variety of conferences and outreach events hosted by other organizations, some held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These included: the Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting (summer 2019), Archives Month Philly (October 2019), Pennsylvania Archives Seminar (October 2019), Schlesinger Library panel (October 2019), Historical Society of Pennsylvania event (October 2020), Free Library of

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<sup>2</sup> The NEH budget did not include any funds for the symposium, but In Her Own Right received support from several of project participants and some local sponsors: Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCL), Friends Historical Association, Drexel University College of Medicine Legacy Center, Drexel University Lenfest Center for Cultural Partnerships, Temple University Libraries, Swarthmore College Libraries, Bryn Mawr College Libraries, and the Barbara Bates Center for the Study of the History of Nursing.

Philadelphia event (May 2021), Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (spring 2021), Conference of Quaker Historians and Archivists (June 2021), and Keystone DH [digital humanities conference] (July 2021).

These presentations were tailored to share different aspects of the project with their varied audiences. Presentations for general audiences, such as those at the Archives Month Philly Archives Fair and Free Library of Philadelphia “Making Her Mark” program, focused on the history of the early women’s rights movement. Presentations for scholarly audiences, such as those at the Conference of Quaker Historians and Archivists, demonstrated how to access and use the website and resources. Presentations for audiences of allied professionals, such as the Society of American Archivists and Keystone Digital Humanities, both shared methodologies and sought feedback on future aspects of the project, with Keystone DH focused on datasets and “Activist Women’s Archives as Data.”

## Teacher resources

As part of a concerted effort to create teacher resources, in Fall 2020 the three home institutions of In Her Own Right’s co-PIs (Drexel University College of Medicine Legacy Center, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, and Temple University Libraries Special Collections Research Center) all hosted Cultural Fieldwork Initiative fieldworkers from Temple University’s College of Education, to create primary source sets and lessons plans using primary sources from In Her Own Right. The Initiative matches pre-service history teachers with cultural institutions as part of their teacher education program to expose them to ways to integrate primary sources into their teaching and to create resources that can be used for National History Day and other educational projects at the institutions.<sup>3</sup> Due to COVID, the program needed to move to a virtual option, with digitized sources providing the only access to the students. Several students produced sets which the In Her Own Right project team edited and added to the [Classroom Resources section](#).

Anecdotally, the project team has several examples of In Her Own Right being used successfully in high school classrooms due to a targeted partnership. As an example, when the COVID-19 pandemic caused classes to go virtual in March 2020, Virginia-based teacher Robin Landes reached out to her sister, Jordan Landes, Curator at the Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College.<sup>4</sup> Friends Historical Library staff attended virtual class sessions and shared online resources for Robin Landes (and, later, a second teacher at her school) during spring

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<sup>3</sup> For more about the CFI program, see Timothy Patterson, “Historians, Archivists, and Museum Educators as Teacher Educators: Mentoring Preservice History Teachers at Cultural Institutes,” *Journal of Teacher Education*, January-February 2021 (Vol. 72, Issue 1) 72(1): 113-125, DOI: 10.1177/0022487120920251.

<sup>4</sup> For more about the origins of this partnership in spring 2020, including a mention of In Her Own Right (footnote 19), see Celia Caust-Ellenbogen, Jordan Landes, and Robin Landes, “DBQ: Document-based Quarantine,” *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage*, Vol 22, No 1 (2021): 16-24, <https://doi.org/10.5860/rbm.22.1.16>.



2020, the 2020-2021 school year, and the 2021-2022 school year. In Her Own Right was a featured resource each year, with students expressing positive sentiments about the website and utilizing it for research projects.

## Project platform

### Overview

The system developed for In Her Own Right uses multiple components to serve a wide variety of users. Built over multiple production and grant periods, from inception the basic objectives were to harvest metadata records from participants, provide centralized discovery, and redirect users to the originating repository for full exploration. Given the consortial nature of the project, the team envisioned a modular, portable system that on completion could be transferred from the developer's custody to PACSCL for maintenance.

Based on these objectives, specific system objectives were developed over time, resulting in these essential requirements: aggregate data from participants' digital repositories utilizing only project team effort; provide a discovery portal for end-users; support interpretive content that could be built and edited by the project team; provide an API endpoint for access to metadata records; and maintain the system for a minimum of five years beyond the grant-funded period. The project succeeded in meeting most of these objectives, with some significant challenges.

### Development team

The In Her Own Right system was originally planned by the project team and members of the technology committee, with input from many PACSCL-member developers and technical staff. Neomind Labs, Inc developed the system, with significant support from the In Her Own Right project team and project staff (see [Project Participants appendix](#) for a full list). Neomind was engaged in the pilot phase of the project, and they continued to develop the system over subsequent phases.

### Cost

The development costs for the system totaled \$109,200 in grant funds from four grants over the five-year period, covering the development of the entire system, from the database to the front-end features. This figure does not include the significant time invested by project staff and team members to manage the development, from defining requirements to troubleshooting data and system issues. Over the five-year period, project staff worked the full-time equivalent of thirty-two months, with an estimate of 20% to 25% of their time spent managing technological development.

The projected annual cost to maintain the system for the next five years is approximately \$4,100 including storage and application maintenance and troubleshooting. PACSCL's annual budget will support the maintenance, with storage costs offset through Amazon's Nonprofit Credit Program.

## Front end website

The website supports discovery of digital records, exploration of exhibit and contextual content, and access to the raw metadata through the application programming interface (API). Like the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) and similar aggregators, the site is a platform for discovering content, serving metadata records and a single image for each record, and directing users to the originating repository to explore entire digital objects. Additionally, the front end provides administrative access to run harvests for ingesting content and to troubleshoot that process. User testing in the starting pilot phase informed site development across the subsequent phases.

The initial website hosted records and images along with broad contextual essays addressing women's activism. Usability testing with high school students indicated a need for better site navigation and a strong interest in more context, and the inclusion of biographical profiles in particular. These results follow broad trends in the use of primary source documents.

The project team endeavored to expand interpretive content, despite the reality that no funds were budgeted to support these efforts. Ultimately the team relied on project participants and the project team to create this content, resulting in multiple exhibits, biographical profiles, and primary source sets from a variety of authors. The team originally created a project blog, separate from the content discovery portal at [inherownright.org](http://inherownright.org), that included writings about historical topics as well as project activity. The blog posts focusing on history content were converted to exhibits and biographical profiles on the discovery portal. Because students were identified as a target audience for this project, several participants worked with pre-service teachers to develop primary source sets, as described in the [Teacher Resources](#) section above.

After nearly five years of beta use of the website, growth in database content and the anticipated growth of interpretive content culminated in a website redesign to enhance user experience, launched in October 2020. Objectives included clearer communication about the purpose of the site, a front-page redesign to feature content and access points, creation of guided content for inexperienced users, and improvements to overall navigation.

The redesigned site features include: guides to the content by collection, subject, and contributing institution; search tips; and a proliferation of access points for the contextual content ("[Exhibits](#)" and "[Biographical Profiles](#)"). Two new resources were added to provide curated access points to content related to underrepresented perspectives and voices: the "[Addressing Historical Inequities](#)" essay and "[Inclusive Archives Resource Guide](#)." A new section, "[For Teachers and Students](#)," includes primary source sets and suggestions for getting started.

Additional access points were built through the subject guide and location maps. The [subject guide](#) is a visualization for browsing subject terms, helping users drill down from topics to more

specific search terms and find connections that may not be apparent through searching or browsing records. Geo-referenced locations can be accessed through an aggregated [map](#) visualization, used as a search facet, or provide context at the record level.

Having added a large amount of interpretive content to the website, the project team grappled with the problem of how to ensure that inexperienced researchers would easily find this context side-by-side with the primary sources. The team pursued two main strategies for addressing this need. One (pragmatic) solution was to create metadata records for the “interpretive content” items (exhibits, biographical profiles, etc.), in the same format as primary source objects. This way, they can be searched from the website-wide search bar and would appear in the same results screen. For instance, [a search for "African American women"](#) surfaces collection descriptions, exhibits and biographical profiles, and item-level records. The second strategy was creating the “[Inclusive Archives Resource Guide](#)” and “[Browse by Contributor](#)” guide to place contextual resources side-by-side with digitized content.

Because another target audience is digital humanists, the website also offers "wholesale" access to project content by making all project data openly available via [API endpoint](#) and includes resources for direct use, including a selection of suggested [tools with which to explore the data](#).

Taken together, the website redesign and creation of additional content and scaffolding aim to ensure maximum usability of the rich content created over all phases of the project. The success of the redesigned site and added content is reflected in end-of-project user testing results (see [User Feedback](#) section below for more on this).

## Technology stack

The system is a Ruby on Rails application backed by a Postgres database, with a Blacklight discovery layer, Solr index and two Blacklight plugins, Spotlight and Blacklight Maps. Components are dockerized to optimize sustainable deployment and maintenance, and the code is maintained in a [GitHub repository](#). Images are stored and processed on AWS S3 storage.

Spotlight is designed to work with Blacklight for easy creation of exhibits using database content. The team needed a means to edit site content directly, and Spotlight also addressed that issue. All the site content is built in Spotlight except the subject guide visualization (which utilizes the open source InfoVis Toolkit) and the search pages.

Blacklight Maps, drawing on Blacklight database content, provides a single aggregated map to access records by their location metadata as well as geographical display at the record level when location metadata is available.

## Aggregation

Throughout the In Her Own Right project, individual repositories digitized and described their materials according to project standards and added records to their digital collection systems. Project participants without digital collection databases were offered several options for delivering their content. (For more on digital content management adoption, see the [Systems for delivering content](#) section below.) Metadata records were harvested utilizing the Open Archives Initiative-Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH) or ingested via a templated comma-delimited (CSV) file. These two approaches to aggregation provided the means to ingest data regardless of the participants' system or capabilities. Roughly two-thirds of project participants were able to utilize OAI.

Participating repositories manually upload a single representative digital file for each metadata record to the project's AWS S3 storage. The system processes the image files to a standard size and matches files with records for display.

Once participant records and image files are prepared, each harvest requires effort from the developer and a project team member to re-index the data and quality-check the ingested records and images.

Collection-level records are ingested by another CSV template and are presented and searchable alongside the digital object records.

## Aggregation model and sustainability

While the aggregation model is among the project's greatest strengths, the interdependence of the database and the participants' digital repository infrastructures also requires ongoing monitoring and resources, particularly in the case of records harvested via OAI. The TriCollege Consortium institutions (Swarthmore, Haverford, and Bryn Mawr) jointly migrated to a new system in 2021, transitioning to a different metadata format and schema. On the In Her Own Right side, the OAI calls needed to be re-mapped, and all records re-ingested, proving to be a significant and unanticipated outlay of time for both the technical vendor Neomind and the project manager. Several participating repositories are anticipating future upgrades and migrations within five years of the official end of support for the In Her Own Right project, and this will require additional re-mapping and re-ingesting. PACSCL formed a Technology Sustainability Working Group in 2021 to begin to establish procedures and a budget for the

ongoing maintenance and sustainability of PACSCL projects, with In Her Own Right serving as one of its first test cases.

## Metadata

See [Documentation section of Appendix](#) for links to *Metadata and Digitization Guidelines and Standards*.

The group's metadata goals were ambitious, and not all were fulfilled. At core was a dual mission to support basic discovery through search and browse, as well as API access to the raw data. The team also needed to keep a constant eye on audiences, usability, standardization, and flexibility in reflecting partner processes. Initial practice for the project metadata was to ingest all the available metadata, normalize essential elements (e.g., dates), and save all metadata versions. Over the course of the project, metadata practices became tighter, while the step of saving all metadata versions was needfully abandoned. Other goals were to lay the groundwork for standardizing regional geographic terms, to implement Encoded Archival Context for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families (EAC-CPF), and to support page-level metadata where available. We were successful in aggregating and supporting participants' use of geographic terms but were unable to work on page-level metadata or on EAC-CPF despite some initial investigations towards this goal (and Social Networks and Archival Context (SNAC) Project (SNAC)) by the In Her Own Right intern.

Metadata guidelines were designed to support the best possible discovery while accommodating individual repositories' practices and systems. The guidelines required a minimum number of fields while recommending richer metadata and commenting on each field's value for discovery. In the pilot phase the team experimented with liberal metadata practices and faced an undesirable outcome: one objective was to offer rich data for mining, but due to the minimal description, the In Her Own Right prototype did not have enough metadata to warrant showing examples of data use. This was a critical point in the planning process and influenced metadata practices in subsequent phases.

Unlike the pilot phase, the implementation phase included reimbursement for description, creating the opportunity for more robust description from participants, although there was still variation as to which of the recommended fields were regularly populated. Another major point of variation was the level at which the repository described an "item." The guidelines did not dictate the scope of a digital object, allowing repositories discretion in defining the "item" for description as individual items (e.g., a single letter) or entire folders.

With the inclusion of a maps feature in the system, participants were encouraged to add geographic terms and coordinates, on their own and via a metadata enhancement event (more

on these events under [Contributing to PACSCL Capacity](#) section below). At least one repository incorporated geographic terms into their routine cataloging workflow for the first time, improving access to records through location and descriptive context. The data is heavy with Philadelphia locations, creating a Philadelphia-centric map, but much of the data is granular enough to show specific neighborhoods, street corners, or addresses.

The project metadata guidelines required at least one subject term and recommended assigning three terms. This practice resulted in a rich set of terms supporting robust searching and the subject guide visualization.

Incorporating full text transcriptions in the system was an ongoing challenge. The value for discovery is clear; however, differences between the practices of originating repositories and the In Her Own Right system structure made it difficult to ingest and display full text for entire digital objects. Many participating repositories store full text at the page level, or in a means not harvestable by OAI, so full text had to be added via a description field in a CSV ingest which occurred separately from the OAI crawl of object-level metadata. The full text is indexed and displayed; while displayed text is useful for reading, it can also overwhelm the record display. Ultimately, transcripts were not reliably captured in In Her Own Right, although in some cases they are available to researchers who click through to the originating repository.

## **Incorporating enhanced metadata**

In Her Own Right held a series of crowd-sourced metadata enhancement events (see [Contributing to PACSCL Capacity](#) below) that generated new descriptive metadata and textual transcriptions. The addition of subjects, geographic terms, and names to the records promised improved discovery and greater use. The enhanced data was created in spreadsheets, outside any system, with the intention of providing the data to the originating repository for addition to their database and subsequent harvest to the In Her Own Right database. This workflow was crucial both for logistical reasons and to keep the originating repository as the metadata source of record. However, despite initial commitments to ingest the updated metadata, some institutions were ultimately unable to add the enhanced data. While the crowdsourcing was intended to save labor for the institutions, some institutions had concerns about the quality of the metadata but lacked the staff bandwidth to review the submissions. Some institutions without the capacity to update metadata in bulk determined that the effort to individually update records wouldn't be worthwhile or didn't expect to be able to add the metadata for some time.

## **Data sets**

In Her Own Right provides access to the full set of metadata records, and project team members and participants created additional, more specialized datasets for targeted use.

These sets support the project's "wholesale" data objectives, and the datasets provide data to work with and examples of how raw data can be used.

**The full In Her Own Right dataset** is all the metadata records in the system, both item level and collection level, and can be accessed via the site's API endpoint. (See the metadata guidelines in the [Documentation appendix](#) or the site itself for all metadata fields included.) Some records have transcriptions which will be included in a full download. The site includes basic instructions for using the Open Archives Initiative - Protocol for Metadata Harvest (OAI-PMH) to harvest single records or the entire dataset. [Access on the In Her Own Right site via the API endpoint](#), or available in tabular format for download as a .tsv/.csv file for ease of use on the website and [on GitHub](#).

**The Martha Schofield correspondence dataset** is a subset of the full data drawing on a specific collection and provides the means for network analysis based on correspondents. The dataset consists of over 800 records with data including correspondents, dates, locations, subject terms, and some transcriptions. [Access on the In Her Own Right site](#).

**The Rosine Association dataset** consists of data transcribed from [two Rosine Association casebooks](#), providing biographies of women assisted by the Rosine Association, "a house for the reformation, employment and instruction of women, who had led immoral lives," between 1848 and 1858. Dataset and transcripts prepared by the [Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College](#). Access the [Rosine dataset on Swarthmore's Github](#) site.

## User feedback

In Her Own Right defined the target audience for this project ambitiously, ranging from high schooler to scholar to digital humanist, making it important to consider user experience throughout the project. The team conducted two structured user studies to inform technical development and grant proposal writing and to assess overall objectives: one at the close of the initial pilot project phase in 2017, and a second at the end of the final grant-funded phase in late 2021.

At the end of the pilot phase, the system and site supported search and browse of 4,323 digital image files. The 2017 assessment observed high school students' exploration of site-based tasks and showed the high value this audience placed on content interpretation, including biographical sketches of the women represented in the documents. These results were an important factor in the final phase grant proposal to NEH.

Final project testing focused on assessing project objectives, primarily the ease of accessing content and the value of features and tools. Responses from scholars, educators, and students provided a clear snapshot of the project's strengths and pointed to a few areas for



improvement. While the project team expected any issues revealed in the testing would be part of future initiatives, it was possible to implement some changes immediately based on this feedback, increasing interpretive content, and improving the visibility of under-represented voices.

The most significant outcome of the final testing illustrated a dichotomy: users agreed on the value of the site's rich content, but testing showed the abundant content was likely to overwhelm some users and more navigational pointers would be beneficial. The exhibits, essays, and biographical profiles were consistently regarded as some of the most valuable components of the site, and all of the test respondents found the essay on "[Addressing Historical Inequities](#)" to be insightful and helpful for using archives and considering the historical record (whether for their own use, or teachers speaking on their students' behalf). The [subject guide visualization](#) was consulted frequently in the testing, with mixed success. Users valued a subject guide, but most found this form confusing to use and unsatisfying in their searches. This feedback is crucial to future system modifications.

The project team did not include digital humanities users in the testing audiences, and the API and raw data access aspects of the system were not formally tested. Informal feedback was solicited during the 2021 Keystone DH conference session, where comments reflected the value of linked data and of increasing under-represented voices, and an interest in sharing data with students. Participants also commented on the limits of who is represented in the data and noted that the database has few non-English language records.

For more details, see [Appendix D: End of project user testing](#).

## Collaboration

### Aggregation beyond the In Her Own Right system

#### Schlesinger Library

Portions of In Her Own Right content will be aggregated by the Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America's "[Long 19th Amendment](#)" portal, which brings together archival collections that shed light on the history of the women's suffrage movement and the broader history of gender and voting rights in the United States and in places that are or have been under U.S. colonial control. The portal's collections database ingests metadata from archival collections at repositories around the country, making them searchable through a single



destination. After review of the finalized In Her Own Right dataset, Schlesinger staff will harvest data via its API endpoint and credit the In Her Own Right project on the Long 19th Amendment's [Information about the Collections search](#) page.

## **Digital Public Library of America**

In devising the metadata guidelines for In Her Own Right (see [Appendix E: Documentation](#)), the Project Team and Technical Advisory Committee were careful to comply with the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA)'s standards, so that any content generated through the project would be DPLA-ready. Several participating institutions who are already members of regional DPLA hubs (PA Digital, NJ/DE Digital Collective, etc.) have had their material included in the hub sites and in the DPLA. The metadata guidelines and exposure requirements from In Her Own Right should set other institutions up to pursue involvement in the future.

## **Expanding content**

### **Institutions already participating in In Her Own Right**

In addition to completing image and metadata creation for the collections specified in the proposal, some project participants went beyond their NEH-reimbursable work to digitize and describe additional documents not originally included in the proposal, expanding the breadth of the content to provide additional value to users. In addition to their NEH-reimbursable work digitizing and describing full collections, participants also selected, scanned, and cataloged individual items, such as photographs, that are not part of a reimbursed collection but enhance the value of the "virtual complete collection." Institutions were also able to contribute certain collections that were not in the proposal using other funding streams. See the [Statistics](#) appendix below for more detail on these contributions.

### **Adding participants to the project**

Beyond the material digitized for the project, In Her Own Right also aggregated existing digital content from six institutions: Bryn Mawr College, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Library Company of Philadelphia, the National Archives at Philadelphia, the State Archives of Pennsylvania (for Eastern State Penitentiary), Princeton University Libraries, and Port Washington Public Library. This aggregated material provides access to African American women's history, immigrant women's history, and the history of women in the criminal justice system and incarcerated women. See the [Project Participants](#) appendix below for a list of all participants.

# Expanding capacity in Philadelphia-area repositories

## Systems for delivering content

All project contributors were required to host their digital content so that the aggregated record could link back to the originating, full digital object. However, not all participants had existing systems for sharing digital content, and the project team worked to find solutions. As a result of these efforts, several institutions found sustainable solutions to hosting their content, ranging from internal opportunities to free or paid subscription services.

The Bates Center for the History of Nursing, at the University of Pennsylvania, initially hosted their project content in static pages on their website. In subsequent project phases, they collaborated within the institution to share content in OPenn, a system hosted by the University of Pennsylvania's Kislak Center for Special Collections.

The United Lutheran Seminary, Chester County History Center (including Chester County Archives & Record Services), and Germantown Historical Society joined the POWER Library to gain access to their [PA Photos & Documents system](#). PA Photos & Documents is a state-wide service offering Pennsylvania nonprofits the opportunity to create digital collections in a shared digital repository, with available product support and training, for a low annual subscription cost.

Following a solution in use by another PACSCL collaborative digital project, the Alice Paul Institute and the African American Museum in Philadelphia used Internet Archive as a no-cost platform to host their content.

Adoption of these new systems allows these institutions to provide greater public access to their materials, as well as to participate in future digitization projects, both independent and collaborative.

## Including non-PACSCL members

The NEH Implementation grant included two non-PACSCL member institutions which had been identified as having relevant content and expressed interest and ability to be included in the grant: Alice Paul Institute and Chester County History Center (including Chester County Archives & Record Services).

In addition, the "hidden voices" portion of the project anticipated the participation of other non-PACSCL members. The project defined "hidden voices" repositories as small institutions which

might be under the radar for traditional researchers, but which contained stories of marginalized people often left out of dominant narratives. The aims in developing these partnerships were threefold: to bring funding and services to under-resourced institutions; to increase the diversity and representation of materials in the In Her Own Right collection; and to nurture long-lasting relationships between PACSCL and community institutions beyond the parameters of this specific project. This resulted in partnerships with three non-PACSCL members to digitize materials and post them online for the first time: the African American Museum in Philadelphia, the Germantown Historical Society, and the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University Libraries.

Additionally, aggregation of already-digitized materials from two additional non-PACSCL institutions enhanced collection content: the State Archives of Pennsylvania (for Eastern State Penitentiary) and Port Washington Public Library.

### **Contributing to PACSCL capacity**

Over the course of the NEH grant period, the In Her Own Right project has contributed to [PACSCL's mission](#) of fostering a community of practice for special collections libraries in the region in several key ways. First, various metadata training opportunities introduced the PACSCL community to best practices in all phases of the digitization process and practical solutions to meet project standards: from the “bootcamp” training session for project participants, to requiring use of project standards at participating institutions through quality control and feedback, and training of various local librarians and archivists, including those not contributing content to In Her Own Right. The project made a special effort to promote metadata standards consistent with the Digital Public Library of America’s requirements. Therefore, in addition to the In Her Own Right project data being DPLA-ready, contributing institutions are now trained to produce content to DPLA standards.

In late March 2020, In Her Own Right held a virtual “metadata enhancement event” which offered interested librarians, archivists, and members of the general public training in best practices for metadata entry and transcription in exchange for their assistance enhancing In Her Own Right data. Event attendees included staff from the project’s partner institutions, many members of the PACSCL community at large, and project team members. Its success encouraged the project team to keep the momentum going with periodic “metadata office hours.” Nearly 100 people—a combination of library professionals and members of the general public—opted into a mailing list to learn about these events. At the events, the project manager offered additional training, answers to metadata questions as they occurred, and the opportunity to continue working on metadata enhancement in fellowship with colleagues. Over the rest of spring and summer 2020, while many archivists were working remotely or not at all due to the COVID-19 pandemic, In Her Own Right provided opportunities for archivists to skill up, stay busy, and contribute to In Her Own Right’s mission of sharing women’s history. The project

team hosted a total of five metadata enhancement events, including one in partnership with the Louisiana Digital Library.

In Her Own Right project experience and discussions have also contributed to PACSCL's work toward sustainability of all its consortial grant projects. Most notably, several project team members serve on PACSCL's Technology Sustainability Working Group, formed in summer 2021, and are contributing significantly to that work.

## **Building the next generation of archivists and metadata specialists**

PACSCL grant projects have traditionally hired and trained graduate students and new professionals, enabling them to move on to permanent positions. In Her Own Right is a prime example of this. Both In Her Own Right project manager Kat Antonelli and Drexel College of Medicine Legacy Center project archivist Sabrina Bocanegra were hired into permanent positions at the American Philosophical Society. The Bryn Mawr College project technician, Casey Shiflet, moved to a permanent technician position at Temple University Libraries. And staff at other institutions, particularly the Chester County History Center, expressed that they felt the project increased their knowledge level in ways that their usual duties could not have.

## **Staffing turnover**

The In Her Own Right project lasted over five years with five grants, so it is no surprise that it experienced staffing turnover in nearly every role. While this posed challenges at times, in other situations this turnover seemed to generate fresh energy and force the project to develop resilient operations. See appendix: [Project Participants](#) for a list of steering committee members.

Beginning at the top, the project team experienced significant turnover. While the Principal Investigator (Margery Sly) and one co-Principal Investigator (Margaret Graham) remained in place through all phases of the project, they were joined by three different co-PIs at different times. This caused the project team to develop excellent record-keeping practices, with a thorough meeting log, to share the history of the project with incoming PIs.

In mid-2020, the project experienced what might otherwise have been a significant speed bump when the original project manager, Kat Antonelli, left for another job. However, because the NEH and CLIR phases of the project overlapped, when Kat transitioned from her CLIR project archivist role to her NEH project manager role, she served alongside Lindsay Van Tine as the concluding CLIR project archivist (August 2019 to March 2020). When Kat left the project in October 2020, Lindsay was ready to hit the ground running when she was hired as successor in the NEH project manager position.

A series of different developers were assigned to the In Her Own Right project over the years due to staffing turnover at the technical vendor, Neomind Labs. Some of these transitions caused setbacks, as new staff were brought up to speed on the project and code. One transition, however, stands out in a positive light, as In Her Own Right was matched with a highly competent and attentive coder for a large period midway through the project, and her contributions significantly improved production. High turnover rates appear to be a universal issue in the tech world and one that future project teams need to take into account.

Lastly, the staffing turnover at In Her Own Right's contributing institutions bears mentioning. While it is always bittersweet to lose staff with tremendous institutional memory, the project also benefited tremendously from the hiring of new staff members at the Chester County Historical Society, who brought new energy and enthusiasm to the project, moving their contributions forward at warp speed. For their part, the new CCHS staff shared that, in the face of trying to get oriented to overwhelming new positions, they were grateful to be able to focus on completing a structured, well-defined project.

Past participant staff members cheerfully volunteered to help chair or present at the In Her Own Right Symposium in March 2021 and remain an incredible talent pool which can be drawn on for future events and needs.

## “Hidden Voices”

### Finding archival sources on historically marginalized women

It is well understood by modern archivists and scholars that people who are educated and in power—often rich, white, men—create the most records, and their records are most likely to end up in traditional archives. As the past recedes, it is increasingly difficult to identify robust documentation for rich, white women, much less Black, Indigenous, and women of color; women with disabilities; religious minority women; immigrant women; incarcerated or institutionalized women; and intersex, trans, and gender non-conforming people.

From the beginning, the In Her Own Right team recognized the benefit of looking beyond traditional archives. Because many archival institutions historically ignored or exploited the archival records of marginalized people in the past, these communities today may be hesitant to donate their precious documents to traditional archives and may instead prefer to keep them in private hands or community organizations. Therefore, one component of the NEH Implementation grant was reaching out to “hidden voices” repositories: non-PACSCSCL members pursued for the likelihood of their containing documentation of women from underrepresented communities. The project team was careful in framing the deliverables from this endeavor, in

order to keep the focus on supporting each archives' own goals rather than prioritizing project goals. Repositories decided for themselves whether they would benefit most from cash to digitize on their own, would prefer the convenience of having a PACSCL partner perform digitization for them, or would rather supply a collection description while opting out of digitization. Advice was available on a range of topics, depending on individual repositories needs, including metadata standards and digital content management systems selection. Through the infrastructure of PACSCL, In Her Own Right aimed to nurture long-term, sustained relationships. Several project PIs had worked with "hidden voices" repositories on different projects at different times and often in different jobs. The intent is to continue these dynamics in the future rather than pursuing one-off, extractive encounters.

Despite optimistic expectations and outreach to non-traditional repositories, In Her Own Right did not uncover any large caches of previously unknown 1820-1920 women's materials. Instead, informal project advisors and the formal Advisory Committee counseled the project team to look for fragments to highlight, and to learn to read between the lines. Moreover, while the project scope was activist women, advisors encouraged the team to adopt an expansive definition of "activist." For BIWOC, disabled women, queer women, and others who have so often been erased from public space and from history, often simply existing and being visible to future generations can be seen as a form of activism.

The project employed a number of strategies to help compensate for the low representation of historically marginalized women. One was to write an [Inclusive Archives Research Guide](#) specifically to highlight and direct researchers to these sources. Another was to create exhibits and biographical profiles that would not only draw attention to sources in the portal but would also scaffold them in context even where it wasn't available through the portal. In some cases, collection descriptions were added to point to relevant, even though it wasn't possible to digitize them during the project.

## "Hidden Voices" repository contacts

The application for the NEH Implementation grant proposed to pursue at least five historically black churches, universities, or other "hidden voices" institutions. During the grant, the two project managers were in touch with close to thirty possible sources of materials: some of which didn't have content or were unable to determine if they had content, some due to routine staff limitations and many closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. (See above under [Challenges](#) and [Finding archival sources on historically marginalized women.](#))

The project team had concrete discussions with six institutions, three of which ultimately provide content:

- Germantown Historical Society: Digitization of 1350 frames from four small collections, and creation of four collection descriptions. These materials provide documentation of deaf people, Black women, and new immigrants.
- African American Museum of Philadelphia: Digitization of 186 frames from one collection documenting charitable support for members, and creation of one collection description.
- Moorland-Spangarn Research Center at Howard University Libraries: Digitization of the Mary Virginia Wood Forten friendship album (62 frames), which complements the three albums from the Library Company of Philadelphia already accessible in *In Her Own Right*, and creation of two collection descriptions, including one for the already-digitized Anna Julia Cooper papers.

Despite preliminary conversations with staff at Elwyn (founded in 1852 to serve individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities) and extensive conversations with staff at Lincoln University and Cheyney University (two historically Black universities), *In Her Own Right* was ultimately unable to complete digitization or collection descriptions with them. At Elwyn, this was due to limited staff capacity after the retirement of the long-time staff member who had served as informal "archivist." In the case of Lincoln University, extensive and productive conversations with two staff members over the course of several months, and a tentative commitment for participation, ultimately concluded because they did not have the staff capacity to participate, in part because of COVID. Likewise, Cheyney University confronted staffing issues and a lack of clarity over the status and content of the collection of interest, which is housed at Penn State–University Park.

Even where "hidden voices" outreach did not bear fruit during the *In Her Own Right* project, each contact serves as groundwork towards PACSCL's long-term goal of building relationships with archival repositories of all sizes throughout the region. Most significantly, PACSCL's relationship with Cheyney has evolved meaningfully since preliminary conversations about *In Her Own Right*. In January 2022, PACSCL representatives began informally advising Cheyney on the management of their library and archival collections.

## Future opportunities

At the project's wrap-up celebration in late September 2021, the project team solicited input from participant representatives about where they would like to see the project go next. In addition, the project team has had tentative discussions of additional projects that would extend and enhance *In Her Own Right* and continue to use the existing robust platform to grow and expand. The project team hopes, as well, that other aggregation projects might adopt this model, and use it to expose other content to users.

The group considered the possibilities of expanding time and geographic scope. There are a range of opportunities that future projects could explore. An obvious area for expansion would

be to look at a national or at least broader range of repositories, to consider geographic similarities or differences. Expanding the timeframe of 1820-1920 by a few more decades would complete or extend some stories that were cut off abruptly and arbitrarily. In addition, it would build on the history of women's activism and do more to address changing and shifting identities across time.

One example of the identity issue, addressed in a parallel project, is the [Rosine dataset](#) created by Swarthmore College. Rosine Association casebooks give biographies of women assisted by the Rosine Association, "a house for the reformation, employment and instruction of women, who had led immoral lives," between 1848 and 1858. A typical entry discusses the woman's place of birth, her family situation, her life in brief, and her contact with the association. To make the casebooks more accessible to researchers, Swarthmore staff flagged the entries based on their content, but included excerpted quotes as responses rather than applying a binary "yes/no." (For example, rather than asking, "Was the woman a sexworker?" the dataset asks, "Does the entry include terms indicating sex work? Excerpt them here.")

The project team has identified additional regional content for digitization, aggregation, or addition of collection descriptions from PACSCL members, including the Presbyterian Historical Society and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, as well as other "hidden voices" institutions.

The team is also interested in expanding use of project metadata to include more expansive and accurate descriptive data around women. These could include using the collections and metadata for a Social Networks and Archival Context (SNAC) or Encoded Archival Context for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families (EAC-CPF) project, providing even more added value due to the consortial and collaborative approach of the project.

K-12 teachers would benefit from more teacher resources, particularly ready-to-use lesson plans and pointers to specific primary sources or source sets.

The project team plans to meet within the next year to review content additions and look at possible next phases. They will continue to meet regularly during the next three to five years to sustain the site. PACSCL has committed funding to sustain the site, renewable annually.



# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Project overview by the numbers

- **\$879,525** total funding in 5 grants, 2016-2021
- **24** partner institutions
- **201,499** frames digitized
- **13,169** items digitized
- **121** collection descriptions
- **39** exhibits, biographical profiles, & primary source sets
- **287** symposium participants
- **100+** volunteers at metadata enhancement events
- **206 individual** project contributors including staff employed by repositories

## Appendix B: Statistics

In total, project participants digitized 41,300 frames (as high-resolution TIFFs with derivative display images and thumbnails) for which they were reimbursed from NEH funds. This includes 1,598 frames for the “hidden voices” initiative (see the [“Hidden Voices”](#) section above). Institutions scanned an additional 14,156 frames of material, relevant to project goals, for which they were not reimbursed, for a grand total of 55,456 frames. This “value added” material includes pages from collections identified for the project (accounting for underestimates in page estimates, or adding, for example, pre-1820 and post-1920 documents, or material from other series not proposed for scanning) and some new content (for example, documents scattered across various collections that relate to the women and organizations featured in this project).

During the NEH Implementation grant period, In Her Own Right participants created 2,986 item-level metadata records, plus 147 item-level records for the “hidden voices” initiative, for a total of 3,133 item-level records.

In collaboration with repositories, the In Her Own Right project team created and added thirty-three new collection-level records. This includes seven collection descriptions from “hidden voices” partner repositories, five of which had materials digitized and added to the In Her Own Right site. An additional three collection descriptions are for collections at PACSCL institutions, which were not digitized because they were outside of the scope of the original proposal. These descriptions were written to highlight “hidden voices” materials about marginalized women: collections held at an existing partner institution (Historical Society of Pennsylvania) as well as the State Archives of Pennsylvania.

The project also aggregated already-digitized materials from six institutions: PACSCL members State Archives of Pennsylvania (providing access to Eastern State Penitentiary records), Princeton University, the National Archives at Philadelphia, Presbyterian Historical Society, and the Library Company of Philadelphia; and non-member Port Washington Public Library in New York.

### Frame and record counts for the NEH phase

Per the NEH grant proposal, institutions planned to digitize a certain number of frames, budgeted for reimbursement at a per-frame rate with NEH funds (“reimbursable”). Many institutions chose to digitize additional materials—sometimes as much as doubling their frame count—knowing they would not be reimbursed for these pages (“additional”). See the [Expanding Content](#) section above for a more detailed explanation.

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Frames scanned during NEH phase</b>	<b>Records created during NEH phase</b>
Alice Paul Institute	73	34
Athenaeum	630 reimbursable + 252 additional	209
Catholic Historical Research Center	150 reimbursable + 1,440 additional	89
Chester County History Center	6,532	101
College of Physicians	150 reimbursable + 174 additional	4
DUCOM	6,375 reimbursable + 2,998 additional	128
Haverford	3,645	674
Historical Society of Pennsylvania	5,850 reimbursable + 549 additional	410
Presbyterian Historical Society	2,370 reimbursable + 3,144 additional	84
Swarthmore College (Friends Historical Library and Peace Collection)	4,650 reimbursable + 4,237 additional	891
Temple University	3,000	30
United Lutheran	6,157 reimbursable + 1,348 additional	331
Union League	120 reimbursable + 14 additional	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39,702</b> reimbursable <b>+ 14,156</b> additional <b>= 53,858</b> TOTAL	<b>2,986</b>
African American Museum in Philadelphia ("hidden voices")	186	106
Germantown Historical Society ("hidden voices")	1,350	40
Howard University ("hidden voices")	62	1
<b>TOTAL ("hidden voices")</b>	<b>1,598</b>	<b>147</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>41,300</b> reimbursable <b>+ 14,156</b> additional <b>= 55,456</b> TOTAL	<b>3,133</b>

# Appendix C: Project Participants

## Contributing Institutions

Institutions that were not members of the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries at the time of the project are identified with an asterisk\*. See the [Browse by Contributor](#) guide on the In Her Own Right website for a listing of institutional contributions.

- Included on the NEH grant proposal
  - Alice Paul Institute\*
  - The Athenaeum of Philadelphia
  - Catholic Historical Research Center of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia
  - Chester County History Center\*
  - College of Physicians of Philadelphia
  - Drexel University College of Medicine Legacy Center
  - Haverford College
  - Heritage Center of the Union League of Philadelphia
  - Historical Society of Pennsylvania
  - Presbyterian Historical Society
  - Swarthmore College Friends Historical Library
  - Temple University Libraries
  - United Lutheran Seminary
- Added during the NEH grant or included in earlier phases (digitized records with project funds, aggregated already-digitized records, and/or contributed collection descriptions)
  - African American Museum in Philadelphia\*
  - Chester County Archives and Record Services\*
  - Germantown Historical Society\*
  - Library Company of Philadelphia
  - Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University\*
  - National Archives at Philadelphia
  - State Archives of Pennsylvania (providing access to Eastern State Penitentiary records)\*
  - Princeton University\*
  - Port Washington Public Library\* (New York)
  - National Archives at Philadelphia\*
- Participated in earlier phases of the project
  - Barbara Bates Center for the Study of the History of Nursing, University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing
  - Bryn Mawr College
  - German Society of Pennsylvania
  - Swarthmore College Peace Collection

- University of Delaware

## **Steering Committee**

- Margery Sly, Temple University Libraries, Principal Investigator (All phases)
- Margaret Graham, Drexel University College of Medicine Legacy Center, co-Principal Investigator (All phases)
- Celia Caust-Ellenbogen, Swarthmore College, co-Principal Investigator (CLIR; NEH Implementation)
- Caroline Hayden, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, co-Principal Investigator (NEH Implementation)
- Heather Willever-Farr, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, co-Principal Investigator (NEH Foundations)
- Kathryn Antonelli, Project Manager (CLIR Project Archivist, 2018-2019; NEH Implementation Project Manager, 2019-2020)
- Lindsay Van Tine, Project Manager (CLIR Project Archivist, 2019-2020; NEH Implementation Project Manager, 2020-2022)
- Christina Larocco, Content Consultant (NEH Foundations)
- Sophie Basalone, Drexel iSchool intern (Spring-Summer 2021)
- Laura Blanchard, former PACSCL Director (retired 2020)
- Beth Lander, PACSCL Managing Director (2020-present)

## **Academic Advisory Board**

- Kathleen Brown, University of Pennsylvania (CLIR)
- Carol Faulkner, Syracuse University
- Kim Gallon, Purdue University
- Lori Ginzberg, Penn State University (CLIR)
- Nancy Hewitt, Rutgers University
- Allison Lange, Wentworth Institute of Technology
- Christina Larocco, Historical Society of Pennsylvania
- Lisa Levenstein, University of North Carolina
- Beverly Palmer, Pomona College
- Marion Roydhouse, Philadelphia University
- Lauren Santangelo, Princeton University
- Kathryn Kish Sklar, State University of New York/Binghamton

## **Technology Committee**

- Convenor: Margaret Graham, Drexel University (all phases)
- Laurie Allen, University of Pennsylvania (NEH Foundations)
- Kathryn Antonelli, In Her Own Right Project Manager (CLIR and NEH Implementation)
- Doreva Belfiore, Temple University (NEH Foundations)

- Celia Caust-Ellenbogen, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College (CLIR)
- Caroline Hayden, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (CLIR)
- Kate Lynch, University of Pennsylvania (NEH Foundations)
- Jaime Margalotti, University of Delaware (CLIR)
- Holly Mengel, University of Pennsylvania (NEH Foundations)
- Bayard Miller, American Philosophical Society (NEH Implementation)
- Emily Thaisrivongs, Haverford College (CLIR and NEH Implementation)
- Holly Tomren, Drexel University / Temple University (all phases)
- Heather Willever-Farr, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (NEH Foundations)
- S. L. Ziegler, American Philosophical Society (NEH Foundations)

## **Application Developer**

[Neomind Labs, LLC](#), Ryan Findley, Principal

## Appendix D: End of project user testing

In October and November of 2021, In Her Own Right conducted user testing focused on assessing the ease of accessing content and the value of features and tools, including search faceting and interpretive content (exhibits, essays, and biographic profiles). Using a scenario-based directive, input was received from scholars, teachers and pre-service educators, and students. Digital humanities users were not included in the testing audiences; hence the API and raw data access aspects of the system were not tested at this time. With testing focused on assessing project objectives, any results reflecting substantial improvements would be part of future initiatives. The most significant outcome illustrated a dichotomy: users agreed on the value of the site's rich content and found that the abundant content was likely to overwhelm younger users and would benefit from more navigational pointers.

Users appreciated the variety of content easily accessed on the front page, with some notes on how the order of the features or content might be improved. They browsed features and tools as well as used the keyword search function. In keyword searching, users valued the search tools, in particular faceting by subject and date range. The map feature was compelling for accessing content by location and understanding place; users also pointed out that the density of Pennsylvania and Philadelphia locations made it more difficult to use as an access point.

The exhibits, essays, and biographical profiles were consistently regarded as one of the most valuable components of the site. Users commented on the richness of the contextual content, the depth of the stories reflected in the content, and their value in helping understand and explore women's activism. Teachers found the content valuable and even necessary for student use of the site. Teachers also appreciated the primary source sets and suggested that an alignment with curriculum standards would make them even more useful. All test respondents found the essay on "Addressing Historical Inequities" to be insightful and helpful for using archives and considering the historical record, whether for their own use or on their students' behalf. Several users reflected that this essay should be more prominent.

The abundance of content in the In Her Own Right system proved to be a challenge as well as a benefit. Users were pleased to find content from multiple repositories, centralizing their search in this subject area. However, users frequently used the term "overwhelming" in describing the scale. Teachers and student users noted that the abundance of content required ample direction, and teachers felt assignments would require sufficient scaffolding. The primary source sets were helpful, but there are only a handful of them. The subject guide visualization was consulted frequently in the testing, with mixed success—it's clear that users valued a subject guide, but most found this form confusing to use and unsatisfying in their searches. This feedback is crucial to future system modifications, and the system would benefit from additional research into what approach would be most effective in lowering the bar to use and reducing or eliminating any sense of being overwhelmed.

In their direct use of digital content, teachers and students also wished for more transcription of handwritten documents, a feature well-known to be consistently desired, but which the In Her Own Right system does not adequately support.

Despite the project's focus on identifying and incorporating content of under-represented women, user testing revealed difficulty locating the content that exists in the database, and a desire for more content. This reflects the imbalance of the number of records of white women within the project and generally reflected in repositories nationally, and points to a need to make the records of women of color and other historically marginalized women more visible on the site itself.

Although unable to implement major changes in response to user feedback, the project team was able to make several adjustments to interpretive content and feature arrangement. The team added new exhibits reflecting the experience of Black women; boosted the visibility of two essays; and foregrounded the "Inclusive Archives Guide" on the main page, the exhibits page, and the "guides" page. The ambitious objective of reaching a wide range of users is reflected in the test results: the needs of scholars and students are different, and even within user groups user needs are idiosyncratic. The project succeeded in creating an abundance of well-described content with robust search support, yet the sheer abundance requires additional attention to be most accessible to the widest set of users.



## Appendix E: Documentation

- Application and workflow documentation
  - [Public view](#) (on GitHub with application) [<https://github.com/InHerOwnRight/InHerOwnRight-Application/wiki>]
  - [Public view - PDF](#) [<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bfQezmnbtCIBGygLUD06YvWCR1Cli-8U/view> ]
  - In Her Own Right project original requirements: “[Required Ideal State](#)”
- [Foundations grant project white paper](#) (pilot project)
- [Metadata guidelines](#)
- [Digital file specifications](#)
- [Data sets](#) (On GitHub)