

# Archives Across the Curriculum: Reflecting on Cross-Disciplinary Digital Editing Experiences at UNF

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## Introduction

This presentation considers how opportunities for student engagement with archives can cut across disciplinary areas and majors, providing formative experiences to diverse groups of students and contributing to the fulfillment of common learning objectives at the undergraduate level. The presenters include Susan Swiatosz, the head of Special Collections and University Archives at the University of North Florida (UNF); Clayton McCarl, a member of the academic faculty; and Janaya Ferrer, an undergraduate computer science major and 2023 Judith Beale Scholarship recipient. They reflect on the experiences of students and faculty who have collaborated on the ongoing project Editing the Eartha M.M. White Collection ([unfdhi.org/earthawhite](http://unfdhi.org/earthawhite)) and consider the larger curricular implications of that endeavor.

## Eartha M.M. White Collection

The Eartha M.M. White Collection at UNF contains papers, images, and other materials related to White (1876-1974), an African American businesswoman, philanthropist, and community leader in Jacksonville. The founding acquisition of UNF's Special Collections in the 1970s, White's papers remain the institution's most frequently consulted collection. They are essential sources for studying the life and work of a key figure in the history of North Florida, as well as for reconstructing the rich history of Jacksonville's African American communities in the early twentieth century.

## Digital Editing Pedagogy

Editing the Eartha M.M. White Collection is a pedagogically focused project that began in 2016 and since has engaged approximately 40 students, faculty, staff, and community members as archival researchers and digital editors. Collaborators transcribe documents from the Eartha M.M. White Collection and mark them up for online publication using TEI-XML, the international standard for digital textual encoding in the humanities. The workshops are held on campus and beyond and are organized and led by student leaders who receive academic credit through a digital humanities internship course.

## A Common Space

Editing the Eartha M.M. White Collection has attracted students from a wide range of academic disciplines, including the following:

Anthropology	English	Nursing
Art History	History	Psychology
Civil Engineering	Information Science	Public Relations
Communication	International Business	Sociology
Computer Science	Mathematics	Spanish

The project appeals to students from across the campus due to the opportunities it offers to work with archival materials, learn about local African American history, and contribute to processes of cultural heritage preservation and dissemination. Students outside the humanities, in particular, value the type of experiences it provides.



Instagram post by Janaya Ferrer

## Student Leadership

To engage such a diverse community of students, the project depends upon the abilities of student leaders to encourage the participation of their peers and create the student-centered space in which the workshops occur. Although faculty coordinate some aspects of Editing the Eartha M.M. White

Collection behind the scenes, the student leaders are the public face of the project. They visit classes, manage the social media, lead the workshops, and represent the project at on-campus, regional, and national conferences.

## Connecting to Undergraduate Learning Outcomes

The project's appeal across disciplinary boundaries suggests that hands-on work related to archives and digital editing can speak to the types of learning outcomes that are common to general education programs. The Pennsylvania State University, for instance, articulates a representative set: "effective communication," "key literacies," "critical and analytical thinking," "integrative thinking," "creative thinking," "global learning," and "social responsibility and ethical reasoning." The work that students do with Editing the Eartha M.M. White Collection connects with most or all of these, as well as outcomes related to diversity and experiential learning. Going forward, we are interested in how the project might position itself to play a larger role in the general preparation of undergraduates.

COME AND JOIN

## EDITING THE EARTHA M. M. WHITE COLLECTION

OPEN TEXTUAL EDITING WORKSHOPS

**ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS**  
Take part in a student-led collaborative textual editing project where participants can transcribe and prepare for online publication material from the Eartha M. M. White Collection, featuring documents and personal written materials relating to Eartha M. M. White, a local African American philanthropist and civil rights activist. No experience is required.

**SCAN TO REGISTER**

<http://bit.ly/3fHWh>  
**Digital Humanities Institute,**  
J.J. Daniel Hall, Building 1, Room 1300  
Tuesdays and Thursdays 4 - 6 p.m.  
Feb. 7, 9, 14, 16, 21, 28  
March 7, 21, 28, 30  
April 4, 11, 13, 18, 20

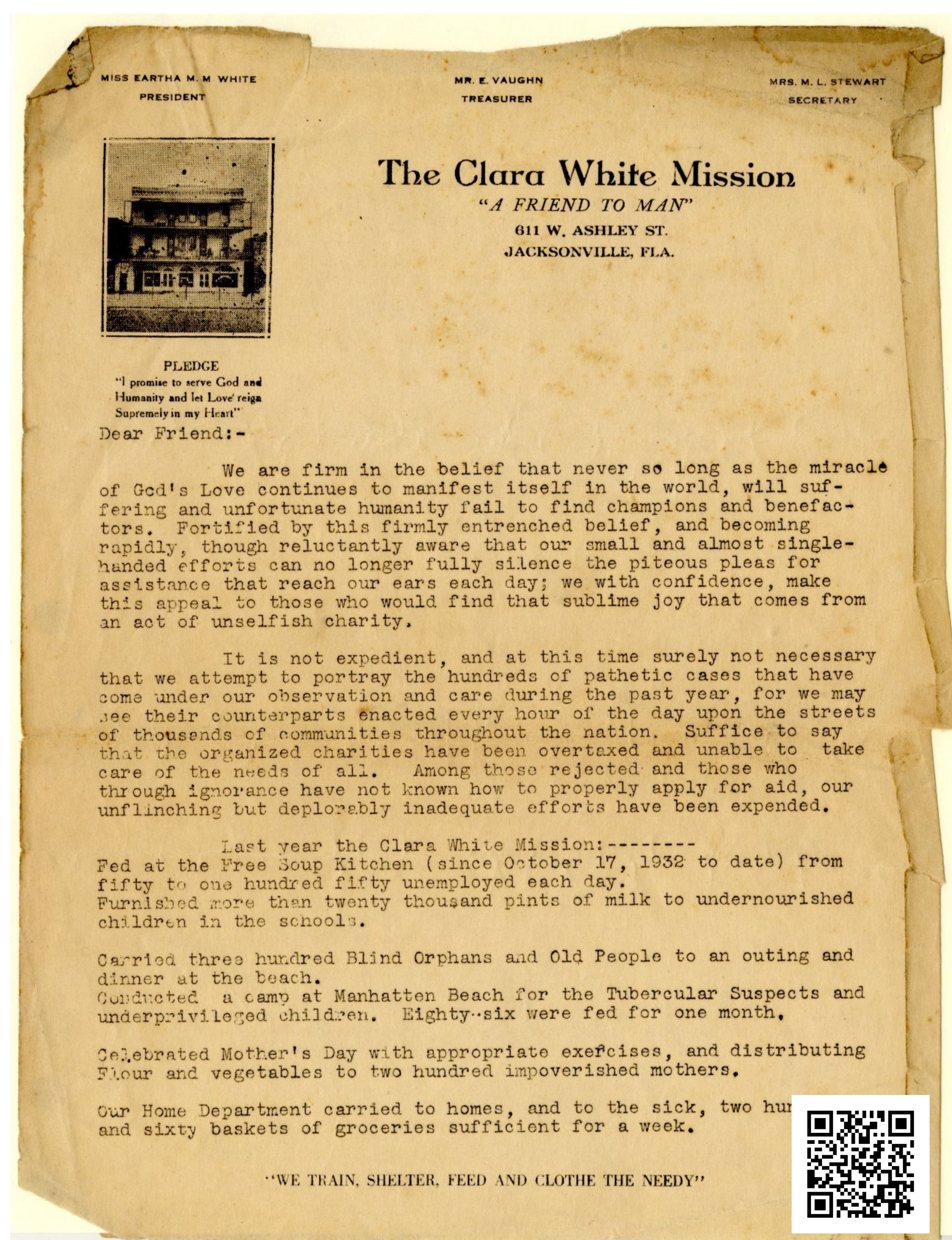
This project is sponsored by UNF Digital Humanities Institute.  
Images courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, Thomas G. Carpenter Library.

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Flier for the Spring 2023 open workshop series

## Conclusions

The Eartha M.M. White Collection serves as a point of contact for many different constituencies. It is a link between UNF and the community, and through Editing the Eartha M.M. White Collection, has become a way to bring together faculty and students from multiple areas. The project focuses on making White's papers available and accessible online, but also pursues pedagogical objectives, exploring digital editing as a tool for teaching and building community and positioning students as collaborators and leaders. The cross-disciplinary appeal of the project and the opportunities it creates for hands-on learning suggest it could be expanded to include larger student populations, potentially as part of general education or a first-year experience. We believe that Eartha M.M. White Collection highlights possibilities for meaningful collaboration between academic units and on-campus archives in creating dynamic curriculum that can benefit students in all parts of the university.



A Sample Document: "Letter from Clara White Mission, 1933"