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BRAIN¹, Black Research Archive on the Internet: Toward a research program for eBlack Studies

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Introduction

We are living at the beginning of a social revolution based on the revolutionary advances of information technologies. There are various models of historical periodization, but most are in agreement about this being a time of revolutionary change. There are some key theorists emerging whose work deserves close attention for their conceptual clarity and empirical measurement:

1. Jeremy Rifkin ²
2. Manuel Castells ³
3. Barry Wellman ⁴
4. Alvin and Heidi Toffler ⁵
5. Jim Davis et al

There are also institutional knowledge portals into this social revolution:

1. Media Union ⁶: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology is a leading center for technological and scientific research, and the Media Union is a center for information and new media work. However, MIT is home to major theorists who have other views. Nicholas Negroponte ⁷ leads the Media Union while Michael Dertouzos ⁸ leads the Department of Computer Science. This is an example of following the technological policy debate through an academic gateway.

2. Digital Divide ⁹: Under the last presidential administration a Black official (Larry Irving of the Department of Commerce) led the way in defining an entire stage of the fight for Black liberation struggle - the problem of the "digital divide." Now, under this administration a Black official (FCC Chairman Michael Powell, son of Secretary of State Colin Powell) is leading the fight to reverse this and de-legitimate the term as "that old class warfare ideology of the past."

¹ BRAIN stands for Black Research Archive on the Internet. This summation is dedicated to Mary Wrighten, librarian at Bowling Green State University, who challenged me to develop the BRAIN project proposal. Her criticism was additional motivation. Thank you.

3. Community Connector ¹⁰: There is a social impact and in turn people who organize to do something about it. The Community Connector is a gateway to a vast network of resources where cyberspace directly connects with community forces on the information-poor side of the digital divide.

4. BRC ¹¹: Black radicalism continues to germinate. Black academics like Manning Marable (Columbia University) and Jen Hamer (Southern Illinois University), and labor leaders like Bill Fletcher (AFL-CO Education Director) represent the Co-Chairs of the Black Radical Congress. The BRC operates 8 major listserv discussions (36 overall) and a website.

Revolution in society means fundamental change. You can want it and not get it, but you can also be in the middle of it and not know it, or not know what to do, how to influence the direction of history. In a revolution opposite outcomes are possible. It depends on what we do.

Different intellectual traditions sum up this historical experience of social context and social action, each using its own language. One American tradition is Pragmatism ¹² that includes John Dewey's emphasis on the social function of critical intelligence. The Marxist tradition ¹³ refers to the necessary unity of theory and practice. Postmodernists ¹⁴ speak of the critical importance of the subjective factor of agency. Black Christians ¹⁵ talk about the Gospel (good news) and bearing witness (acts of good will). All of these approaches basically say that when change is possible it is necessary to jump in there and get the job done.

Rethinking Black history in terms of technology is critical for this assessment about where and when to jump in. The following three stages of development seem to have taken place in terms of tools, instruments of labor:

1. a labor-intensive labor system based on the machine tools of the slave system, but also the sharecropping system
2. a capital-intensive mass industrial factory labor system
3. the capital-intensive lean production system of the computer age.

This third period, the early stage of the information revolution, also brings us the crisis of the digital divide. ¹⁶

The problem: Building a new architecture of knowledge

Today we are addressing the transformation of scholarship in this social revolution. How can scholarship advance on the basis of advances in information technology? How can Black Studies be reinvented as eBlack Studies ¹⁷ ? I will put before you a proposed research agenda to debate, build consensus around, and implement.

The critical factor is that we are in the position of designing cyberspace to look and feel like us, and to work for us. At this stage in the information revolution we are the masters of our fate. There has never been an opportunity for self determination greater than this. This is a moment of fundamental practical importance on a philosophical level. The issue is as deep as the architecture of knowledge ¹⁸, our epistemological deep structure. We can embrace our particularity as well as universal knowledge, from our one can come a model for the many.

Knowledge and all forms of documentation (including audio and video) of the Black experience can be translated into digital code ¹⁹. This is something we can do for ourselves, with or without a grant. Our survival in cyberspace is in our own hands. The only solution is a group effort. This is an "all hands on deck!" situation.

Everything being discussed in this article can be accomplished with about \$2,000 in hardware and software (CPU, keyboard, monitor, mouse, printer, digital camera, and scanner), less than \$1,000 if used. This equipment is even available free at public computing sites such as schools, libraries, and community technology centers.

The new technology makes this period as basic for knowledge production as when the slave narratives ²⁰ were collected, as the Atlanta conferences of W. E. B. DuBois ²¹, or as the history conferences of Carter G. Woodson ²². In each instance the campus united with community and research was combined with audacity. Conferences were held and proceedings published. The near-unlimited capacity of new technology to store and manipulate information means that now is an ultimate moment to pay attention to the details. Nothing has to be left out in this period of eBlack Studies unless we leave it out. Everybody, everywhere, whenever can be included. We can unite. We must.

Historical background

A universal impulse that drives all people is to understand, to know. This is a goal usually suspended between the polarities of summation and innovation. Of course there is unity between these two polarities. We can identify innovation today because we know what has come before it through a process of summation. On the other hand, that same innovation will itself be part of a new summation tomorrow. This is more of a fractal ²³ and dialectical process than a linear and metaphysical one. There is a pattern, but not a straight line. Nor is it cumulative or repetitive.

It seems the historical process forces people in the midst of change, especially revolutionary change, to sum up so as to fully grasp the importance of the innovation changing their lives.

There are many historically repeated forms of written summation: the encyclopedia, the anthology, the directory, the dictionary, the bibliography, the collected works, the textbook, the journal, the survey course, and conference proceedings, and, most encompassing of all, the special collection or library. Each of these forms of summation involves a textual dataset created to define an entire corpus of knowledge.

These are relatively modern forms. Ancient forms tend to be some combination of orality and ritual, narratives of cultural and political significance. When knowledge breaks from faith, when science drives knowledge, the sheer quantity of specialized knowledge and the speed of change require ongoing summation as an aspect of professional scholarship. In Europe this emerges in the so-called "Enlightenment." In the USA this process begins to fully develop for African Americans in the 20th century.

Table 1 contains examples from 20th century Black intellectual history of major attempts at summation. Central to this process has been the role of the Historical Black College and University, the independent Black publishing firms, the rise of literacy and curriculum at all levels of education, and consciousness raising social movements.

Table 1: Selected summations in 20th century Black intellectual history.

Links are to web pages or to book covers and tables of contents.

Encyclopedia	W. E. B. DuBois, <i>Encyclopedia Africana</i> ²⁴
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	Henry Louis Gates, <i>Encarta</i> ²⁵
Anthology	Alaine Locke, <i>The New Negro</i> Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal, <i>Black Fire</i>
Annuals	Negro Year Books State of Black America
Bibliography	Monroe Work, <i>A Bibliography of the Negro in Africa and America</i> <i>Afro-Scholar Newsletter</i>
Collected Works	W. E. B. DuBois ²⁶ Booker T. Washington ²⁷
Textbooks	Maulana Karenga, <i>Introduction to Black Studies</i> Abdul Alkalimat and Associates, <i>Introduction to Afro-American Studies</i>
Autobiography	Three autobiographies of W. E. B. DuBois The Autobiography of Malcolm X
Who's Who	Who's Who in Colored America (for example 1930, 1931, 1932) Who's Who among Black Americans (for example 1985)
Conference Proceedings	Black People and the 1980 Census Malcolm X: Radical Tradition and Legacy of Struggle ²⁸ (1990)
Special Collections	Arturo Schomberg Collection ²⁹ , New York City Public Library Vivian Harsh Collection ³⁰ , Chicago Public Library

One current example will help illuminate this impulse toward summation. In the recent period three major anthology projects have been published, each from a particular theoretical orientation, each designed to be an inclusive compilation.

1. Molefi Kete Asante and Abu S. Abarry, eds., *African Intellectual Heritage: A Book of Sources* (1996) 828 pages
2. Henry Louis Gates and Nellie McKay, eds., *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (1997) 2,665 pages
3. Manning Marable and Leith Mullings, eds., *Let Nobody Turns Us Around: Voices of Resistance, Reform and Renewal* (1999) 704 pages

This is a total of 4,197 pages. Each of these summations has the strength of ideological focus, but the weakness of excluding other voices. Hard copy constraints are more important in the long run than critical judgment.

There is no such constraint in cyberspace. The summation possible in the context of eBlack Studies can include all of the ideological threads, all of the voices. Moreover, it can embrace the editorial contributions of all scholars. In cyberspace there need not be any barriers to sharing knowledge, and we can grow our unity based on hyper-linked texts. This preserves our individual identities while at the same time forming a growing, unified architecture of knowledge.

The modern institutional foundation for knowledge is the library: the public library and its special collections, and the academic library and its special collections. Our summations have always been encoded and written up in texts, hard copy. Libraries have served as warehouses for all of the summations, as centers for scholarly research, as well as the wellsprings of democracy in every local grassroots community. The preservation of our summations creates an intellectual foundation for each next generation.

Now we are at a great crossroads in the history of knowledge production, distribution, and consumption. The information revolution has increased the quantity for each process exponentially. If there ever was a time for summation it is now.

The point is that there is a wonderful convergence of (1) a great need to sum up and (2) the revolutionary new tools of information technology. eBlack is necessary and possible. So we also have to focus on the use to which we can put the current tools of computers and the Internet.

The Toledo experience

Our starting point is the fledging effort at the University of Toledo. The Africana Studies program is in its fifth year. Ours is a report of a work in progress, an example of what can be tried.

A common conception of conventional academic work includes five points: professional discourse, curriculum development, research, policy and community service. This holds for Black Studies and eBlack Studies as well (table 2). The five most current aspects of eBlack studies in Toledo are:

1. **H-Afro-Am** ³¹listserv of academic professionals and serious students of the Black experience. Part of H-Net.
2. **University of Ghana Distance Learning Project**, two courses presented over the Internet by a professor based in Ghana.
3. **Malcolm X: A Research Site** ^{32a}a comprehensive web site to sum up Malcolm X and make possible his cyberresurrection.
4. **Murchison Center** ^{33a}a community technology center, providing a basic link between campus and community.
5. **Black Hair**, a site mapping experience which is deep inside the cultural and economic life of the community.

The screenshot shows a Netscape browser window with the title 'eBlack: A 21st Century Challenge - Netscape'. The main content is a table with the following structure:

eBlack as a Practical Project: The Toledo Experience			
	Black Studies	eBlack Studies	The Toledo Experience
Professional Discourse	Conference (face to face discussions)	Listserv discussions	H-Afro-Am
Curriculum Development	Classroom based campus courses	Distance learning	Joint project with University of Ghana
Research Productivity	Hard copy publications	Research web sites	<i>Malcolm X: A Research Site</i>
Public Policy	Consulting and internships	Advocacy web sites and petitions	1998 Black Radical Congress
Community Service	Volunteering in an actual community	Building a virtual community	Toledo Black Church web project

Three core values

Out of our experience we have identified three fundamental values that are both desirable and possible. The critical issue is to have a

general orientation that can unite us as we build a new practical program of scholarship.

1. Cyberdemocracy. Everyone has to be included. On one level this is like fighting for the public library and public education. Inclusion is a matter of access and of literacy. Literacy is a matter of skill, what some call functional literacy, and of application, what I call social literacy. Our civil rights must be protected as cyberrights.

This is one of the great targets of any serious reparations program ³⁴. To repair what has been done to Black people would have to mean reestablishing them securely and fairly in the 21st century. A minimum demand has to be the core cyberright, cyberdemocracy.

Cyberrights are protected in the public sphere and should not be pushed back into the realm of the private sphere, at home or at work. So cyberdemocracy calls for public computing. The leading places have been public libraries and schools at all levels.

Every public institution needs public computing to guarantee cyberrights.

2. Collective intelligence. Today we have large datasets, and IT provides the tools to analyze them. For example, we need every slave narrative digitized and formatted as a searchable data set, along with an archive of the research done on the entire texts. Our knowledge is about to leap exponentially as such a new scale of research takes off.

A major aspect of collective intelligence is consensus. Consensus is the ultimate summation of consciousness. On the basis of cyberdemocracy we can build connectivity to achieve consensus. This will require shifting our focus from hierarchy to egalitarian interdependence.

Collective intelligence overpowers the segmentation of knowledge. Different disciplines contribute to our databases without prejudice. The community contributes as well as the campus, on the basis of lifelong learning. The map of knowledge structures and clusters, now organized in distinct academic disciplines, is about to be reconceptualized and reorganized.

3. Information freedom. The new information technologies produce and distribute information in such a way that drives its exchange value down towards zero. For example, new software is soon discounted and then distributed with hardware in a bundle at minimal cost. This

new thinking has impacted scholarly discourse and exchange of information so global networks are emerging based on information freedom. H-Net ³⁵ is a good example of this. Government officials at the National Institutes of Health ³⁶ have also decided that it is in the national interest that government sponsored health related research will be available for free as well.

The privatization of global culture is a dangerous trend. Information about our species, every group and all their experience and knowledge has to be preserved for all of us and all our collective descendents. In fact, as it is privatized it is slowly extracted from the main forces driving our evolution so everyone will be the less for it. Taken to its logical conclusion, we can foster inmanageable species differentiation.

It doesn't make sense in the age of the Internet and the World Wide Web that we still have to pay to read the major leaders in our intellectual tradition, be they W. E. B. DuBois, Martin Luther King, or Malcolm X.

BRAIN: Black Research Archive on the Internet

This brings us to our major proposal.

We have posed the problem as summation. We have shared some of our research and related activities in launching eBlack Studies. We have summed up our experience as three basic core values to guide us. Now, our proposal is called BRAIN, an acronym for Black Research Archive on the Internet. We propose a web portal filled with knowledge about the Black experience. Our goal is to design and create the digital being of Blackness, eBlack.

The brain metaphor has been used again and again. One early example is H.G. Wells's World Brain ³⁷ (1938). Perhaps the latest example is Howard Bloom, Global Brain: The Evolution of the Mass Mind from the Big Bang to the 21st Century ³⁸(2000). Such efforts are attempts to grasp a rational pattern that defines how reality operates. The brain is the scientist's metaphor for the overall. Others choose the heart, the soul or the spirit. At Toledo our community slogan in working with kids is "learning + labor + love = life." This combines everything: brain and muscle, spirit and emotion.

Our brains (and nervous systems) are where biological knowledge processing goes on. The Internet is the silicon based environment for

new sites of knowledge processing. This time the brain will be collective and we will be wired together with one continuous flow of information: contradictions, negations, and arguments included!

We are in the first stage of this process: digitizing hard copy (atoms of material things) into electronic files (bits of digital code). If it's true that a thousand mile journey begins with a single step, this is it.

The basic model is one of transformation:

Black--> digitization --> eBlack
(actual experience) (virtual experience)

This is the transformation of atoms into bits, of natural, bioevolutionary modes of experience into intentional, digital-evolutionary modes of experience. This is based on computer technology, the most crucial part of which is that all forms of perceivable experience can be reduced to a universal digital code.

The issue is therefore information and not artifact, though one is contingent on the other at the point of digitization. The artifact will always retain value, but its contribution to the future will mainly be through the code that represents its digital being.

Just as crucial as information is ideology, our concept of this experience, what we conceive/perceive and therefore what we choose to code and retain. The foundation of ideology remains, however: the material, economic, and social interests of classes expressed through alternative political cultures of different communities, or, in other words, the old class/color/culture/consciousness nexus in the actual world we live in.

In this context the academic field of Black studies is in need of transformation (in fact is being transformed) into eBlack Studies. This is a post-ideological or informational stage. This is an inclusive model.

Our proposal is BRAIN. The issue is to design an appropriate architecture of knowledge about the Black experience for cyberspace. The design will be based on the three core values of cyber democracy, collective intelligence, and information freedom. We are not carving in relatively inert stone but launching a new life form. We are giving birth to the united digital being of Africa and the African Diaspora. We are

waking up all of the mighty spirits and calling them to sit in council. Really this will be the first time everybody can be at the table.

The proposal is to build a movement for the digitization of the Black experience. We have to get into cyberspace, and begin to evolve into new and more powerful datasets and databases that tell the whole story.

BRAIN will be launched with three primary sources of content:

1. experience: databases of objective and subjective forms of knowledge that describes and represents Black people defined in all possible ways;
2. scholarship: everything considered appropriate knowledge produced by academic professionals;
3. discourse: archives of conference proceedings, listservs, and bulletin boards.

These three categories represent perception, conception, and conversation. So now in reviewing this process of the three digitizations we will share more of our work and then propose a national project for collaborative work. This is a real proposal, but also a model for many such proposals that are welcome.

Digitization of experience

Experience is knowable. To accomplish this we have an approach to the objective/subjective problem that links them together. We begin within the subjectivity of the Black community to find our experiential target - we identify the objective Black experience within the subjective conceptual framework of some current within Black intellectual history, and then we match that with some form of hard copy representation (audio, visual, texts, etc.).

The thesis is that the empirical data identified through the lens of this Black particularity will anchor knowledge of more universal applications. Anyone can look through the eye of the needle of our experience and see the whole world.

We are working on two levels of Black subjectivity: (1) ideology and intellectual currents, and (2) the political culture of everyday life.

Our project on ideology is about Malcolm X. We developed a basic compilation of information over several years of research. The web site

is called a research site." We intended to distinguish this kind of knowledge portal as one beginning a consensus building process of a foundational aspect of Black ideology overall. We explained the site in a brief introduction ³⁹.

We have in this site a model database for all individuals of ideological significance. This breaks down into five basic categories:

1. Family
2. Chronology
3. Words
4. Bibliography
5. Webliography

Every community has had important voices that need to be accounted for in the overall story of the ideological life of the Black community. When enough people are in this kind of global data base then we can prove that ultimately wisdom is found among the great masses of people and not a select powerful few.

For the political culture of everyday life we are exploring two kinds of space to understand how an actual community becomes a cyber community. For physical space we are digitizing a street: Dorr Street. For social space we are digitizing the Beauty salons - hair culture.

We believe that our project is making headway on the first aspect of digitization, the transformation of the external public experience. But this keeps the community as an object of what we doing and not in the drivers seat. This is the second step. Now that we have digitized content of compelling interest, it is assumed that there will be a high motivation for interactivity of like minded people.

The national action project we would like to propose is Cyberchurch (see box).

Cyberchurch: A proposal for a national action research project

This project has been initiated by the Africana Studies Program at the University of Toledo under the leadership of Abdul Alkalimat.

The purpose of the Cyberchurch project is to organize Black Studies programs to collaborate with churches in their local areas to develop web pages for the churches.

The following points sum up this proposal for a national action-research project.

1. Black studies programs in institutions of higher education are the most wired aspect of the Black community. This includes access and literacy with hardware and software, as well as the student, faculty, and staff who are skilled in high-tech.
2. The Black church is the major institutional base for the Black community. At all levels of class stratification the Black church far exceeds any other institution in terms of levels of participation, leadership development, resource accumulation, meeting space, national and international networking, and spatial distribution.
3. The University of Toledo Africana Studies Program is part of MetroNet, a service by the University of Toledo to provide free web pages for non-profit organizations. We will use MetroNet until we have 500 churches online, and then we will migrate this to our own server by the end of 2002.
4. Each page will have at least the following:
 - a. photo of church
 - b. photo and bio of minister and family
 - c. history and mission
 - d. church calendar and weekly service/meeting schedule
 - e. church organization and ministries
 - f. contact information
 - g. online donation link (optional)
 - h. map of location

5. Our long range goals are to set up these web pages, get at least 20% of each church congregation to have email, set up online discussion groups, post sound files of the minister preaching and the choir singing, and organize national Cyberchurch workshops.

6. Action/research teams are being formed to carry out the Cyberchurch project. Anyone interested in joining this program please contact Professor Abdul Alkalimat at *abdul.alkalimat@utoledo.edu*.

The basic proposal is to establish a digital institution of Black experience. The Black church has adapted to communicating through radio and cable television, and now it is time for the Internet. Cyberchurch will grow into a self-evolving global network of individuals and institutions

Digitization of scholarship

It goes without saying that any new architecture of knowledge will draw on professional academic research. We have established a baseline webliography for this community of professional academic research in our **eBlackStudies.net**⁴⁰ site. The main datasets are the following:

- 1. Journals**⁴¹
- 2. Organizations**⁴²
- 3. Undergraduate degree programs**⁴³
- 4. Graduate degree programs**⁴⁴

The new project we are proposing is Project BAD: Black American Doctorate (see box).

Project BAD: Black American Doctorate

This project has been initiated by the Africana Studies Program at the University of Toledo under the leadership of Abdul Alkalimat.

The purpose of Project BAD is to establish a public database of the Black American doctorate. Our goal is to include every African American awarded the PhD or equivalent degree. This does not include honorary degrees.

The following points sum up this project:

1. There is a great need to build empirical databases that sum up Black intellectual history, especially as contained in the empirical record of intellectual and artistic production.
2. The highest level of academic scholarship is the PhD dissertation. The people who successfully completed the PhD degree constitute a base line for the academic component of Black intellectual history. Every institution keeps detailed records on every person awarded the doctoral degree.
3. Most of the PhD granting institutions in the USA have some kind of Black Studies related professional staff and faculty in an academic unit or the library.
4. On a campus by campus basis lists of Black PhD's can be compiled and organized as a research report. On a discipline by discipline basis people who have earned the PhD can be compiled.
5. The model for this project is the work by Harry Greene, Holders of Doctorates Among American Negroes (1946). He listed over 300 people and presented detailed information. His data is already in an excel spreadsheet ⁴⁵.
6. Each campus list will be considered provisional until the official Registrar of the institution validates each degree holder.

7. We are interested in the following data about each person:

- a. name
- b. gender
- c. undergraduate institution, major, degree, and date
- d. graduate institution, major, date and title of thesis for the MA
- e. graduate institution, major, date and title of dissertation for PhD

Our proposal is for people at PhD granting institutions to begin digging into local records to compile and document portions of the database. This level of intellectual production is certainly part of the basic architecture of knowledge for information about the Black experience.

Digitization of discourse

There are two opposing views of what constitutes a canon for Black intellectual history, dogma or debate. Some believe that a canon can be named by selecting texts of language and conceptual clarity. We believe this orientation is towards dogma and what will inevitably turn into a conservative orientation. The canon of the Black radical tradition is debate, the interaction of voices in which each challenges and interrogates the other.

The main logic of this history follows three great debates that have shaped Black intellectual history and reveals its logic of development:

- (1) the emancipation debates that began with the National Negro Convention movement in 1830
- (2) self-determination debate of DuBois, Garvey, and Booker T Washington early part of the 20th century, and
- (3) Black liberation debate of Martin Luther King, and Malcolm X in the 1960's.

Our name for the digitization of these past debates is cyber resurrection. Our main project in this regard is the digitization of a conference held in 1990: Malcolm X, Radical Tradition and Legacy of Struggle. We have audio and video tapes, photographs, hard copy archives, and continuous contact with many of the conference speakers. Three thousand people from twenty countries attended, but now we have it on the World Wide Web. There were 24 sessions

during the conference. We are posting one session per week for 6 months to relive the 1990 conference in 2001. After merely 6 weeks the conference web site has twenty thousand hits from nearly 50 countries.

This process of digitizing discourse also applies to contemporary exchanges. The most interesting application of information technology in this regard is that on a listserv email can be automatically archived. H-Net is a major example of this. H-Net sponsors over 100 listserv discussion networks of scholars. Every list has a log or archive of all messages. These logs can be searched as individual lists or for any combination of list up to a search of all lists. This is emerging as the definitive way to access the most current thinking in a given field or research area. Or experience has been with H-Afro-Am. This listserv has about 1,500 subscribers from every region of the world.

There is a need to aggregate all listserv networks in some way related to professional academic scholarship in Black Studies. This is a major initiative for the systematic codification and sharing of this discourse. There is a key leadership role in this process for librarians at research institutions.

Organizing for change

In general we are proposing a model for research and collaboration that relies on limited local resources. Of course we aspire to building a movement, and for this movement (to digitize the Black experience) to get off the ground local efforts will have to put three resources in place:

1. Campus base

The first concern is to have the project initiated by one or more persons (usually one or more graduate students, faculty, or professional staff) who take leadership. This is a professional activity, the building of a research program, especially one that will redefine an academic field of study. Productive leadership in this area deserves full recognition as scholarship.

Every project could be staffed in part by student workers paid for by the work-study federally funded student aid program. Every project needs a data delivery technical code writer. My suggestion is a student from the closest College of Engineering. We have had luck with students from National Society of Black Engineers and students who

have just arrived from India. There is a healthy attitude and a willingness to work hard, especially when it is socially and morally engaging by people who identify with what is being done. We have also found students who are politically active to be good recruits, including all kinds of non-Black students.

Academic credit should be awarded for successful participation in a community project. In higher education circles this is being called "service learning."⁴⁶ This is what we call the method of "involved observation," being an activist in a situation one is also studying. Sometimes it is appropriate to involve an entire class and sometimes a single person through some form of independent study arrangement.

National projects like Cyberchurch should be offered as part of the curriculum on a regular basis.

Black Studies needs to build a coalition with everyone practicing any form of social informatics, in every case including the library. Every program needs a student lab and a production lab for digitization. Every digitization center needs to begin with a local project and consolidate campus-community ties.

2. Community base

The first task is to identify an institution to serve as a base of operations in the community. The best examples are the local library and the local community technology center. If these don't exist then the first task is to get them set up. Our experience is in linking the Africana Studies Program, at the University of Toledo with an inner city community technology center, The Murchison Center. Our experience can be summed up into five guidelines or rules:

First rule is that our purpose is to serve the people. At the Murchison Center we have a community garden ⁴⁷ to teach this to the young people, and to practice it ourselves.

The second rule ⁴⁸ is that the practical application of eBlack Studies in the community is social cyber power, the use of cyber power for the end of poverty once and for all.

The third rule ⁴⁹ is that our focus is on building a bridge across the digital divide.

The fourth rule ⁵⁰ is that programs of research will always support an action project to serve the local community.

The fifth rule is that there should always be free classes in the community on various forms of information technologies, hardware and software.

3. National research program

The beginning of the information age is the ultimate moment for self determination - creating a new architecture of knowledge in cyberspace. This new knowledge is a launching pad for the new society we need free of all historical forms of exploitation and oppression.

We are proposing three new national research projects that provide examples of how new forms of national cooperative research programs might look:

1. Cyberchurch
2. Project BAD: Black American Doctorate
3. Hyper-unification of eBlack Studies listserv discussions.

Now is the time.

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- 24 <http://www.endarkenment.com/eap/>
- 25 <http://www.encarta.msn.com/products/upgrade/prdupgrade8.asp>
- 26 <http://www.library.umass.edu/spcoll/dubois.html>
- 27 <http://www.historycooperative.org/btw/>
- 28 <http://www.murchisoncenter.org/malcolm>
- 29 <http://www.nypl.org/research/sc/sc.html>
- 30 <http://www.chipublib.org/002branches/woodson/wnharsh.html>
- 31 <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~afro-am/>
- 32 <http://www.brothermalcolm.net/>
- 33 <http://www.murchisoncenter.org/>
- 34 <http://www.ncobra.com/>
- 35 <http://www.h-net.msu.edu/>
- 36 http://www.nlm.nih.gov/news/press_releases/free_medline.html
- 37 http://sherlock.berkeley.edu/wells/world_brain.html
- 38 <http://www.howardbloom.net/>
- 39 <http://www.brothermalcolm.net/introduction.html>

- 45 <http://www.murchisoncenter.org/acrl/BAD.xls>
- 46 <http://csf.colorado.edu/sl/>
- 47 <http://www.murchisoncenter.org/garden/>
- 48 <http://www.communitytechnology.org/cyberpower>
- 49 <http://www.digitaldividenetwork.org/content/sections/index.cfm>
- 50 <http://www.luc.edu/depts/curl/prag/>



BRAIN:

(Black Research Archive on the Internet)

Toward a research program for
eBlack studies

Abdul Alkalimat
University of Toledo

March 17, 2001

Association of College and Research Librarians

Outline

- Crisis: the summation of knowledge
- The Toledo model of eBlack Studies
- BRAIN: summation in cyberspace
 - digitization of experience
 - digitization of scholarship
 - digitization of discourse
- Organizing for change

Abdul Alkalimat 3/17/2001

Information society replacing industrial society

Industrial society

- Powered by steam or electricity, tools become enormous
- Workers are harnessed to machines in large factories
- World divided into power blocs of nation states that contend and conspire to dominate the world

Information society

- Knowledge is digitized, information is key ingredient in production
- Factories become smaller, even 'dark'
- Global economy dominated by networks of transnational capital producing great polarity of wealth and poverty

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Problem:
Crisis of knowledge

- Quality problem: Racism
 - distortion of reality
 - silence about reality
- Quantity problem: Resources
 - "Race" variable industry
 - Limited Black access to mainstream

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Solution:
Summation of knowledge

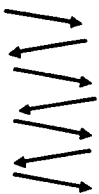
- Quality: Knowledge from a Black perspective
- Quantity: Inclusive summation

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Objective logic:

Modes of social cohesion

Africa
Slave
Rural tenancy
Urban



Modes of social disruption

Slave trade
Emancipation
Proletarianization
Crisis

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Subjective logic:

Dogma

Black Liberation
Theology
Pan Africanism
Nationalism
Marxism
Feminism

Debate

Over emancipation
Over self
determination
Over Black liberation

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Selected summations in 20th C. Black intellectual history (1)

Encyclopedia	W. E. B. DuBois, Encyclopedia Africana Henry Louis Gates, Encarta
Anthology	Alaine Locke, The New Negro Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal, Black Fire
Annuals	Negro Year Books State of Black America
Bibliography	Monroe Work, A Bibliography of the Negro in Africa and America Afro-Scholar Newsletter
Collected Works	W. E. B. DuBois Booker T. Washington

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Selected summations in 20th C. Black intellectual history (2)

Textbooks	Maulana Karenga, <i>Introduction to Black Studies</i> Abdul Alkalimat and Associates, <i>Introduction to Afro-American Studies</i>
Autobiography	Three autobiographies of W. E. B. DuBois <i>The Autobiography of Malcolm X</i>
Who's Who	<i>Who's Who in Colored America</i> <i>Who's Who among Black Americans</i>
Proceedings	<i>Black People and the 1980 Census</i> <i>Malcolm X: Radical Tradition and Legacy of Struggle (1990)</i>
Collections	Arturo Schomburg Collection, NYC Public Library Vivian Harsh Collection, Chicago Public Library

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Three Contemporary Anthologies

- AFROCENTRISM: Asante and Abarry, eds, *African Intellectual Heritage* (1996, 828 pages)
- POST MODERNISM: Gates and McKay, eds, *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (1997, 2665 pages)
- RADICAL: Marable and Mullings, eds, *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: Voices of Resistance, Reform, and Renewal* (2000, 674 pages)

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Content of the three anthologies

- Total pages: 4,167
- Total selections: 308
- Selections in common: 14

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Emancipation Debate

Oludiah Equiano (1745 - 1797)
David Walker (1795 - 1830)
Maria Stewart (1803 - 1879)
Frederick Douglas (1818 - 1895)
Frances Harper (1825 - 1911)

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Self-Determination Debate

Booker T Washington (1856 - 1915)
Anna J. Cooper (1858 - 1964)
Ida B. Wells (1862 - 1931)
W. E. B. Du Bois (1868 - 1963)
James Weldon Johnson (1871 - 1938)
Marcus Garvey (1887 - 1940)

Alkalimat/Williams: www.africa.utledo.edu/uva/

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Black Liberation Debate

Malcolm X (1925 - 1965)
Martin Luther King (1929 - 1968)
Amiri Baraka (1934 - alive)

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Black as a Practical Project: The Toledo Experience			
	Black Studies	White Studies	The Toledo Experience
Professional Experience	Conference (face to face discussions)	Listserv discussions	H-Afro-Am
Curriculum Development	Classroom based campus courses	Distance learning	Joint project with University of Ghana
Research Productivity	Hard copy publications	Research web sites	Malcolm X: A Research Site
Public Policy	Consulting and Internships	Advocacy web sites and petitions	1998 Black Radical Congress
Community Service	Volunteering in an actual community	Building a virtual community	Toledo Black Church web project

Potential of information society: three fundamental values

- **Cyberdemocracy**
(everyone can connect)
- **Collective Intelligence**
(everyone can produce)
- **Information Freedom**
(everyone can consume)

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Communications and Black history

HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE	COMMUNICATIONS INNOVATIONS	HISTORICAL EXAMPLES
Slavery	Face to face Quilts Newspaper	Nat Turner Frederick Douglas
Rural Tenancy	Radio	Ida B. Wells
Urban Industry	Telephone TV	W. E. B. DuBois Martin Luther King Malcolm X
Information Society	Fax Computers Internet	Million Marches Black Radical Congress

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BRAIN: Black intellectual renaissance

1920s Harlem Renaissance:
Middle class celebration

1940s Chicago Renaissance:
Working class celebration

1960s Identity Renaissance:
Youth celebration

2000's Cyber Renaissance:
Everyone celebrates

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Black Research Archive on the Internet (BRAIN)

- Paradigm shift is elaborated and affirmed, but not proven
- Capitalism and the origin of the modern encyclopedia (Diderot, 1751)
- Electronics and the World Brain concept (H. G. Wells, 1938)

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Goals of study

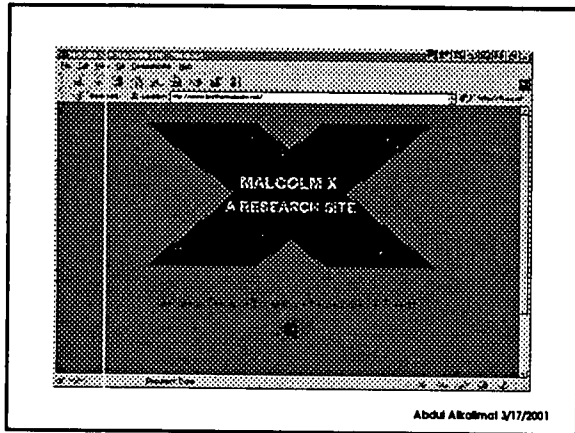
- End the silences
- Map the linkages (inter-textuality)
- Compute a citation index
- Facilitate the circuitry of ideas

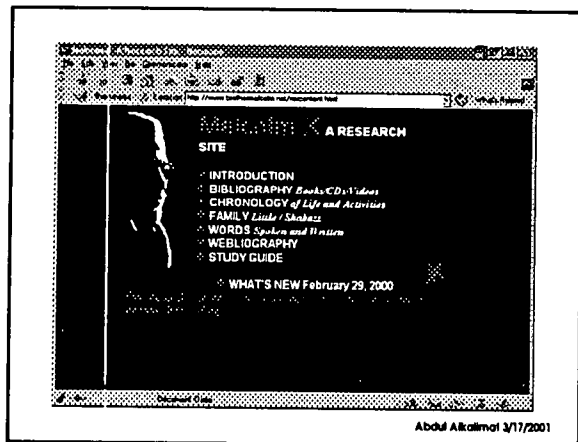
Abdul Alkalimat 3/17/2001

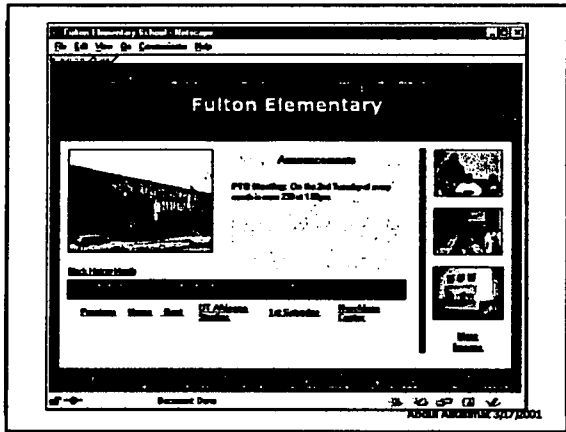
Creating the BRAIN

- Digitization of experience: perceptual knowledge
- Digitization of scholarship: rational knowledge
- Digitization of discourse: socialization of knowledge

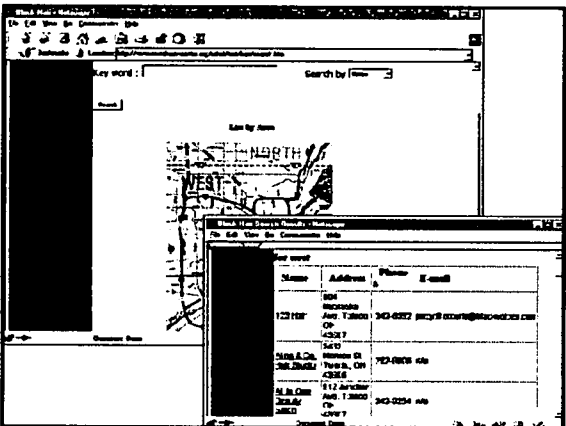
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123 Eads

Address : 504 Nebraska Ave, Toledo, OH
43607
Phone # : 342-6532
E-mail : 3426532@earthlink.net



Working Hours :
Tuesday - Friday: 9am-3pm
Saturday: 9am-4pm
Sunday:
Closed

Appointments :
Owner : LaDana Jones

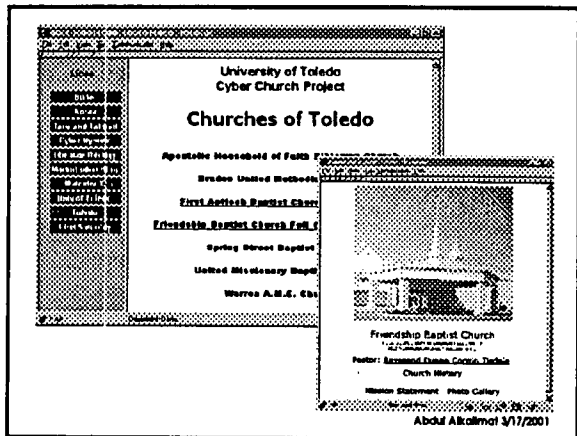
Employees :
S. June Allen, Christal Brodie, LaDana Jones

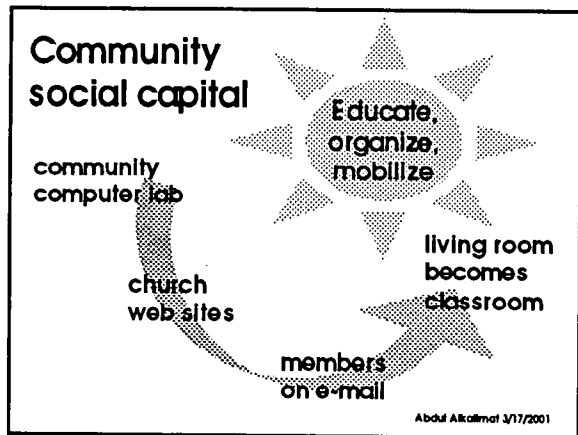
Price range :
Driving Directions : Mapquest Map

Additional Info :



Abdul Almalwat 3/27/2001





Cyberchurch: Proposal for a national action research project

- This project has been initiated by the Africana Studies Program at the University of Toledo under the leadership of Abdul Alkalimat.
- The purpose of the Cyberchurch project is to organize Black Studies programs to collaborate with churches in their local areas to develop web pages for the churches.

Abdul Alkalimat 3/17/2001

Cyberchurch: Proposal for a national action research project

1. Black studies programs in institutions of higher education are the most wired aspect of the Black community. This includes access and literacy with hardware and software, as well as the student, faculty, and staff who are skilled in high-tech.
2. The Black church is the major institutional base for the Black community. At all levels of class stratification the Black church far exceeds any other institution in terms of levels of participation, leadership development, resource accumulation, meeting space, national and international networking, and spatial distribution.

Abdul Alkalimat 3/17/2001

Cyberchurch: Proposal for a national action research project

3. The University of Toledo Africana Studies Program is part of MetroNet, a service by the University of Toledo to provide free web pages for non-profit organizations. We will use MetroNet until we have 500 churches online, and then we will migrate this to our own server by the end of 2002.

Abdul Alkalimat 3/17/2001

Cyberchurch: Proposal for a national action research project

4. Each page will have at least the following:
 - photo of church
 - photo and bio of minister and family
 - history and mission
 - church calendar and weekly service/meeting schedule
 - church organization and ministries
 - contact information
 - online donation link (optional)
 - map of location

Abdul Alkalimat 3/17/2001

**Project BAD:
Black American Doctorate**

- This project has been initiated by the Africana Studies Program at the University of Toledo under the leadership of Abdul Alkalimat.
- The purpose of Project BAD is to establish a public database of the Black American doctorate. Our goal is to include every African American awarded the PhD or equivalent degree. This does not include honorary degrees.

Abdul Alkalimat 3/17/2001

**Project BAD:
Black American Doctorate**

1. There is a great need to build empirical databases that sum up Black intellectual history, especially as contained in the empirical record of intellectual and artistic production.
2. The highest level of academic scholarship is the PhD dissertation. The people who successfully completed the PhD degree constitute a base line for the academic component of Black intellectual history. Every institution keeps detailed records on every person awarded the doctoral degree.

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**Project BAD:
Black American Doctorate**

3. Most of the PhD granting institutions in the USA have some kind of Black Studies related professional staff and faculty in an academic unit or the library.
4. On a campus by campus basis lists of Black PhD's can be compiled and organized as a research report. On a discipline by discipline basis people who have earned the PhD can be compiled.

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**Project BAD:
Black American Doctorate**

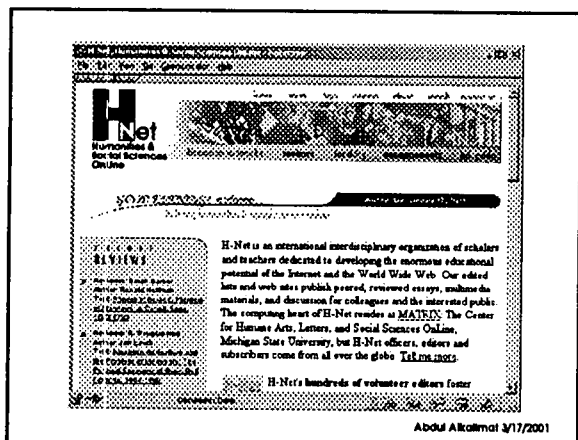
- 5. The model for this project is the work by Harry Greene, Holders of Doctorates Among American Negroes (1946). He listed over 300 people and presented detailed information. His data is already in an excel spreadsheet.
- 6. Each campus list will be considered provisional until the official Registrar of the Institution validates each degree holder.

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**Project BAD:
Black American Doctorate**

- 7. We are interested in the following data about each person:
 - name and gender
 - undergraduate institution, major, degree, and date
 - graduate institution, major, date and title of thesis for the MA
 - graduate institution, major, date and title of dissertation for PhD

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A campus is a hub for a vast network of learning communities...



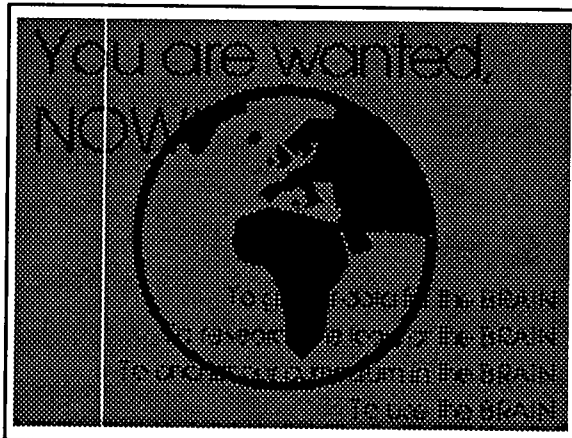
...the public sphere

Abdul Kalam 3/17/2001


Main goals

1. A renaissance of knowledge
2. Learning communities in cyberspace
3. An expanding public sphere
4. Democracy reinvented

Abdul Kalam 3/17/2001





 **BlackSTUDIES**

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eBlack
A 21st Century Challenge
Abdul Alkalimat

"Every generation has a mission.
It can fulfill it or betray it."
Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*

The information revolution is a concept that sums up a complex historical process, a process of struggle. In sum, this process is over throwing our old ways. No sector of society, no community of people, is exempt. This includes Black Studies in all its manifestations: Afrocentricity, Afrology, Afro-American and African American Studies, Africana and African Studies, as well as all forms of ethnic or minority studies. This article is a call for the transformation of Black Studies, a move from ideology to information. My argument is that eBlack, the virtualization of the Black experience, is the basis for the next stage of our academic discipline.

The information revolution is manifest in a new reality called cyberspace, the world-wide-web and the Internet. We inhabit cyberspace by digitizing information about our experience including our artistic and intellectual production, and conversations via email and chat rooms. This is the evolution of survival - if we are not digital then we do not exist. The dominant reality of the world is cyberspace. This is why the challenge of the 21st century is to develop eBlack as a positive force for Africa and the African Diaspora. eBlack forces on a global level will represent the rebirth of Pan-Africanism and a new era of struggle against all enemies - from poverty, to AIDS, to anti-democratic regimes.

The impact of the information revolution can lead to a renaissance of community development, cultural creativity, and liberation politics. We need to have theoretical principles, practical projects, and a strategic plan to create eBlack Studies. In this article we will discuss three fundamental theoretical principles. Five case studies of the eBlack Studies Program at the University of Toledo will be described as practical examples, models being proposed for more general adoption. Finally, we will propose a strategic plan to unleash a new national trend of productivity under conditions of cooperation and unity.

From Ideology to Information

Black Studies began as part of the Black Liberation Movement. It originated as a Black power project in higher education. The early adopters of the fight for Black Studies advanced their cause based on community struggle. A second generation emerged in a career stream delinked from these struggles. They cultivated academic careers rooted in the struggle for tenure. Both generations were ideological: the founders fought the century old Marxist - Nationalist debate, and the second generation wages its debate on the terrain of the Post Modernist - Afrocentrist debate.

Ideology is a form of intelligence and ignorance at the same time. Ideology easily becomes a way of life: ideas are dogma, actions are morally sanctioned, and the role of institutions is to isolate and protect members against outsiders. We become ideological as an intellectual short cut to freedom, as a way of organizing and joining large numbers of people to change the world. All too often adherents of one ideology show no interest in and even refuse to study other ideological positions. We appoint ourselves victors before we fight and win the war.

While ideological struggle has persisted the information revolution has undercut the material conditions for ideological ignorance. The information revolution has increased our capacity to produce, store, distribute, and consume all texts - written, oral, and visual. The move from ideology (Black Studies) to information (eBlack Studies) is when we chose to know about not just which texts we believe, but all the texts including ones we don't believe. The information revolution requires global consciousness. This means knowing about or wanting to know about and having access to all ideas.

This move to eBlack, from ideology to information, is consistent with the profound changes taking place in other related contexts. Library schools are schools of information science, newspapers are online sources of information, and massive efforts are underway to digitize the major library collections of the world. This is the future.

Three Theoretical Principles of eBlack Studies

eBlack Studies relies on at least three theoretical concepts: cyber democracy, collective intelligence, and information freedom. These general principles will guide the necessary discussion and debate to win faculty and students to create eBlack.

Principle One: Cyberdemocracy. eBlack depends upon everyone having access and becoming active users users of cyber technology.

The current explosion of information technology is class based. The new concept being used to describe the growth of information rich and poor is the "digital divide." This is a critical problem. Hoffman and Novak report the following recent data (1999). In 1997, on a percentage basis, Blacks were 75% as likely to use the web than whites, but by 1998 they were only 60% as likely. On the other hand the rate of increase in these same figures indicate that from 1997 to 1998 whites increased by 62.5% and Blacks by 75.8%. Blacks are not on the web as much as whites, but it looks like they are trying to be.

Comparison of Recent Black – White Web Use

Date	White		Black	
	%	#Millions	%	#Millions
Spring 1997	22.4	35.2	16.6	3.9
Fall 1997	30.0	48.4	17.0	4.0
Spring 1998	35.8	60.4	21.9	5.2

The Commerce Department (1999) makes a further clarification: "Nevertheless, the news is not all bleak. For Americans with incomes of \$75,000 and higher, the divide between whites and Blacks has actually narrowed considerably in the last year."

The principle of cyberdemocracy is being promoted in society by a variety of forces, especially ecommerce. It is very likely that computer access will become similar to telephone access (whites 95.0%, Blacks 85.4%). This is suggested by free email, free Internet access through institutions like the library and school, and community computing centers. In higher education cyberdemocracy is mandated to promote fundamental skill for the 21st century, a standard of literacy. Access is fast coming to every campus on a 24/7 basis.

Principle Two: Collective Intelligence. eBlack depends upon all intellectual production being collected, analyzed, and utilized.

An elite runs Black Studies, usually in a very undemocratic manner. Small handfuls of people tend to dominate the activities of each ideological network. This means we see the same names in texts, anthologies, journals, academic programs, professional organizations, invitational conferences as well as annual meetings, and as editors of reprints. This is a vertical structure, a hierarchy. It protects the ideology by sustaining an authoritative source, and creates a more manageable market through name recognition.

There continues to be a remarkable expansion of cyberspace (Moore's Law = every 18 months memory of a microchip doubles, and the price is cut in half). Every text of a particular type can be included in a digital library and utilized in the aggregate, e.g., all African American Novels, all slave narratives, all the documented words of leaders like Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. This includes the written word, and also spoken and visual material as well. Everything that encodes meaning can be aggregated into a data set. This will redefine the role of scholarship. There are many examples of data sets that have never been systematically studied before: e.g., graduate level theses and dissertations at HBCU's, records of every ship involved in the slave trade, every speech given by a Black elected official during the Reconstruction, and every novel written by an African American.

Principle Three: Information Freedom. eBlack depends upon intellectual production being freely available to everyone.

Knowledge for sale has governed the logic of the academic marketplace. The hard copy commercial publishers of books and journals, as well as the popular press, especially the New York Times, have been the gatekeepers of legitimacy and the main mechanisms for knowledge distribution. eCommerce has helped to equalize this distribution through Amazon.com and BarnesandNobles.com, but the major centers of culture and the major academic institutions will continue to dominate. Class is the best way to predict book purchases. In sum, information flows through conduits owned and controlled by big money.

On the other hand, great traditions of information freedom have been crucial for the Black Freedom struggle. The most important one is the free public library. Anyone can go and read any book for free. Literacy for Black people has required information freedom more than any thing else.

Now, information freedom is taking off in cyberspace. It is possible to go the web and get any census data you need for free. The National Institute of Health has announced its intention to make all health related scientific research available for free. H-Net has set up over 100 listservs and websites in all disciplines of the Humanities and Social Sciences that offer free subscriptions. Information from the radio and television is free. We need to give our system a makeover based on information freedom.

These three theoretical principles are revolutionary. All ideological tendencies and schools of thought in Black Studies can embrace these principles as the basis for eBlack. We can use them to guide us through the next decade of transformation toward a unified discipline based in cyberspace.

The Toledo Model: Five Practical Projects

For the last three years we have been working to build an eBlack studies program at the University of Toledo. The importance of this is that we are similar to most places. We have had only modest resources in a working class based urban public university. This work is an experiment in eBlack Studies. Other institutions with similarly modest resources are also experimenting in eBlack Studies. More experiments will advance this next stage.

Listserv: H-Afro-Am
<http://www.h-net.msu.edu>

H-Afro-Am is edited at the University of Toledo. It is part of H-Net based at Michigan State University. H-Afro-Am was launched in 1998 as a vehicle for professional discourse in Afro-American Studies. There are over 1,000 subscribers from 25 countries. The list is free and open to everyone. It is a moderated list averaging up to 10 messages a day. Faculty, students, and others use H-Afro-Am to make announcements to the field, share information about curriculum development and research, and discuss theoretical and practical issues of relevance to the Black experience. People of all ideological positions are involved, and everyone shares information.

eBlack as a Practical Project: The Toledo Experience			
	Black Studies	eBlack Studies	The Toledo Experience
Professional Discourse	Conference (face to face discussions)	Listserv discussions	H-Afro-Am
Curriculum Development	Classroom based campus courses	Distance learning	Joint project with University of Ghana
Research Productivity	Hard copy publications	Research web sites	<i>Malcolm X: A Research Site</i>
Public Policy	Consulting and internships	Advocacy web sites and petitions	1998 Black Radical Congress
Community Service	Volunteering in an actual community	Building a virtual community	Toledo Black Church web project

Our goal is to have every faculty and graduate student in the field in communication via this and other related listservs. This is a necessary complement to face-to-face gatherings and more expensive forms of telecommunications such as voice and fax phone.

Distance Learning: The UG / UT Project
<http://webct.utoledo.edu>

The World Bank created the Virtual African University to send courses from the USA into Africa. At the University of Toledo we have set up a partnership with the University of Ghana to send courses from Africa to the world. We invited Dr. G. K.Nukunya, Professor of Sociology and former University of Ghana Pro Vice Chancellor, to be a visiting professor for academic year 1999-2000. He taught two courses on our campus during the fall and is currently teaching the same courses for the spring via the Internet from Ghana. We are using the WebCT software to teach "Introduction to the African Experience" and "Foundations of Culture in the African Diaspora."

Distance learning is a threat to teachers if it is used to downsize faculty and seize ownership of course

materials. However, it can be used to fight racism, empower Black faculty, level the academic playing field, build partnerships with community institutions, globalize education, and reverse the brain drain out of Africa.

This UG/UT project is the first project to use cyberspace in this manner. We intend to expand this to a global Pan-African Studies Program via the Internet. Geography, language, ideology, or institution will never again limit us.

Web Research Site: Malcolm X

<http://www.brothermalcolm.net>

Scholarship in the age of information is a public exercise. The history of Black Studies, as with all academic fields, has been linked to specific institutions that have been able to house information in archives, often under conditions of limited access. Major examples include public library collections (e.g., the Schomburg in New York or the Harsh Collection in Chicago), University archives (e.g., Fisk, Howard, University of Mass., or Yale), and special research institutions (e.g., Martin Luther King Center, and the Smithsonian). Archival material usually requires the support of major funding and acceptance into one of these institutions. WEB DuBois, Booker T. Washington, Frederick Douglass, Marcus Garvey, and Martin Luther King all have major university based archives and even digitized projects. There is no such project for Malcolm X, nor any Black woman.

The University of Toledo has been engaged in a program of research, production, and advocacy about the life and legacy of Malcolm X since the 1960's. There are hundreds of people all over the world as colleagues in these activities. We decided to develop a web site to share information and establish an empirical baseline for studies of Malcolm X. This web site, based on the principles of eBlack, is now the authoritative source about Malcolm X other than his published writings. It's only a click away for anyone online anywhere at anytime.

Our goal is to standardize the research site type of web page as a peer reviewed formal intellectual product of eBlack Studies. Specifically, we hope to use the Malcolm X site as a model to build a major archive of Black intellectual history, especially the radical Black tradition. This must include all ideological tendencies and be built on the principles of eBlack.

Black Liberation Movement: BRC, 1998

<http://208.234.16.110/index2.html>

The 1990's included a major international conference on Malcolm X (1990), an unprecedented uprising in South Central LA and over 40 other cities (1992), and the Million Man March (1996). Black radicals had not had a coordinated major national movement since the African Liberation Support Committee of the 1970's. Reformism replaced radicalism by the electoral campaigns of the 1980's and the resurgence of Black middle class mainstream leadership. We began a process to reverse this.

What began as a couple of conversations expanded to a group that then organized thousands of activists into a process to reinvigorate Black radicalism. The main vehicle for this was a web-based source of information. Many radicals were not convinced that cyberspace was the major tool for national coordination, but the BRC web site stands as a triumph of the technology. The BRC was the first organization of any kind that created the cyber organizer as an elected position. A cyber organizer includes the duties of a webmaster, managing the web site, but also building the movement based on the principles of eBlack.

The BRC cyber activity included a listserv discussion and debate. This activity demonstrated that rather than promoting factionalism and a hardening of ideological lines, participants found an open exchange over

the most controversial and polemical issues to be refreshing. It gathered a webliography of contemporary Black radicalism, posted official BRC documents, and posted a report (including sound and photos) of the national congress attended by over 2,000 people. The cyber action of the BRC continues under the able leadership of the Internet pioneer Art McGee.

The BRC cyber organizers turned ideology into information and built a movement of people who otherwise would not have spent the time of day with each other. We discovered that cyberactivism made the gulf between advocacy and archiving disappear. Our 1998 experience is a model for future national campaigns of Black radical activists. Our goal is to reorganize the organizational tactics of Black radicalism around the principles of eBlack.

Community Service: Black Church Project

<http://www.blacktoledo.net/religion>

The Black church anchors the lives of Black people and serves as a foundation for the community. The church is total theater, and includes music, lectures, ritual, pageantry, and the largest mass following of any institution. The rhetorical and organizational skills of the Black ministry are unrivaled. The Black church has been the basis for all major protest movements. When the Black church makes a commitment to recreating itself in a digital format the entire Black community will soon be online.

The University of Toledo recruited Rev. Al Reed, a local Toledo minister, to prepare a course on the Black Church. This was part of an ongoing strategy to utilize local talent to diversify our program as we had done in politics, jazz and theatre. The course met every Saturday morning and focused on rereading the Black church through the lens of Black liberation theology. As a requirement for the course each student selected a church to gather material for a web site. The University of Toledo has established a service called MetroNet that local nonprofit organizations can use to host web pages for free. In addition, we are part of a local community-computing program, the Murchison Center and the Community Math Academy, (<http://www.murchisoncenter.org>). We are establishing a weekly workshop in which church members can learn web development software and keep their church web site updated on a regular basis.

Our goal is to get every church online via a common portal, all faiths, as a virtual ecumenical environment for Black liberation theology. Our vision is a virtual Black community. Creating this virtual world in cyberspace is a step toward recreating the actual world we live in.

Strategy for eBlackStudies

So, where do we go from here? What is a strategy to use the three basic principles, and implement the transition from Black Studies to eBlack Studies? We need a new course, a new concentration, and a new conception of mapping our existence in cyberspace.

Our academic programs need a new course: Introduction to eBlack or Information Technology and the Black Experience. This course should provide basic cyber skills to access and search the Internet, knowledge of web-based information on the Black experience, and basic skills to produce web sites. Students will grow to love this course to keep them up to date and more viable in the job market.

We need to build on this course and create a new major by linking our curriculum to information science, either through Library Science, Business, Education, Computer Science, or Engineering. This should lead to cyber organizing becoming a concentration in eBlack Studies, and route our students to exciting careers and able to make practical contributions to digitizing the experience of their family and community.

We need a national plan of research collaboration, state by state, to build portals for all digital formats of the Black experience, all Black content web sites state by state. This is a vital service waiting to be done by Black Studies Programs. The state parameters give us a rational matrix to coordinate such a

comprehensive webliography project. We can use federal work-study money to hire students to carry out this activity. Further we can partner with local chapters of the Black Data Processing Associates, the Society of Black Engineers, the Community Technology Centers network, BRC cyber organizers and other local information technologists such as librarians.

This is not the time to be a slave to the past. We live in a revolutionary age that will likely go far beyond our current imagination. We need a fundamentally new approach to the 21st century. This eBlack Studies proposal begins the discussion of new theory, new practice and new strategy. Please join in this process. When we do what is necessary in cyberspace the actual material transformation of the world will surely follow.

The time for eBlack is now.

SELECTED WEBLIOGRAPHY

Campus Web Sites

1. Africana Studies, University of Pittsburgh <<http://www.pitt.edu/~bjgrier/links.htm>>
2. African and African Diaspora Studies, Tulane University <<http://www.tulane.edu/~adst/links.htm>>
3. Center for Afro-American and African Studies, University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) <<http://www.umich.edu/~iinet/caas/links/index.html>>
4. Africana Studies Research Center, Cornell University, <<http://www.library.cornell.edu/africana/index.html>>
5. Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture, University of Chicago, <<http://social-sciences.uchicago.edu/ucrpc/>>

Digital Divide Sites

1. Donna Hoffman and Thomas Novak, "The Evolution of the Digital Divide: Examining the Relationship of Race to Internet Access and Usage Over Time," <<http://www2000.ogsm.vanderbilt.edu/>>
2. Commerce Department <<http://digitaldivide.gov/>>
3. Benton Foundation <<http://www.benton.org/Library>>
4. Art McGee, Class Culture and Cyberspace <<http://www.igc.org/amcgee/e-race.html>>
5. Abdul Alkalimat, The Technological Revolution and Prospects for Black Liberation in the 21st Century <<http://www.cyrev.net/Issues/Issue4/TechnologicalRevolutionAndProspectsforBlackLiberation.htm>>

Information Revolution Sites

1. The Community Connector, School of Information, University of Michigan <<http://www.si.umich.edu/Community>>

2. Information Technology in Africa

<<http://www.sas.upenn.edu/AfricanStudies/AboutAfrican/wwtech.html>>

3. cyRev: A Journal of Cybernetic Revolution, Sustainable Socialism and Radical Democracy

<<http://www.cyrev.net/>>

4. Media Lab, MIT <<http://www.media.mit.edu/>>

5. H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online <<http://www.h-net.msu.edu/>>

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1. Abdul Alkalimat, Doug Gills, and Kate Williams, *Job?Tech: The Technological Revolution and Its Impact on Society* (Chicago: 21st Century Books, 1995)

2. Jim Davis, et. al., *Cutting Edge: Technology, Information Capitalism and Social Revolution* (London: Verso, 1997)

3. Bosah Ebo, ed., *Cyberghetto or Cybertopia: Race, Class, and Gender on the Internet* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998)

4. Timothy Jenkins and Khafra K Om-Ra-Seti, *Black Futurists in the Information Age* (San Francisco: KMT Publications, 1997)

5. Eric Lee, *The Labour Movement and the Internet* (London: Pluto Press, 1997)

6. Pierre Levy, *Collective intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace* (New York: Plenum Press, 1997)

7. Steven Miller, *Civilizing Cyberspace: Policy, Power, and the Information Superhighway* (Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley, 1996)

8. Michael Perelman, *Class Warfare in the Information Age* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1998)

9. Douglas Schuler, *New Community Networks: Wired for Change* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1996)

10. Nick Dyer-Witheford, *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and circuits of Struggle in High Technology Capitalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000)

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