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Jewish Experience in Huntsville, Alabama

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RCEU 2022 Project Proposal

Project Title

Jewish Experience in Huntsville, Alabama

Faculty Information

Name: Reagan Grimsley

Status: Librarian III, Head of Special Collections

Department/Program: Archives and Special Collections

College: Salmon Library

Phone: 256-824-5781

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Adjunct Mentor:

Name: Caroline Gibbons

Status: Librarian I, Digital Archivist

College: Salmon Library

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Proposal ID RCEU22-LIB-RLG-01

I. Project Description

Huntsville, Alabama has a vibrant Jewish community which dates to the 1840's. This project will provide insight into the life and culture of the area's Jewish residents via the creation of a scholarly digital exhibit. The student will work with UAH mentors to research and create a publicly available digital exhibit with the tentative title "Jewish Experience in Huntsville, Alabama." The student will develop the project using Omeka, a web publishing platform for sharing digital collections and creating online exhibits. The information contained in the digital exhibit will be the basis for a physical traveling exhibit to debut at a later date.

II. Student Duties, Contributions, and Outcomes

The student will research and create a six panel digital exhibit based on their historical research into the lives of Jewish residents of Huntsville, Alabama. Each exhibit panel will contain 150-350 words of text plus appropriate images as well as document and object scans. UAH Special Collections will host the student, and will provide assigned workspace for the duration of the project. The Archives has an extensive archive of materials related to Jewish life in Huntsville, in particular the Goldsmith-Schiffman Collection which encompasses 80 linear feet of material. We expect the student to heavily utilize this collection in completing the exhibit.

Special Collections is open 9 to 4 Monday through Friday, and students will have access to the work area and faculty mentors during this time. Grimsley will provide an overview of digital humanities, exhibit design, background reading on Jewish history in the South, and an introduction into primary source research on the topic. Adjunct Mentor Caroline Gibbons will train the student on the needed digital tools, such as the digital exhibit module in Omeka. Both mentors will be available to answer questions and provide guidance throughout the 10 week period.

The student will learn and practice a variety of both theoretical and practical skills, including: academic writing, exhibit design, digital humanities best practices, and scholarly research. The mentors will work with the student to assist them in finding a

venue to share the research with the public in addition to creating the RCEU poster. Possible venues for their work may include the Society of Alabama Archivists Annual Meeting or the Alabama Historical Association Annual Meeting. The student will be listed as a co-author on any physical exhibit developed based on the RCEU research.

Student Selection Criteria

Any academic rank from freshman to senior. Art, English, History, Sociology, World Languages and Cultures majors or public history minors are preferred; related disciplines considered.

III. Project Mentorship

Since both of the mentors are 12 month faculty, the student will have access to one of the faculty mentors each week day during the ten week period. A weekly team meeting will be held to report on progress, provide feedback and provide a time for open discussion. The student will receive the support needed to develop the project from both a theoretical and practical perspective. UAH Special Collections will provide the equipment and software needed to create the digital exhibit. Mentors will also discuss possible tangible outcomes with the student such as future poster presentations, conference presentations, or publications.