



Communities in the Loop: Developing AI for Black Digital Archives

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Abstract: This CSRAI grant proposes to bring together scholars and students from the Colleges of Liberal Arts, Engineering, Information Sciences and Technology, and Earth and Mineral Sciences in an interdisciplinary, cross-rank, initiative that will advance knowledge of socially responsible AI in Black archives. The proposal includes PSU scholars and students from African American Studies, English, History, Geography, IST, and Mechanical Engineering including Assistant professor Jim Casey, Associate Professor Chris Dancy, Paterno Family Professor, P. Gabrielle Foreman, and PhD candidates Eden Mekonen, Courtney Murray, and Deja Workman. The project will be housed in PSU's Center for Black Digital Research, which itself is a cross-College (Library/CLA) Center which houses the longest-standing Black digital humanities project in the U.S. as well as Douglass Day, a global annual transcribe-a-thon which has engaged over 33,000 transcribers on four continents in transcribing Black records since 2017, resulting in an ongoing partnership with the Library of Congress. The proof of concept and planning work we will do via this grant will help secure future NEH and NSF funding and will also prepare PSU students to take leadership roles at the intersection of ethical/socially responsible AI and archives, addressing an urgent need identified by our partners at the Library of Congress, Smithsonian, and citizen science organizations.