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Building Lasting Fair and Equitable Community Partnerships Proposal

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Building Lasting Fair and Equitable Community Partnerships

The Florida International University Libraries' Digital Collections Center has a long history of community partnerships that have produced hundreds of digital collections with hundreds of thousands in pages of local history made freely available online for students, faculty, and the public. We have created innovative web applications to access these materials, we have provided new ways for students to produce creative scholarship with these materials, and we have engaged communities in discussions about the materials through public programming.

As an academic institution, we may perceive our role within a community partnership as facilitator, advisor, and steward, providing expertise where needed to help achieve a common goal. Yet, how do we ensure everyone has a seat at the table and our collaborative efforts are beneficial for all parties? Mindfulness about how we approach community partnerships is essential to fostering good will and trust, especially where disenfranchised and underrepresented groups may have felt exploited by organizations in the past. Approaching community partnerships with equity from the onset strengthens ties between community partners and the university as well as our students and the community.

Building on the concept of “radical collaboration” introduced by Nancy McGovern, director of Digital Preservation at MIT Libraries, this presentation sets the stage for continued discussion around strategies for implementing inclusivity in community partnerships. This is not meant to be prescriptive. It is hopefully a means to a continued dialog amongst the FIU community of faculty, staff, and students who value our local communities and strive for ongoing innovative, exciting, and engaged initiatives with the public.