

*Connecting Students, Archives, and Heritage:
Centering Black Students, Experiential
Learning, and Community Through the Black
History Archives Student Residency Program*

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Concordia University Library Research Forum
April 24, 2026

OVERVIEW

- Introduction to the Black History Archives Student Residency.
- Literature review.
- Program implementation.
- Partnerships and attracting students.
- Concluding thoughts and lessons learned.



PROPOSAL

- The idea for the Black History Archives Student Residency (BHASR) in Special Collections and Archives was proposed in February 2021.
- Initial goals were to:
 - Ensure that the Black History and Community Archives preserved in Special Collections and Archives remained accessible and connected to their communities.
 - Better integrate these archives into teaching, learning, and research at Concordia.
 - Foster connection between Black students and the archives.

PROPOSAL

- The BHASR was developed in support of the work of the President's Task Force on Anti-Black Racism.
- Subcommittee on Concordia's History and its Founding Institutions' Relations with Black Communities:
 - "Working with Concordia archivists and librarians towards identifying possibilities for mobilizing Concordia's Black community archives and library."
 - "Researching and rebuilding previous relationships with Montreal's Black community and forming new pathways and relationships with the community."

Concordia University. (n.d.). Concordia's History and its Founding Institutions' Relations with Black Communities. <https://www.concordia.ca/equity/task-force-anti-black-racism/about/subcommittees/communities.html>



PROGRAM OUTLINE - ELIGIBILITY AND FEATURES

- Eligibility:
 - Black students enrolled in full or part-time studies at any level (undergraduate, graduate).
 - Registered with The Noola Centre for Black Students.
- Features:
 - Paid!
 - 8 weeks, at 15 hours per week.
 - Based at Vanier Library, with opportunities for off-campus work.
 - Instruction, training, and support provided to help foster success.

PROGRAM OUTLINE - ELIGIBILITY AND FEATURES

- Features (continued)
 - Space to explore and activate archival materials based on their own interests.
 - Creativity and freedom to define and design their own output:
 - Research paper, newspaper or magazine article, zine, exhibition, creative work, a website, a community-based initiative, educational resource, etc.

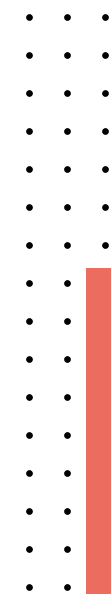


PROGRAM OUTLINE- OBJECTIVES

- To support the research and learning goals of the student resident by offering a supported opportunity to work with rare and archival materials held in the collection of the Library's Special Collections and Archives.
- To foster student interest and engagement with archives and archival research.
- To activate the Black History archives through research and exploration.
- To connect the Black History archives preserved at Concordia University Library with a new generation of learners and community members.

RESEARCH

- Literature on residency programs set in academic libraries, special collections, and archives.
- Environmental scan of institutional websites in Canada to learn about residency programs offered in university libraries and archives.
- Public libraries were not within the scope of our research.



FINDINGS

- Most residencies in academic libraries, special collections, and archives are designed to support the research needs of experienced researchers.
- Traditionally, residencies encouraged researchers to visit libraries and to make use of their collections (Wilson, 2019).



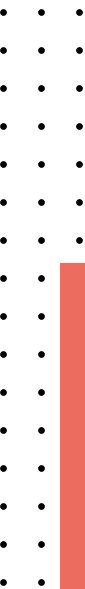
FINDINGS

Residency programs at libraries, archives, and special collections aim to:

- Support researchers;
- Fill historical gaps;
- Encourage and reward academic achievement and leadership;
- Facilitate access to library resources;
- Promote library research and enhance academic library research cultures;
- Support creative and academic freedom; and
- Reach out to new audiences through research or creative outputs by residents.

FINDINGS

- No evidence of residency programs where the learning and research needs of Black students, especially undergraduate students, are the focus of an academic library or archives-based residency in Canada.
- The Black History Archives Student Residency offers a unique experiential learning opportunity to Concordia's Black students by supporting their research needs, and academic and creative freedom.



IMPLEMENTATION - OBTAINING ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

To achieve administrative support, we focused on our:

- Commitment to preserve and share the histories of marginalized and underrepresented communities;
- Duty to ensure that collections remain connected to communities of African descent;
- Agreement to support the work of the President's Task Force, and Concordia's commitment to combating systemic racism; and
- Aim to create an experiential opportunity for Black students in support of the Black Perspectives Office's mission to advocate for Black flourishing and Black knowledges.

IMPLEMENTATION - SECURING FUNDING

- The residency program was proposed as a paid initiative.
- Reason: To help combat systemic racism.
- Resident pay matches the student salary scale published by Concordia.

	2026 salary scale	2022 salary scale
Undergraduate student	\$19.95/hour	\$16.75/hour
Master's student	\$24.95/hour	\$21.20/hour
PhD student	\$33.59/hour	\$28.75/hour

IMPLEMENTATION- BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

- Finding partners to help us define the framework for the residency was crucial.
- The Black Perspectives Office (BPO) was the Library's first partner on this project. They worked with us to develop the first call and help to ensure that the residency met and supported community needs.



IMPLEMENTATION- ENSURING ACCESSIBILITY

- No CVs or letters of support are required.
- Applicants are asked prepare a short expression of interest that tells us:
 - About themselves;
 - why they are interested in learning about and working with archives;
 - whether they have worked with the library's archival holdings;
 - how the residency aligns with their interests and goals; and
 - A bit about their predicted project outcome and what archives they anticipate using
(We note that this does not have to be firmly defined).

BHASR PARTNERSHIPS



Office of Community Engagement (OCE) (2022-present)



Black Perspectives Office (2022-2023)



NouLa – Black Student Centre (2024-present)

BHASR PARTNERSHIPS



Promotion of the
program



Strengthening
relationships



Build trust with the
Black student
community



Connect directly
with students

ATTRACTING STUDENTS

- Sharing the call for applications via Library communications (socials, kiosks).
- Conducting an information session and presentation at NouLa lounge.
- Sharing postings about the residency and info-session on NouLa's socials and listserv.
- Sharing the call for applications through collaborators' socials.
- Providing handouts about the program to students at NouLa.
- Sharing the call for applicants with professors teaching Black History.
- Word of mouth!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- Early feedback: recommendation to host two students at once, instead of a single student per residency year.
 - Proven to be true, but not always financially viable. To do this again when it is feasible.
- The residency really does support student success!
 - Most residents continue to work with archives (ours and others);
 - One moved from their undergraduate to their masters and continued to work with the materials explored during the residency. They will begin their PhD using the materials (and others) shortly!
 - An undergraduate resident will begin their master's working with the archives and plans to study archival science after its completion. They presently also work in another archive with Black History-related materials.
 - A graduate resident will begin a new phase of the project they completed during their residency shortly.



CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- Increased flexibility on offsite work to better support residents' needs and the completion of their projects.
- Commitment to continue supporting Black students through this program; to respond to their needs and feedback; and facilitate an enriching learning experience in Special Collections and Archives.
- Continue to build trust with the Black community by growing and expanding partnerships.



THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?

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