

# Collaboratively Developing Open Access Digital Collections @ UF

## The Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art & the Digital Library Center

### Between the Beads:Reading African Beadwork



#### The Arts of Africa Digital Collection & the Between the Beads Exhibit

##### Introduction

As the largest information resource system in the state of Florida with collections covering virtually all disciplines, the University of Florida Libraries supports an ongoing digitization program and Open Access to digitized materials through the University of Florida Digital Collections.

The UF Digital Collections provides Open Access to materials from the UF Libraries, UF partners, and external partners. By leveraging the power of the UF Digital Collections to support materials from many different collections, the UF Digital Collections serve as a unifying repository that brings materials together in the open in ways that are not possible to do with closed silos. In doing so, the UF Digital Collections allows for the materials to inform each other while being explored and used in new ways.

In preparation for the exhibit "Between the Beads: Reading African Beadwork" in 2008-9, the Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art partnered with the University of Florida Libraries' Digital Library Center to provide online access to selected items from the exhibit. The Digital Library Center provided imaging support by photographing each object in high resolution and creating a digital package which would simulate museum viewing by allowing each object to be seen in the round (360 degrees). Each object can also be enlarged to show detail giving scholars, researchers and the public an experience not available in the museum setting; the ability to inspect even the smallest stitch or tiniest bead. These images, along with the item's museum label text, are now freely available online to anyone with an Internet connection.

To further support the exhibit, the Digital Library Center scanned related images from the UF Libraries collections, notably photographs from Z.J.S. Ndimande & Son which were donated by researcher Frank Jolles. In order to best support the fusion of museum and library materials for exploration, innovation, and research, the Digital Library Center is also pursuing permissions to digitize scholarly research on African Beadwork.

Both institutions benefited greatly from this collaboration. The project allowed the Harn to move one step closer to their goal of providing greater public access to their collections online. At the same time the DLC added to their holdings and provided a more complete research portal by adding visual objects which directly related to their existing collection of African print materials. The result is illustrated in the UF Digital Collections when searching for the term "Yoruba." The search term returns 155 items including books on Yoruba names and their meanings, the origins of Santeria, and cultural traditions in the Benin Kingdom as well as a Yoruba Beaded Coronet and Female Ibeji Figure (both from the Harn collection). Together, the Digital Library Center and the Harn Museum hope to bring materials to life online and in conversation with each other.

##### Online

Works in the Arts of Africa Digital Collection are intended to be used in tandem with literature, research, photographs, and other materials in the Africana General Digital Collections as well as with other items from the Harn Museum's Digital Collection.

Africana Digital Collection:  
<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/africana>

Arts of Africa Digital Collection:  
<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/artaf>

Harn Museum of Art Digital Collection:  
<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/iharn>