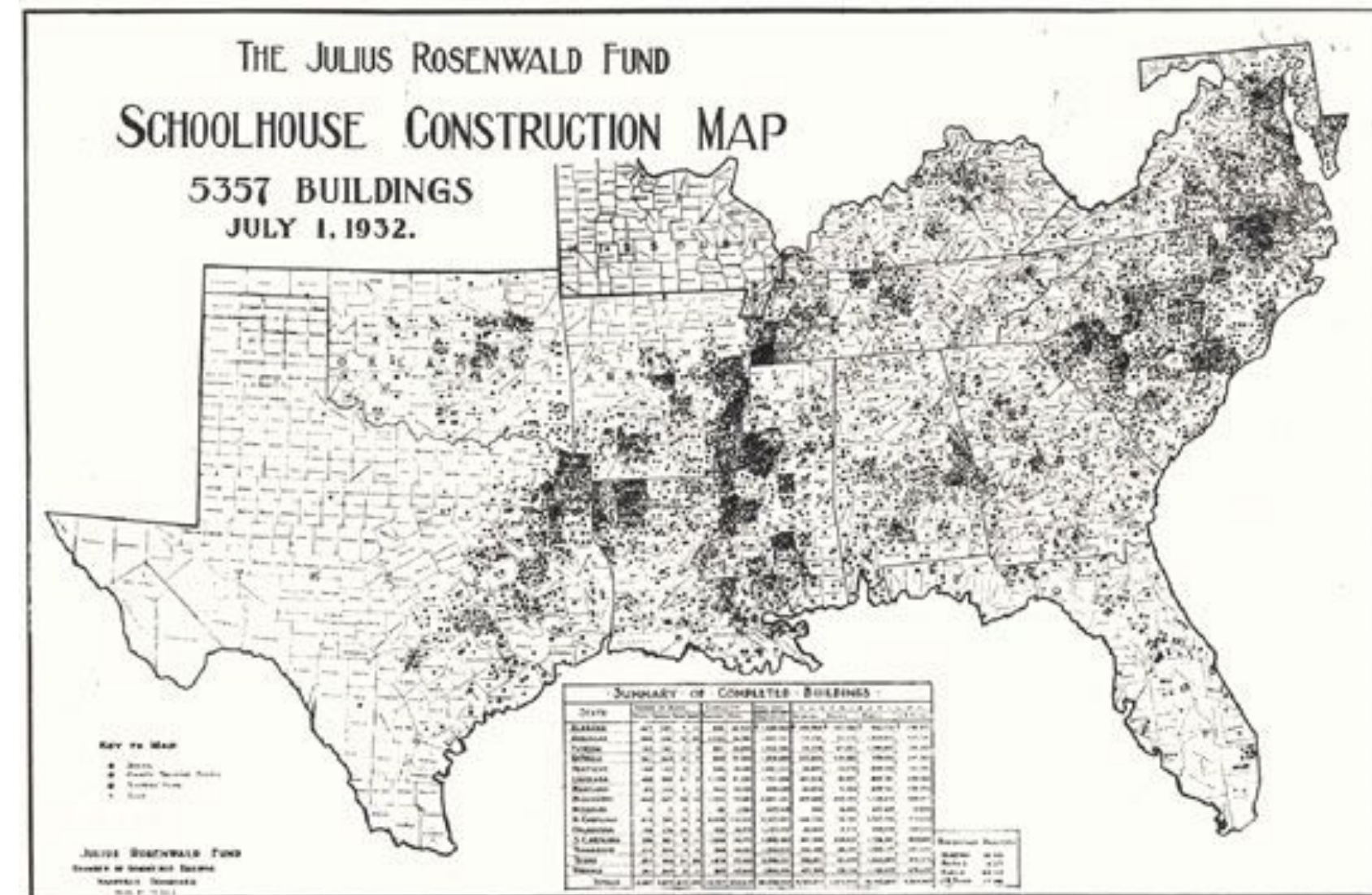


Bringing Cultural Heritage to Campus through Innovative Technical Platforms and Physical Spaces

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Rosenwald Schools



In 1912, Julius Rosenwald, President of Sears Roebuck, met with Booker T. Washington, Principal of the Tuskegee Institute, setting forth plans for the Rosenwald Fund that would be used to build improved schools for Black children throughout the south. More than 5300 schools, industrial workshops, and teacher homes were built across 15 states through a public-private partnership comprised of Rosenwald funds, community fundraising, and taxpayer funds administered by local school boards. North Carolina had the most Rosenwald projects of any state at more than 800.

The Russell School



A recent state Historic Preservation Office survey identified 125 Rosenwald Schools still standing in the state. The Russell School is the last remaining Rosenwald School of 17 originally constructed in Durham County, North Carolina. It has a two-teacher floor plan separated by a sliding divider. It opened in 1926-27 and was funded by the Black community (\$270), county school board (\$2725), and Rosenwald Fund (\$700). This community set the trend of petitioning the local school board for construction funds, although funding took years to be approved in many cases.

Follow-On Event at D.H. Hill Library

1. Panel (Contextualize)



After the completion of the virtual tour, a follow-on event was planned at D.H. Hill Library to bring further exposure to the Russell School, drawing on Matterport images previously collected to build related new exhibits (see 2., 3., and 4.). To kick off this event, a panel comprised of a Rosenwald Schools university scholar, a Russell School alumna, and a Friends of Russell School Board member was formed to discuss implications of the Rosenwald Schools movement on Black communities in the south, from both the macro context a scholar could provide, and the micro context and compelling stories local community members could offer.

3. Innovation Studio (Connect)



The library's iPearl Innovation Studio contains eight custom-built interactive projection tables on which visitors can browse exhibit content using hand gestures. This environment was used during the event to connect the Russell School story with other Rosenwald Schools in Durham County and North Carolina using historic photographs from the state archives. Exhibits on Julius Rosenwald's philanthropy to artists and Rosenwald School architecture and construction were also developed. A scavenger hunt was prepared to encourage visitors to spend time viewing the exhibits to answer all of the questions on the handout.

2. VR Headsets (Immerse)



The library event was open to the university community, Russell School community, and general public, many of whom had never visited the physical Russell School and may not have seen the virtual tour either. To provide guests with a better sense of the Russell School as a sample two-room Rosenwald School, Matterport images were exported and merged with interview audio, focusing specifically on introducing the physical features of the school (e.g., chalkboards, podium, windows, room divider).

4. 360 Theatre (Inspire)



Whereas VR headsets were used for immersion and introducing physical school features, the theatrical qualities inherent in the library's 360-degree Cyma Rubin Visualization Gallery lent themselves to inspiring guests by panning up into one's full view both external and internal school scenes (also exported from original Matterport images), cueing compelling interview segments to display over the scenes, and merging appropriate music including a joyful hymn recorded in the church that sits adjacent to the school and which owns and maintains the Russell School.

Initial Russell School Project



When NC State's digital learning office (DELTA) issued an internal call for proposals to test Matterport virtual tour technology, faculty with the College of Education proposed to develop a virtual tour of the historic Russell School. DELTA provided technical assistance to capture 360-degree images, while faculty worked with the Friends of Russell Rosenwald School Board to capture interview footage of community members and alumni discussing the school.



After editing interview footage for themes and posting segments on Youtube, DELTA worked with faculty to finalize the virtual tour by setting up interactive hot spots within Matterport and providing a Google Slides template to curate pop-up content (text, images, embedded Youtube video) that displays when viewers click particular hot spots within the tour. The completed virtual tour can be viewed at go.ncsu.edu/russell.school

Takeaways

- High Public Interest
- Digital Preservation
- High & Low-Tech Combination
- Scaffolding
- Immersion & Interaction