

Jamaica Journal now in Digitized version

showcase the history of Jamaica, the digitized version of the Jamaica Journal Historical Collection online was launched on Sunday (Nov. 15) at the Green Library of the Florida International University (FIU), Miami.

The Jamaica Journal described as the Caribbean's leading cultural publication on Jamaica's heritage is now celebrating its 40 year anniversary with 32 volumes. Published in 1967, the Journal boasts a wide range of topics including history, literature, science and environment, and the arts and can be considered a significant source of research material on Jamaica.

"Making the entire collection available online, will increase the awareness of the Journal's historical and continued importance in documenting Jamaican heritage, culture and environment" according to Brooke Wooldridge of the Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC) of the University, one of the collaborating agencies.

Speaking with JIS News, she continued that making this collection available online in a digital library will introduce people to the publication. Students pursuing Caribbean studies will also have more access to even more information, she added.

Professor Barry Chevannes, Chairman of the Institute of Jamaica (IOJ) speaking at Reception to celebrate the historical launch said that the "digitization of the Jamaica Journal will mean a de-locking of the document from its imprisonment in time and space and releasing it to a readership and research community that has the potential to be as wide as cyberspace is wide."

Describing the Journal as one of Jamaica's most cherished products, Professor Chevannes said that the publication was a "window into the life of the Jamaican people." It was founded in 1967 by former Prime Minister Edward Seaga who at the time was doing anthropological fieldwork among the rural and urban folk.

He continued that Mr. Seaga's fascination with the beauty and cosmological sophistication of the Revival religion, led him to compose a poem titled "River Mumma" which he entered into the Festival competition under an assumed name, earning a gold medal.

As there was no outlet to publish the poem at the time, Mr. Seaga suggested that the Institute start a publication to showcase the works of writers and scholars on Jamaican and Caribbean culture. "River Mumma" was printed in the third volume in 1969. Since then, the issues continue to carry articles on the practices of the daily life of the Jamaican people, "providing snapshots of a people in a rapidly changing cultural life" according to Professor Chevannes.

Emphasizing its simplicity in language and style, Professor Chevannes said that the Journal was not a specialized organ but "one aimed at cultivating the sensibilities and intellect of as wide a readership as possible."

He lauded the collaborative work of other partnering agencies including the Institute of Jamaica presuming that the digitization would help the sustained growth of the Journal. Other supporting agencies included the Jamaica Information Service, the Jamaica Tourist Board, Air Jamaica Limited and the Latin American and Caribbean Center.