

We began our work on the CCP Corpus based on the minutes which make up the majority of its holdings. These documents generally follow a consistent form across organizations and meetings, which makes creating a schema for them relatively straightforward. As such, we were at first preoccupied with adding elements to our schema that reflected to structures commonly found in meeting minutes. We put a great deal of effort into the formatting elements necessary to encode a multi-page document, including page breaks and numbering.

We were also interested in honoring the presence and agency of the Black activists who created and are the subjects of these documents (per the CCP corpus guidelines), so we worked to add formalized elements that would note location data, both for people (e.g., delegates from different states or counties) and for locations of conventions. We also constructed included a name element with attributes for both enslaved names and chosen names that could be connected with each other using a target/xml:id structure.

However, as we examined the material available from the CCP corpus, we were most interested in the work of Black women in the Colored Conventions. We found no official woman delegates, although women were involved in the Conventions. If there were women involved in the production of the meeting minutes (as transcribers or proofreaders, for example), there was no mention of them. So, we focused on the work Black women did to support the Colored Conventions materially: when delegates met, they also had to eat and sleep, and women were often the providers of such essential support in the form of boardinghouses and catering services.

We decided to encode a set of brief, heterogeneous documents: some newspaper clippings about boardinghouses run by Black women, and an exhibit constructed by CCP scholars using a menu from a Black caterer to a colored Convention and two cookbooks of the same era.¹ While these cookbooks were not technically associated with the Colored Conventions, they do provide a window into the cooking that the Black women running those boardinghouses might have done.

As we began encoding the recipes, we found we had to make some additions to our schema. Unsurprisingly, the kinds of data found in meeting minutes and the kinds of data found in a cookbook do not perfectly overlap. Most notably, we had to add measurement and quantity elements to account for ingredient lists. As I encoded my portion of the recipes, i found that they

¹ One cookbook was by a former enslaved woman named Abby Fisher and one by free Black woman named Malinda Russell (it is worth noting that while Rufus Estes' *Good Things to Eat* was published in 1911 and proclaimed itself the first cookbook published by a Black person, Mrs. Fisher's book was published in 1881 and Ms. Russell's in 1856-Estes was born in 1857).

ended up less densely encoded than I would have anticipated, which I think is likely due to the fact that many of our elements were originally intended for a very different type of document.

The newspaper clippings proved easier to encode without much schema alteration. One in particular fit well: a “card” written by the delegates of the 1835 colored Convention in Philadelphia, praising the boardinghouse of Serena Gardiner. It included a list of delegates much like the lists of delegates we saw in the meeting minutes we had previously examined; I find it interesting that the delegates would choose to carry over such a formalized way of recording their names, and that they felt it worthwhile to list the name and geographic origin of every delegate. The location element also applied to the newspaper clippings, as they went to some trouble to list accurate addresses for businesses. Possibly this was both good for custom and a way to make their support known and available to Black organizers not from their area.

If we were to encode such heterogeneous documents at scale I am not quite sure what would happen. We have what feels like (to my novice judgement) a broad range of elements which allow for the encoding of a range of documents, although I am sure that our schema would grow yet larger as we dug into the details of more texts (a table of contents or a publishing information page, for example, might require a lot more structure).

It is tempting to simply make different schema for these disparate documents, but I think there may be something fruitful in encoding recipes, minutes, and advertisements under one schema. All of these writings relate to Black organizing in some way, and one of the notable ties between all of them is the physical experience of the people they describe and were made by. I note in particular that the location, and name tags could see use across all of these genres; it is possible that by cross referencing minutes with newspaper clippings and recipes or menus, we might be able to gain a clearer picture of the movements and experiences of individual delegates at the Colored Conventions.

I also note that while the minutes primarily take men as their subject, the recipes and advertisements more clearly bear the mark of women: they are by and about women. Although our documents do not explicitly state their connections to each other, we might rediscover the threads connecting them by matching names, dates, and locations across our documents, thus giving us a sense of how organizing happened not just in offices and meeting halls, but kitchens and parlors. If could change the schema to optimize for this, I would make the name, date, and location elements further formalized, so that a computer could more easily find matches across large datasets.