new york state archives

A Manual for
Documentation Planning
in New York State

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**This manual and the documents referred to in it are available on the
New York State Historical Records Advisory Board web site
https://www.archives.nysed.gov/shrab.**

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Introduction

New York is in danger of losing a priceless treasure. Scattered about the state in file drawers and boxes, in offices, attics, and warehouses, are innumerable reservoirs of information about our historical and recent past, the seeds of history and understanding for an educated and informed populace. Much of this vital resource is being lost or destroyed, mostly from lack of understanding, neglect, or the lack of resources to save what needs saving. Whole industries, cultures, and areas of New York life, and many of its important events, people, and organizations are undocumented. If unchecked, this deterioration will result in a shallow and uneven historical record that will leave critical parts of our history untold and unknowable.

Purpose of the manual

This manual is a tool whose purpose is to help ensure the creation of a more comprehensive, balanced, and equitable record of all New York's peoples and their history. It is part of an effort of the New York State Archives and the New York State Historical Records Advisory Board, made possible in part by a major grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, to develop statewide plans for the documentation of underdocumented groups and topics throughout the state.

As part of this project, the State Archives has developed the documentation planning methodology in this manual and tested it in three areas: mental health, environmental affairs, and Latino/Hispanic history and culture. In each of these areas now, people are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of the records they create or hold in their possession, and projects are beginning to emerge that will create a more complete and balanced archival record. This manual presents the methodology for people and organizations that wish to undertake further documentation planning in these and other topic areas.

What Is Documentation Planning?

The process of documentation planning

Documentation planning at the statewide or regional level is a process of research, dialogue among stakeholders, and decision-making. Its goals are to organize the mass of possible topics for documentation within a broad topic area*, decide which are most important to document, and determine appropriate documentation approaches. A documentation planning process will attempt to answer questions such as these:

> See Defining Terms: Documentation and Records, Appendix B, page 25

> *See the New York Documentation Topics Framework a comprehensive, annotated list of eighteen broad topic areas to consider for documentation in New York history, prepared by the New York State Archives. A summary list of the topics is found in Appendix D, page 28.

- Which topics fall within the broad topic area and which don't? What are the boundaries of the topic?

- How should the topic be divided into subtopics?

- What are the most important subtopics, events, trends, or issues in the history of the topic over the past 100 years or so that should be documented in the historical record?

- What organizations, institutions, and individuals have been most significant in the topic area?

- What documentation of the topic already exists and what are the most important gaps that need to be filled?
- What are the most promising steps to take in documenting the topic?

Ultimately, it is individual repositories that will decide what exactly to collect. The documentation planning process provides them with a research-based set of priority topics and criteria that can guide them in their decision making.

Three premises of documentation planning

There are three underlying premises that are particularly critical to the New York State Archives' approach to statewide and regional planning[1]:

All appraisal is local and subjective.
Decisions about what to collect must be made by each repository, balancing its resources of staff, facilities, and money; its mission, interests, and collecting policy; and its perceptions and understandings of the importance of the topic and the likely historical value of particular kinds of records.

The potential universe of documentation will always exceed the resources of any repository.
Given the size and diversity of any important topic area, the potential amount of documentation will be more than any particular repository can handle; indeed it will be more than all the repositories in the state can handle. Therefore it is not possible to define or achieve comprehensive documentation — there is no way to decide how much documentation is enough.

It is possible to make the selection of what to document more rational and efficient relative to a specific repository's goals and resources.
It is possible for an individual repository, or repositories throughout the state, to develop a rational and efficient basis for assessing what it makes sense for them to document, within a context of statewide needs and priorities. Such an approach benefits the repository, and it contributes to a more balanced, rational, and comprehensive historical record statewide.

The products of documentation planning

A documentation planning project will usually result in three products:

- A general history of the topic in New York State or the region, drawn from secondary sources. For regional or local planning projects, this may consist of a few pages within the guide or plan that profiles the history of the topic. For statewide projects, it may be a substantial document of 50 to 100 pages. (See "Prepare historical overview," page 12)

- A report on the existing documentation of the topic in New York State that shows what kinds of materials have already been collected and are already available in archives. (See "Develop a preliminary summary of existing documentation," page 13)

- A guide or a plan that explains what kinds of subtopics, events, organizations, and individuals need to be documented and why; what kinds of records are likely to be particularly valuable within the topic area, and guidance on how to go about the documentation work.

Who is the manual for?

Records holders This manual is for records holders — archivists, librarians, administrators, and others who work with repositories, such as archives, libraries, historical societies, community organizations, museums, government agencies, corporations, colleges, and universities, that collect historically valuable records and make them accessible to the public for research.

Records creators The manual may also be useful to records creators — people and organizations who are engaged with the topic to be documented and who generate records in the course of their activities — especially if they are considering or are already part of a documentation planning effort.

Records users Some readers will be the users of records, individuals who need documentation for their research and want to ensure the survival of critical information.

Why undertake documentation planning?

Identifying, preserving, and making publicly accessible historically valuable materials is essential to the creation of a balanced historical record. But which records should be collected? The documentation planning process helps answer that question by providing vital information about what documentation of the topic area already exists, what subtopics are most important to document, and where the gaps are that need to be filled.

Documentation planning:

Helps people decide what is most important to collect and why
A documentation plan or guide will set forth priority topics, issues, trends, and events for documentation on a statewide or regional basis.

Provides a basis for collecting decisions, focuses on filling significant gaps in the documentary record
In a time of scarce resources of space, time, and money, there is no point in duplicating documentation efforts, and it is important that organizations concentrate on work that meets significant needs. A documentation plan can provide the rationale, at statewide, regional, and local levels, for collection policies and for documentation projects and decisions within the projects. It can also be a persuasive tool for use with CEOs, trustees, or funders that must approve and support documentation and collecting efforts.

Encourages and stimulates collecting to improve the documentary record
The existence of a statewide or regional documentation guide or plan for a topic area makes it much easier for repositories to undertake documentation of the topic. It may also help draw attention to the topic as an important focus of documentation. The plan or guide places the local effort into a statewide context, defines its conceptual boundaries, suggests priority areas for documentation, and identifies potential sources of information, technical assistance, and funding.

Scope of documentation planning

Geographical scope

Statewide

A documentation planning project that is statewide in scope will define the topic and establish statewide criteria for high priority documentation. It will help a statewide repository make informed decisions about what is most important for it to collect, and it will help a regional or local repository decide whether a particular subtopic or issue has statewide significance or is of local or regional importance only.

Regional

It is the intent of the State Archives that the statewide guides and their methodology will be used in each region of the state to help generate more explicit and detailed regional documentation plans with priorities and topics selected for documentation that reflect the specific needs and interests of the region. In the dozens of topics where no statewide guide exists, regional planning is even more important. A successful regional plan can serve both as a model for other regions and as a resource for the development of a statewide guide.

Topical scope

The potential topics for documentation planning efforts are wide ranging and tend to fall into one of the following categories:

Theme

In most cases, the topic for documentation planning will be a broad thematic area of New York history, such as environmental affairs, health, business, religion, education, etc.

The topic could also be the overall history of a region. A county historical society or a coalition of historical societies in a region might undertake such a project to develop a collecting focus for the area.

Event

In some instances, there may be particular events or issues whose complexity or ramifications are so extensive that a documentation planning process is necessary to make sense of the subject and make documentation decisions. The World Trade Center catastrophe of 2001 is a good example.

Population group

This category generally refers to groups defined by ethnicity or culture (Latino, Korean, etc.). Groups selected by age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, social class, and so on might also be appropriate subjects.

Active involvement of stakeholder communities

Stakeholder participation is at the heart of this documentation planning method. A planning project involves making critical, possibly controversial decisions about what topics, organizations, activities, and individuals are the most important to document. Such decisions need to rest on a broad and reliable knowledge base, and the decision-making process needs to be viewed as fair by stakeholder communities. Carefully chosen people knowledgeable about and active in the topic area can provide

valuable information, varied perspectives, and oversight of the project as it develops; they lend credibility to the process and the outcome; and they can become the core of an active, committed constituency for ongoing documentation.

Who are the stakeholders?

Records creators
For the purposes of involving stakeholders in the documentation planning process, "records creators" refers to the people active in the field who have detailed, day-to-day knowledge of their part of the topic area, the issues and challenges faced there, the kinds of records created in the course of their work, and the other players with whom they interact (colleagues, clients, customers, suppliers, etc.).

Subject experts
This term generally refers to scholars and other analysts who study the field, and leaders in the field or others who have broad and detailed knowledge of the topic as a whole, whether or not they currently play an active role in the organizations working in the topic area. The broad, outsider perspective on the topic is important to include in discussions about the parameters, the documentary universe, and other facets of the planning process.

Records holders
Archivists, librarians, and others who work with repositories that collect historical records understand the documentation process, the ways archives process the records they receive, and the opportunities and the constraints faced by repositories. They constitute an important resource for the documentation planning effort.

Records users
A documentation planning project should include among its advisors some of the regular and knowledgeable researchers that are likely to make use of the collections. Records users may be subject experts or records creators as well, but their experience as users should also inform the planning process.

Stakeholders need to be involved in the project from the beginning, and ideally they should participate in all its stages. In a statewide project, the participation of records holders will come later, once the content and priorities of the topic area have been worked out. Stakeholders can be involved in several ways: as individual consultants or advisors; as one-time participants in meetings or conferences; or as members of ongoing project advisory groups.

Establishing a project advisory group

It is important to establish an ongoing advisory group for the project as a whole. Its primary purpose will be to provide oversight and guidance for the planning process and then guide follow-up and implementation of the documentation effort once the guide or plan is complete. The group should include: (1) stakeholders representing various facets of the topic; (2) key subject experts; (3) archivists, ideally including someone with documentation planning experience; and (4) representatives of repositories with an interest in the topic area. In order for the group to be ready to assume its responsibilities, it should be convened and invested in the project as early in the planning process as possible.

(For more information, see "Managing stakeholder involvement," Appendix C, page 27.)

Getting the word out

The documentation planning process needs to involve numerous people and organizations that represent the diversity of the topic across the geographical area to which the plan will apply. Once it is complete, it is important that people who might be interested in participating in or supporting documentation efforts are aware of the project. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare documents for public distribution, as well as for internal use, at several stages of the project. A news release early in the project may result in topic experts or important stakeholders coming forward who can contribute to later stages of the project. Later releases and announcement of the completion of the project and related publications can do a lot to raise the profile of documentation and historical records issues and to win support for documentation projects based on the results of the planning process.

Summary of the Documentation Planning Method

This and the following sections provide the steps to follow in documentation planning. The table below summarizes the steps. Following this summary, each step is described in more detail.

Although the steps outlined below follow a logical sequence, they do not necessarily take place in strict chronological order. Several may run concurrently, and the results of "earlier" steps may be revised on the basis of information gathered in "later" ones.

Documentation Planning Method — At a Glance
Step 1. Define documentation topic and determine its parameters.
• Conduct preliminary research on existing definitions and parameters.   • Begin to identify key stakeholders and potential members of advisory group; establish group when ready (see page 8).   • Draft definition of the documentation topic and its parameters — the boundaries of the topic.   • Consult with subject experts, researchers, and records creators to develop and validate definition.   • Draft and distribute news release announcing the project.
Step 2. Conduct background research to determine documentary universe.
• Identify significant developments, trends, events, functions, legislation, individuals, and organizations within defined parameters. 　• Prepare an historical overview of topic from secondary sources 　• Develop a conceptual framework of the structure of the topic 　• Prepare a preliminary inventory of existing documentation   • Consult with subject experts, researchers, and records creators on how to organize and subdivide the topic.   • Identify key records creators and endangered collections
Step 3. Develop list of topics to document and criteria for prioritizing them.
• Develop a list of topics and subtopics that need to be documented, in consultation with stakeholders.   • Define criteria and method for prioritizing topics and subtopics.   • Consult with subject experts, researchers, and records creators to refine and validate topics list and criteria .

Documentation Planning Method — At a Glance

Step 4. Assess existing documentation in relation to priorities.

- Compare existing documentation with priority topics and subtopics to identify documentation needs

Step 5. Identify and prioritize actions needed to address documentation needs.

- Identify potential partners in action — records creators, experts, repositories, and sponsors.
- Determine the steps in the documentary process.
- Act immediately to save selected important and endangered records.
- Plan short- and long-term actions to address gaps in the documentary record.

Step 6. Prepare and distribute documentation plan or guide.

- Draft documentation plan or guide: Suggested table of contents.
- Review with key stakeholders for final comments.
- Publish the plan or guide — Distribute and publicize it widely.
- Actively pursue implementation strategies.
- Review and revise the guide or plan periodically

Step 1. Define topic and determine its parameters

A. Three sets of parameters

Defining the documentation topic and setting its boundaries may be a more challenging task than it first appears. The boundaries are likely to be of three kinds: topical, geographical, and temporal.

Topical Boundaries

What are the conceptual limits of the topic? Most topics tend to merge into other topics at the edges, and the lines may be hard to draw. Even once they are drawn, there will be decisions requiring subjective judgment.

The State Archives has developed a "New York State Documentation Topics Framework," (Appendix D, page 29) which attempts to arrange the entire universe of New York history into 18 broad topic areas and related subtopics to be considered for documentation. It may be a useful tool in effort to determine the boundaries of a topic and describe its documentary universe (Step 2 below).

Environmental affairs, for example, blends into the biological and earth sciences at one edge, and natural history at another edge nearby. Should basic research in animal behavior or atmospheric ozone be documented? We decided that the litmus test would be whether the topic — or more accurately, the organization or activity up for documentation — explicitly addresses environmental issues or becomes engaged in the public discourse about environmental issues. A zoo that simply educates the public about animals and their habitats and behavior would not be included. One whose public interpretations focus on environmental issues such as the loss of habitat would be a candidate for documentation.

Geographical boundaries

What are the geographical limits within which documentation will be collected? Do "natural" boundaries for the topic (for example, the service areas of the organizations being documented, or political districts or county lines) coincide with the service areas of the collecting organizations? If a national organization is headquartered in the region for which the plan is being developed, but most

of its activities take place elsewhere, should the organization be documented, and if so, to what extent?

Temporal boundaries
What is the date range within which documentary efforts will be concentrated? Does it make sense to continue mining the nineteenth century for a few remaining nuggets? Should scarce resources be directed to the entire twentieth century, or is much of the most significant activity concentrated in a particular period?

B. Definition and Parameters, step by step

1. Preliminary research

> Items 1 through 4 in this section will be helpful also in determining the documentary universe (Step 2 page 13).

- Is there an accepted definition of the topic in the scholarly or professional world? In the field of Mental Health, for example, there is a standard manual, the Diagnostic and Statistic Manual IV (DSM IV) that clearly defines the boundaries of mental health from the point of view of the medical profession and sets it apart from such related fields as substance abuse and developmental disabilities.

- Look at tables of contents of books, bibliographies, etc., for the topics covered.

- Seek articles that address definitions and parameters directly.

- Seek lists of organizations and associations in the field — what kinds of topics are addressed by the organizations that create records?

2. Identify two or three key experts
Begin to build stakeholder list

At this early stage of the project, it is important to find two or three subject experts to help you think through the initial questions. Ideally they should be people who have broad knowledge of the field, aren't too narrowly focused in their interests and views, are able to understand, articulate, and respect views other than their own, and are respected by others in their field.

In addition to their grasp of the subject matter, they are likely to know or know of other people who should be involved with the project. Using their contacts and others you may have, begin to build a list of stakeholders in the field, individuals who may be willing to participate in the project. They should be drawn from all facets of the field, all main points of view, different kinds of organizations, and different levels within organizations.

> For the mental health project two initial contacts led us to more than thirty key individuals statewide, many of whom both advised us on the project and led us to additional contacts.
>
> For the environmental project, we identified two leaders in environmental affairs who had worked for the Department of Environmental Conservation, been active in nonprofit organizations, and conducted environmental research. They helped guide our initial definitions of the topic and led us to numerous other contacts around the state.

3. Draft statement of definition and parameters and revise with experts

Based on the preliminary research described above, draft a concise statement that, for the purposes of the project, defines the topic and its parameters as clearly as possible.

4. Test and revise with colleagues and stakeholders

This process will continue throughout Step 2, because discussion of the internal structure of the topic, the documentary universe, is likely to lead to revision of the external boundaries. Also, with each step the stakeholder group will grow, and new ideas are likely to emerge.

5. Draft and distribute news release announcing the project

The definition and parameters statement should give you a clear enough concept and definition to announce the project publicly with a news release. Email, electronic lists and newsgroups, and web sites are potential outlets for the release, along with print media. A release early in the project may result in important new contacts and information about significant records that might not otherwise come to your attention.

Step 2. Conduct background research to determine the documentary universe

The goal of this step is to develop the tools necessary to achieve a basic understanding of the topic as an historical narrative and to identify major topics for documentation. Based on the understanding that emerges, you will be better able to identify stakeholder participants, suggest priority topics for documentation, and ask the right questions of your stakeholder participants.

The research aims to answer questions such as these: What is the overall history of the topic in New York over the past century or so? Who have been the major organizations, institutions, and individuals that have shaped this history? How is the field structured, conceptually by scholars and policy makers and functionally by the people and organizations that participate in it? What documentation about the topic already exists in accessible archives?

A. Identify significant developments, trends, events, functions, legislation, individuals, and organizations within defined parameters

1. Prepare an historical overview of the topic from secondary sources

An outline of the history of the topic in New York is an important resource for documentation planning. As a complement to the conceptual framework discussed below, the historical overview provides a broad narrative and chronology of the topic, its main trends, issues, events, and actors over time. Much of the input about the content of the field during other phases of the project (explained below) will come from people currently engaged in the field who may or may not be knowledgeable about its history. This document will provide information and perspectives beyond living memory that is essential for the historical record.

This should not be a scholarly research project; rather, it should be drawn where possible from secondary sources. Its purpose is not interpretive; it should not be arguing a thesis. It should instead give the basic factual outlines of the history, focusing on New York. For a regional project, it should naturally focus on the region's history, but some general statewide narrative will be necessary to provide context. It will be a public document, so it needs to be well written in an accessible style.

For some topics there will be such a scarcity of published material on the subject that a paper based on secondary sources will be impossible. This may be the case for regional histories and for many population groups. Under these circumstances, the writer will have to find other ways of getting at least the basic elements of the story — interviews with knowledgeable individuals, newspaper and magazine accounts, and so on.

The extent and quality of secondary source material on the topic will be a partial indication of the need for documentation and may suggest where some of the most important documentation gaps are.

2. Develop a conceptual framework of the structure of the topic

It is useful early in the process to have in some brief form a way to picture the topic as a whole — a list of subtopics, a grid or chart, whatever emerges from your initial research and conversations with subject experts. The steps recommended under "Preliminary Research" in Step 1 will help with this.

For the Latino project, we adapted the New York Documentation Topics Framework (Appendix, page 28) and added subtopics relevant to Hispanic history and experience. For the environmental component, we developed an Environmental Topics Matrix (Appendix E, page 30). Both helped shape our initial thinking and questions. They were also useful reference tools during the project, helping us to make sure we weren't missing important areas of the topic.

3. Prepare a preliminary inventory of existing documentation

It is important to know what documentation already exists in archives in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in the historical record. The final documentation plan or guide should focus attention on filling the important gaps and avoid collecting more material in areas where the record is already strong.

Both, however, had limitations. Although they were based on research and expert scholarly input, they did not always accurately reflect the ways people active in the field view and structure the documentary universe within which they operate. The stakeholder perceptions proved generally more reliable and useful as guides to a future documentation process. The two approaches, however, were complementary, and both served important purposes.

A large and growing number of repositories are describing their collections online. This makes it possible and cost-effective to search major research library databases and web sites online to determine the extent of archival materials available on the topic. This process will not find all the relevant materials for two main reasons: Archives that don't have their collections described online will be excluded; and the choices of search terms and search techniques will determine what is found and what is missed. However, the results of a well conducted search should provide basic and detailed information about existing documentation of the topic.

Searchable online databases that can help you find out what documentation of your topic currently exists in archives include: the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN), the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), and Excelsior (the online catalog of the New York State Archives and State Library), which includes New York's statewide Historic Documents Inventory (HDI).

Analyze results in relation to documentation topics list

The results of the search will be a preliminary but useful finding aid. It's usefulness will be increased by an analysis of its contents, and this analysis will be essential in determining the gaps in the historical record (see Step 4, page 19). If the development of the priority list of topics is being carried out concurrently with the online search, the analysis should seek to identify and group the records located using the main categories identified in the list. For example, if land use emerges as a major subtopic for

documentation under environmental affairs, it will be important to know to what extent records related to land use turned up in the search.

Publish initial findings and solicit additions and corrections

If time and resources permit, the finding aid that results from the search should be published on the Internet or in print and made available to stakeholders and others, with a request for information about relevant additional records that did not turn up in the search.

Timing and interaction among these three tasks

Each of the three steps above —writing the historical overview, developing the conceptual framework, and conducting the online search — is closely tied to the other two and can benefit from knowledge gained in them. Circumstances will dictate which gets under way first, but they are likely to be done concurrently, and there should be regular communication among those working on them.

For example, those working on the conceptual framework may be influenced by trends or events discovered by the historian and by kinds of records discovered in the search. The historian may be prompted to look in new areas based on categories that emerge in the conceptual framework or the online search. The online researcher may structure the search based in part on terms derived from the framework or the historical overview.

B. Consult with experts and records creators on how to organize and subdivide the topic

This process will have begun in Step 1 while defining the topic and setting its parameters and continued while building the conceptual framework. It is, however, at this stage, organizing the topic, and the next two — deciding which are the most important topics to be documented and identifying records creators and collections — that it is crucial to get a wide range of information and views from stakeholders. The same individual contacts, conferences, and small-group meetings described below can be used for both purposes.

Build stakeholder list

By this point in the project, you are likely to have a good beginning to a list. Work on the conceptual framework, historical overview, and online records search will have suggested places to look for people and may have turned up key names. Phone calls or emails to the contacts provide opportunities to spread the word about the project, solicit people's interest and involvement, and learn of other contacts to pursue.

Gather information from experts and records creators

The purpose of the documentation enterprise overall is to save and make accessible important historical records. Therefore, it is the people who create the records, organize them, and put them away whose understanding of how the topic is divided will be most important to learn. New York State government, for example, has separate agencies to handle mental health, alcohol and substance abuse, and mental retardation, so it is important to understand those distinctions if one is searching for state records. On the other hand, many local or regional agencies address all three areas and serve many individuals who require assistance in two or three of them, so they divide up the territory — and the records — differently.

The best way to find out what are the meaningful topics and subtopics around which people understand their work and organize their records is to ask them. This can be done at the same time that they are being asked what topics and subtopics they think are most important to document (see Step 3 below, page 16). One approach is to ask participants in a small group meeting or a conference break-out group to brainstorm the most important events, trends, issues, organizations, and individuals that have shaped the history of the topic; then have them cluster the items into related groups. The groups, and the titles participants give them, will give a good indication how they divide up the universe of the topic area.

There are several complementary mechanisms that may work well to obtain stakeholder input (for more on this, see Managing Stakeholder Involvement, Appendix C, page 27):

Individual contacts

Telephone calls, email exchanges, or face-to-face meetings are a good place to start, particularly with individuals who are particularly knowledgeable. There may also be key people who for personal or professional reasons are unable or unwilling to participate in a conference or group meeting but will meet individually. Knowledgeable and well respected individuals can help in three important ways early in the project:

- They can give you important initial information on how the field is structured — for example, how environmental affairs might be conceptualized differently by academics, legislators, and people working in environmental organizations.

- They can put you in contact with other potential participants.

- They can help establish the legitimacy of the project by virtue of their involvement in it.

Conferences

One method for gathering information and encouraging interaction is a regional or statewide conference of stakeholders. This approach provides opportunities for cross-fertilization of ideas from different geographical areas and opportunities for both small-group and plenary sessions. A conference held early in a project could be used to energize and inform participants about the project, build a contact list, and gather views about important topics to document, particularly with a topic, such as mental health, for which regional differences may not be significant. A mid-project conference could be used to refine the documentation topics list and review a draft of the guide (see mental health example in the box above). A conference at the end of the project could focus on how to use the completed guide, generate documentation project ideas, stimulate the formation of partnerships or coalitions among records creators and repositories, and launch the implementation phase of the documentation work. Whether to hold one or more conferences will depend on the resources available and decisions about which will be the most efficient and effective ways to obtain stakeholder input for the particular project.

> For the mental health component, the State Archives convened a conference in Albany following completion of the first draft of the documentation plan. Attracting more than sixty people representing a broad range of mental health constituencies, the conference focused on gathering feedback and commentary on the draft. The suggestions received led to significant changes in the content of the plan. The conference also provided an invaluable and rare opportunity for communication among people active in different facets of this complex topic area.

Small-group meetings

Small-group meetings held in different parts of the state or region are valuable ways to obtain stakeholder involvement in several ways:

- They reflect the local character of the area and reveal local history and issues. (Not all topics will be characterized by strong regional or local differences, but some will.)

- They can involve people who could not travel to a statewide conference

- By holding a series of meetings, the later ones benefit from what was learned at the earlier ones, both in terms of process and content

- They entail relatively low travel and hospitality costs

For the Latino and environmental components of its project, the State Archives held a series of six to eight regional meetings for each topic. About fifteen people participated in each, including one or two staff. The agenda was to gather information about the organization of the field, the topics most important to document, and who has records — specific records creators or collections that should be documented.

Participants in the conference and meetings were chosen to reflect the diversity of each topic, in terms of points of view, kinds and sizes of organizations with which they were affiliated, and walks of life. They were also chosen for their depth and variety of experience over time. These gatherings proved very successful, both in collecting important information and in building a constituency for the documentation effort.

Small group meeting are a good context in which to brainstorm about the divisions within the field, the most important topics to be documented, and the individuals and organizations that are likely to hold important collections.

C. Identify key records creators and endangered collections

The process of gathering information from stakeholders about topics to document is also an opportunity to learn about specific individuals or organizations that may have important collections and about valuable collections that are endangered. This information will be important during Step 5, identifying and prioritizing action steps (see pages 19-21).

Step 3. Develop list of topics to document and criteria for prioritizing them

A. Develop list of topics and subtopics to be documented

It is not possible or necessary to document all aspects of any topic. By asking a wide range of knowledgeable and experienced individuals what they consider to be the *most important* topics, events, issues, and organizations that should be reflected in the historical record, it is possible to narrow the range considerably. But whether the mechanism for developing the list of topics for documentation is conversations with individuals, a conference, a series of small-group meetings, or a combination, the result is likely to be a long and varied list.

For a statewide plan or a regional one that involves multiple repositories, it is not necessary or desirable to decide specifically what to collect and what not to collect. Such decisions will be made by the repositories that do the collecting. Rather, the documentation planning process needs to identify a manageable, coherent set of priority topics that can guide repositories in the decisions they need to make. (For an outline of how a repository might use a documentation guide to help it decide what to

collect, see Appendix G, page 33.) Therefore, the list of topics stakeholders consider most important needs to be analyzed and consolidated, but it should not be prioritized internally.

B. Define criteria and method for prioritizing topics and subtopics

At this stage, stakeholders have given their views as to the most important topics that should be documented. But many of these topics are still broad categories. When it comes to deciding whether a particular subtopic or a particular organization should be a statewide or regional priority for documentation, how does one make those decisions?

Criteria

To be considered a statewide or regional priority for documentation, a topic should meet at least one and probably more of these criteria. This list should be the template for developing a set of criteria appropriate to the particular topic of the documentation planning process. Some of these criteria may not be relevant, others may need to be revised, and new ones may need to be added.

- **It represents a contribution by New York that is distinctive, seminal, or precedent-setting to the topic area overall**;
  Example from Mental Health: New York has been at the forefront in the diagnosis and treatment of psychiatric conditions since the 1840s. Diagnostic and treatment research pioneered in New York has ranged from moral treatment to fever therapy to psychotropic drugs and surgical approaches. From environmental affairs: The initial suit to prohibit the use of the pesticide DDT on Long Island led to the formation of the Environmental Defense Fund (now Environmental Defense, a national organization), whose subsequent legal action led to the national ban on DDT. By contrast, while global warming and climate change are major issues, and many New Yorkers are engaged with these issues, New York's contributions in this area have not been distinctive to date.

- **It has had major impact or influence statewide or over large areas**;
  Examples from environmental affairs: The establishment of the Adirondack Forest Preserve and Adirondack Park affected an enormous area of the North Country and set important precedents for land use and protection statewide. Similarly, the protection of land through private acquisition by non-profit organizations such as land trusts and the Nature Conservancy has affected all parts of the state. The controversy surrounding a particular Superfund site, on the other hand, which might be extremely important regionally for its effects on public health and water quality, among other impacts, may not have affected a large area or stimulated statewide activity. The issue could be a high priority, however, in a regional documentation plan.

- **It reflects the beginning of a trend or issue or an important milestone in its history.**
  Example from Latino-Hispanic history and culture: Latino history begins in each part of the state with the establishment of a community, and it continues with many "firsts": the first Hispanic elected to public office, the first bilingual education program, and so on. Some of these firsts may be interesting markers but may not be considered historically very important. Others may be important regionally or statewide because of the circumstances of their occurrence or their ongoing influence. Such events or milestones may be important to document.

- **It has engaged and had significant impact in several facets of the topic**.
  Example from environmental affairs: Love Canal engaged issues of toxic waste, public health, and water quality; it stimulated citizen action statewide and nationally and influenced the

*development of legislation and public policy. **From Latino-Hispanic history and culture**: A community-wide annual Latino parade is an important part of family and community life and the arts and culture; it engages businesses and may involve politics and social reform issues. The establishment of a new Latino community or the rapid expansion of an existing one due to migration or immigration affects nearly all facets of the topic.*

- **It is illustrative of common experience statewide**.
  It is important to document not only major events and topics but also representative instances of social history, daily life, and common experience that characterize a topic overall.
  *Example from Latino-Hispanic history and culture: It is not necessary or possible to keep records of every kind of family celebration, social club, community organization, or bodega, but it is important to preserve and make accessible enough of this kind of documentation to represent the social and cultural life of diverse Hispanic communities around the state. **From environmental affairs:** Representative examples of the development of sewage treatment plants, land use planning controversies such as battles over zoning or mall development, single-issue organizations, etc. should be documented. **From mental health:** The first two priorities of the mental health documentation plan are to document the experiences of people who receive mental health services and the experiences of family members and others close to people with psychiatric histories. Although personal experience is at the heart of the mental health topic, very little documentation of it exists in the voices of service recipients.*

- **It has been significant over a considerable period of time**.
  Example: An organization that meets some of the other criteria in this list and has been in existence for decades will be a higher priority for documentation than one doing similar work that was founded five years ago or lasted only five years.

- **It contributes significantly to the knowledge base about the topic** This criterion may involve information generated statewide or at regional or local levels, because local or regional information may be important to research on statewide patterns, trends, or impacts.
  *Example from mental health: Information, qualitative or quantitative, that reveals the effects of particular approaches to diagnosis and treatment, mental health services provided by institutions and organizations, and self-help and alternative programs and services. **From environmental affairs:** Test results or other data about the flora and fauna of an area generated for environmental impact statements.*

- **It is not already well represented in the historical record.** Within the topic, there may be some subtopics that are already well documented and for which systems of continuing documentation are in place. Some such topics would meet other criteria for statewide priority, meaning that their documentation is important enough to be part of the historical record, but since considerable documentation already exists compared to other important topics, they would not be considered priorities for new documentation projects.

The process of passing a specific proposed subtopic for documentation through the filters of the topics list and the criteria will be done by the repository and/or the records-creating organization using the documentation plan or guide as a reference. See "Using a documentation guide/plan to decide what to collect" in Appendix G, page 33, for the steps a repository might take to evaluate a particular subtopic.

C. Consult with experts, researchers, and records creators to refine and validate the topics list and criteria

The completed draft of the topics list and criteria should be circulated to the advisory group, subject experts, the stakeholders who have participated in the process so far, and selected individuals knowledgeable about the topic who have not yet participated in the project. Their additions, corrections, and other comments can be incorporated into revised versions of the topics list and criteria.

Step 4. Assess existing documentation in relation to priorities

A. Compare existing documentation with priority topics and subtopics to identify gaps

The list of documentation topics generated in Step 2 indicates what *should* exist in the historical record. The online search reveals what *does* exist. Comparing the two products will show where the most important gaps are and where documentary efforts should be focused. In practice, this process of comparison is likely to begin informally early in the project as important topics emerge and strengths and weaknesses in the historical record become evident. Once both the online search and the list of documentation topics are complete, however, it is important to systematically compare them. (This is where the analysis of the online search results completed earlier becomes invaluable — see page 13.)

Based on this comparison, you will be able to judge the relative importance of particular topics for documentation in the short and long term. Topics considered high priority for documentation but nearly absent from the historical record would presumably demand immediate attention. At the other extreme, action on topics considered of lower priority and already well represented in archival collections would be de-emphasized. The plan or guide should reflect this relationship between the importance of a topic and the current extent of its documentation in the historical record both in the descriptions of the topics and in the actions proposed under Step 5 below.

> In the mental health project, documenting the experiences of recipients of mental health services in their own voices emerged as a high priority. But the online search revealed that despite an enormous number of case files on patients, there was almost no documentation of patient experiences in their own voices, from their points of view. Addressing this gap is therefore one of the highest priorities for action in the mental health documentation plan.

Step 5. Identify and prioritize actions needed

Steps 1 through 4 will have made a compelling case for the need to improve documentation in the topic area, including a clear, rational basis for making decisions about what particular subtopics and facets of the topic should be targeted. It is now time to determine how to do the documentation work — what kinds of actions — or specific actions — need to be taken right away, in the short term, and in the long term. And who are potential participants and partners in the process?

A. Identify potential partners

By this stage the project will have built a constituency of individuals and organizations among the stakeholders, some of whom will be ready to take part in the implementation of the documentation plan. There will be others who are not yet aware of the project but for whom the statewide or regional documentation plan or guide may provide the incentive and rationale to become engaged in this important work. The range of potential partners for implementation of the plan will fall into three main categories:

Records creators and subject experts active in the topic area
These may be the sources of records that will be collected. Some larger entities may have their own archives, and some may be ready to take the lead in launching a documentation project based on the plan.

Historical records repositories or other records holders
Historical records repositories whose service area or topical interests are related to the plan are essential partners in the documentation process. Some potential partner repositories may not have been actively collecting in the topic area in the past; others, such as many libraries, may not have formal archival programs. For them, the documentation planning process may lead to growing interest and a commitment to documentation of the topic. If repositories that are natural partners have not been involved in the earlier steps of the process, this is the time to identify and engage them.

Sponsoring organizations and funding agencies that may support such a project
If potential supporters of documentation work can be engaged in the project before the plan is completed, it may result in a better plan, and funding may be easier to obtain.

It may be possible to contact promising partners and engage them with the project so that they can be named in the final document as potential partners. If this is not possible, partners may be identified generically, by type rather than by name.

B. Determine the steps in the documentation process

Most steps in the documentation process will be common to most topic areas. Others will be specific to a particular topic. The guide or plan should spell out these steps, which may include the following:

For records creators

- Improving the management of current records, including identifying those likely to be of historical value
- Finding an appropriate repository for archival records
- Building partnerships with other records creators and repositories for joint projects to document the topic in the area

For records holders

- Matching the repository's mission and the topic area — making sure it makes sense to collect in the proposed topic area, and making a formal commitment to do so.

> The environmental guide reminds readers that local environmental impact statements may contain scientific data of statewide significance.
>
> The Latino/Hispanic guide points to both Latino organizations within a community and government agencies, businesses, or nonprofit organizations that serve the Latino community.

- Identifying the kinds of organizations, governments, and individuals that are likely to have important records. This step will be quite different from topic to topic.

Documentation and access projects

Most documentation work will take place initially in the context of planned projects carried out by records creating organizations, archival repositories, or partnerships involving both kinds of entities. The guide or plan can offer information about how to organize such projects and list potential sources of assistance and funding (including the State Archives).

C. Act immediately to save selected important and endangered records

Records may be endangered in various ways:

- They may be stored under poor conditions that threaten their physical survival.

- Computerized data may be stored on old media the hardware for which the organization is phasing out.

- If an organization or individual is running out of space or an organization is changing leadership or moving, there may be a strong incentive to throw away records, some of which may have enduring historical value.

- While records themselves may be in good shape, the computerized metadata that describes them and tells where they are and how to gain access to them may become corrupted or stored on obsolete media.

If the records are particularly important, the threat is imminent, and time and resources permit, action should be taken immediately to recover and safeguard them before they are lost or destroyed. This may take place at any stage during or after the planning process. It need not mean going through the whole process of finding a repository, donating the records, processing them at the archives, and making them available. That can happen later. The immediate action may be as simple as moving records from a wet basement to a dry room in the same building, persuading a board of directors and executive director to keep records they were planning to throw out, or copying metadata about a collection from old floppy disks to a new medium before replacing the old computer with one that doesn't have a floppy drive.

D. Plan short- and long-term actions

Implementation of a statewide or regional documentation plan, or of the recommendations in a guide, is a large undertaking that is likely to include many independent or concerted actions by numerous organizations and individuals over a long period of time. Some actions, such as the rescuing of endangered records, may be completed during the planning process itself. Some may be launched during the planning phase and completed much later. Others will be impossible to plan or undertake until the final guide or plan has been published.

This step, to plan short- and long-term actions, has two purposes:

- To plan for actions that can be started during the planning process as participants in the project become aware of the needs and see the opportunities; and

- To develop actions that will be outlined in the plan or guide and could be taken by users as part of the implementation of documentation work.

Short term actions — begun during the planning process

The possibility of a specific short-term action is likely to arise in response to engagement with or learning about a particular organization or organizations and/or a particular repository. A partnership or a project may suggest itself, and the resources may be available to begin work on it. Here are three examples of possible short-term actions:

- A statewide organization with many local chapters may have become engaged with the planning project and be eager to launch a documentation initiative among its chapters. Work on such a project could begin immediately, even before the statewide or regional planning process is complete. The director could present the idea of a documentation project to the organization's board, send an announcement to the chapters, schedule a documentation workshop as part of the annual conference, begin an assessment of the records the organization and its chapters hold, and begin the search for an appropriate repository or repositories. Once the guide is complete, the organization could follow its approach to prioritizing topics for documentation and so on.

- Participants in the planning process might identify a key organization in the topic area with a long and rich history. They could work to bring the organization together with a repository in the area to see whether there is interest in collaborating on a documentation project.

- The director of a county historical society who has attended a small group meeting or a conference that is part of the project might decide that her organization should be collecting in the topic area. She and her board could review their mission statement and collections policy and modify them if necessary to include the topic, assess the society's resources (space, staff, and funds) to determine the feasibility of the new focus, and hold exploratory meetings with important organizations and individuals involved with the topic in her area.

Beginning short-term actions as soon as possible during the process can bring several benefits:

- Initial results of the actions can raise interest and boost confidence in the documentation process.

- Lessons learned in the action — what worked well and what didn't — can be incorporated into the plan or guide and enhance projects undertaken in the future.

- The action may test the developing guide or plan itself and lead to greater clarity in the writing or to addressing issues that hadn't been anticipated in the planning process.

- If a project is planned to begin a relatively short time after completion of the plan or guide, its description in the published document, either as a specific project or as a type of project, may make it easier to gain funding and other kinds of support for the project itself.

Long-term actions — begun after the plan or guide is complete

Identifying records creating organizations and repositories, building partnerships and coalitions, designing and funding documentation projects, and eventually making records publicly available for use can take years. During the documentation planning project, however, long-term implementation strategies may emerge that can be included in the plan or guide as recommendations. For example:

- It could make sense for a statewide professional association related to the topic area to consider a major statewide documentation initiative, or for a group of university archives to make a joint commitment to collect in the topic area. Identifying such strategies in the plan or guide as specific or generic options could generate interest and perhaps support for action, and it could inspire others to develop and implement similar strategies.

- If the field is dominated by one or a few large institutions or governments, the plan could identify and recommend a focus on the documentation of those entities. This approach could be especially

appropriate if principals from the institutions or agencies were enthusiastic about documentation and the guide's mention of their entity would help them garner support for the project.

- If the topic or facets of it have a strong local history component (land use, for example), the guide could recommend concerted or individual action by historical societies to explore collecting in the topic area.

Step 6. Prepare and distribute documentation plan or guide

A. Draft plan or guide: Suggested components

Prepare an initial draft of the plan or guide. The following suggested list of components may be helpful in structuring the document:

Introduction This general introduction to the publication should include background on the project and explain the purpose of the guide.

Executive Summary If the plan or guide is long, this section should give the reader an overview of what is to come and a brief statement about each of the main sections that follow.

How to use the guide Explain here whom the guide is for, why it is important to records creators in the topic area and to repositories, and how it can be used to further documentation.

Define key terms Define the topic area itself. This is where you can introduce the reader to the external boundaries and main internal structure of the topic. It is also important to define documentation itself — the range of formats and the kinds of documentation that are likely to be of historical value.

What to document in the topic area Likely to be the longest section of the publication, this will list and describe the subtopics, subjects, or themes that have been identified during the research phase as important to document. The topics list may need to be annotated with explanatory paragraphs and sample subtopics (for examples, see Appendix F, page 32). This section will also outline the criteria that the reader can use to determine whether a particular topic should be considered a high priority for documentation.

How to document the topic area This section will explain the steps that the creators of important records and records collectors can take to improve documentation of the topic area. It will explain what documentation and access projects are and where one can find assistance and funding to support the work.

Conclusion

Appendix In order to make the guide or plan as accessible and user-friendly as possible, it may make sense to keep the main sections of the text fairly concise and put longer, more detailed text in the appendix. For example, if the annotated list of topics is very long, it might be better here. You may also want to include auxiliary materials such as an explanation of the methodology.

B. Review with key stakeholders for final comments

Submit it to colleagues, the advisory group, subject experts, and all the stakeholders who have participated in the project. Send it also to a few people who are active in the field — records creators, researchers, repositories, government officials, etc. — but who know nothing about the project to make sure it is accessible. Ask for critical comments. Incorporate suggestions and complete the final editing.

C. Publish the plan or guide — Distribute and publicize it widely

Publish the finished plan or guide, promote it, and distribute it as widely as possible. The State Archives published its guides on its web site. It is promoting them through electronic mailing lists, its magazine, and other mechanisms. It provides paper copies upon request. This relatively inexpensive approach gets the documents to those who need and want them, and it avoids the expense of printing a large number of copies.

D. Actively pursue implementation strategies

Most people are pleased to learn that some of the documentation they create or hold is of historical value, and they would welcome the opportunity to have valuable documentation taken off their hands and made available. But most people in organizations are very busy with their jobs, and caring for their historically valuable records is likely to be low on their list of priorities. Under these circumstances, although the documentation planning process and the resulting guide or plan may spark interest and enthusiasm, they may not spark action without some encouragement and assistance from the outside.

Therefore, an organization that takes on a documentation planning process should build into its project a period of follow-through during which it can pursue relationships and develop documentation projects with promising partners based on the plan or guide.

The logical next step following the development of a documentation plan is the creation of documentation projects, which will usually include a survey and descriptions of existing records and result in collecting records and/or increasing their accessibility. Guidance in planning and implementing documentation projects is available from the State Archives through workshops and publications. Such a project that is based on a documentation plan or statewide guide could be a strong candidate for a grant from the State Archives Documentary Heritage Program.

E. Review and revise the guide or plan periodically

As the guide or plan is tested and used in the field, and as circumstances change over time, it may become dated in some areas, and there may be ways to improve it that will be evident when it is read critically. It is important, therefore, to revisit the guide or plan from time to time and revise or update it so that it remains a dynamic, useful tool through periods of change.

Conclusion

Today's history stretches back from yesterday; tomorrow's is being lived today. If we and future generations of New Yorkers are to understand who we are, how we got here, and how to shape our futures with informed intelligence, justice, and respect for one another, we must create a comprehensive, balanced, and sustainable record of our evolving history. We must make sure that the stories of all New York's peoples are equitably reflected in that record, that all the main facets of our history and of our contributions to the nation and the world are represented there.

The historical record we find in New York at the beginning of the twenty-first century is vast and varied, but it has huge gaps waiting to be filled. And they won't be filled if we don't notice they are there and make a concerted effort to fill them. Documentation planning is the key. It can bring people together across the state to agree on the priority areas for documentation, identify the areas where the documentary record is weak, and guide records creators and repositories to respond strategically to commonly understood needs. The result can be a documentary record that reflects the full depth and breadth of New York's history, now and in the future.

The State Archives has tested this approach in the areas of environmental affairs, mental health, and Latino history and culture, and it is beginning to bear fruit as documentation projects are launched that address the gaps in the historical record. But dozens of topic areas and population groups remain underdocumented. This manual is designed to guide documentation planning for topics across the spectrum of New York history.

We encourage organizations, individuals, and groups to make use of this tool. Adapt it and apply it to planning for the statewide or regional documentation of other population groups, other topics. The State Archives is eager to help with advice, encouragement, access to resources, and funding through its Documentary Heritage Program.

We welcome your inquiries, comments, and suggestions. For further information on how you can be part of the documentation planning effort, or if you have questions about the manual, please contact:

The New York State Historical Records Advisory Board
Or
The New York State Archives

Suite 9D46 Cultural Education Center
Albany, New York 12230

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Appendix

A. Origin and description of New York Heritage Documentation Project

The project, which was funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), grew out of the strategic plan, "Ensuring a Future for Our Past," developed in 1998 by the State Historical Records Advisory Board to provide direction to all who are engaged in the preservation and use of historical records. The plan established as one of its five top-priorities for the coming decade "Ensuring Comprehensive Documentation" of the historical and current records of all New York's communities and the creation of a comprehensive documentation plan for New York State.

As an important step in this direction, the New York Heritage Documentation Project was designed to develop and test an approach to planning the documentation of whole sectors of this large and complex state. If a method can be developed that works for such diverse topics as mental health, environmental affairs, and Latino history and culture, it should be adaptable to a broad range of possible topic areas that need to be documented if we are to create a comprehensive, balanced documentary record of New York's history. The fundamental approach and many of the specific steps should also be applicable to regional or local planning, which are essential complements to documentation planning at the statewide level.

The State Archives staff began work on the mental health component of the project before the NHPRC grant was obtained and used its success in the early stages of that effort as evidence of the viability of the project. The funded project began in September, 1999, and continued for two years. The mental health documentation plan was completed in the summer of 2000, the environmental documentation guide in August, 2001, and the Latino/Hispanic guide in January, 2002.

B. Defining Terms

Documentation and Records

In this manual, *documentation* refers to the *process* of identifying, collecting, and making publicly available existing *records,* such as correspondence, computer files, photographs, etc., that are of enduring historical value. Documentation may also involve the creation of new records to help fill a gap in the historical record, for example, a taped oral history or a videotape of an important event. (*Records* refers to recorded information in any format created by an organization or received in the formal operation of its responsibilities. It can also include recorded information created or held by individuals.)

Documentation also refers to the *records* themselves. Documentation may be found in a wide range of formats (paper, photographs and slides, motion picture film, audio- and videotape, computer disks and tape) typically collected by archival repositories. Many kinds of documentation may have important historical value, for example:

- Diaries, correspondence, photographs, slides, tapes and other sound or graphic records that document family or community life, events and activities

- Minutes, summaries, or transcripts of meetings, hearings, or conferences

- Correspondence, including email files, of people in responsible positions or people who have had an important impact

- Reports, grant proposals, position papers, academic papers, and other unpublished documents that present what an organization does and why or that discuss issues related to the topic

- Program announcements, broadsides, flyers, and other publicity materials related to events, programs, or services

- Legal briefs and other supporting documentation related to litigation or other legal procedures

- Summaries, analyses, and raw data related to scientific studies

- Records from the print and broadcast media, especially old or rare publications and film or text documentation that may not have been published

- Maps, photographs, slides, tapes and other sound or graphic records that document the people or activities of a group or organization, scientific data, or other features, events, or changes

> Three-dimensional artifacts may also tell important parts of the story, and much of the information in this manual will be useful to those planning to collect such objects. Our focus, however, is archival documentation. Organizations that are committed to collecting material culture may want to consult with one of the following organizations or other museum professionals for guidance:
> Museum Association of New York State
> Lower Hudson Conference of Historical Agencies
> Upstate History Alliance
> Western New York Alliance of Historical
> Associations
>
> (For contact information, see www.nysmuseums.org.)

Acquisition/Collections policy

Every archives, historical society, museum, or other organization that collects historical records should have an acquisitions or collections policy. The heart of such a policy is the statement of what the organization collects, what its collecting goals are. A minimal, and not very useful, policy will be very general, perhaps defining its goal as collecting materials related to the history of a particular county. A more useful policy would state explicitly and in detail the topics that are the focus of collecting, so that the archivist or curator has a basis on which to make decisions of what to accept and what not to, what to seek out and what to ignore.

An existing documentation guide at the state or regional level could help a repository develop a collection policy that reflects statewide priorities in a particular topic area. A repository that undertook or was a participant in a documentation planning project might well base part of its collections policy on the results of the planning process. And the methodology outlined in this manual could be adapted by a repository for determining or reassessing its policy in dialogue with its constituents.

C. Managing stakeholder involvement

Stakeholder involvement is at the heart of this methodology, but managing it can be a challenge and must be tailored to the specific needs and capacities of each project. The main elements of stakeholder participation are likely to be some combination of the following:

- An ongoing advisory group or groups

- Individual consultation and conversation in person or by phone or email, including the review of drafts of the plan or guide.

- One-time participation by stakeholders in meetings or conferences

Project Advisory Group

Ideally, a group of advisors should be established at the beginning of project, but you may not yet know who are the best candidates for the group until you have met more people, seen them in action, and you understand the field better. Which constituencies need to be represented at the table? Who is reliable, articulate, knowledgeable? Who cares a lot, not just about the topic, but about documenting it? Who works well in a group and thinks well beyond his or her particular niche? Answers to these questions may be clearer later in the process. Therefore, it may make sense to begin the project with a small core group and leave places open so you can add people later in the process.

The advisory group can represent a substantial commitment of time on the part of the participants and project staff, and it may have significant costs, particularly if travel is involved. Although travel is not an issue in a local project, time is — the people you want to work with are probably busy. You will need to think carefully about how to use their time and expertise most efficiently and when it is most needed in order to avoid overburdening them.

Maximize input, minimize cost

How do you maximize effective input from stakeholders and minimize time, travel, and associated costs? There are no easy answers, but here are some considerations and strategies to think about.

Decide when it is most important to bring groups together. Use telephone and email whenever possible. Nearly every step in the planning process needs stakeholder involvement, but in most situations the costs in time and money will force you to be selective, particularly in convening groups of advisors. Try to determine in advance at which points group discussion will be most essential, as opposed to gaining input through individual communications. Chat rooms, online discussion groups, telephone conference calls, even teleconferencing, may prove to be more cost-effective ways to gain input from and interaction within a group.

> For the State Archives projects, we found that it was most effective to gather people early in the project to discuss their priorities for documentation — what they considered the most important trends, events, issues, and topics in the history of the field in New York. The group discussions yielded consensus and agreed-upon groupings of subtopics that would have been much more difficult to arrive at through individual surveys or conversations. On the other hand, responses to drafts of a document and other evaluative parts of the process worked fine by email or telephone.

You travel to them
If your project is statewide or covers a large region, it may be more cost-effective and productive for one or two staff to travel to meet with a group in their community rather than convene a statewide or regional group at a central location. This approach saves travel time and funds; it may allow more local people to participate; and it may give an important local flavor to the information gathered that would be lost in a larger group meeting.

D. Documentation Topics Framework — Summary

> # New York Documentation Topics Framework — Abridged

This framework of 18 broad topics is designed to support efforts to build a comprehensive, balanced, and equitable documentary record of New York's history and culture. Given the enormous scope, diversity and significance of human activity, knowledge, and experience in and about New York, the task of creating a comprehensive documentary record is daunting indeed. Without some rational framework for organizing the range of possible topics for documentation, it would be nearly impossible. This list attempts to meet that need. See the complete, annotated Documentation Topics Framework which includes an introduction and more complete explanatory paragraphs and subtopics for each of the main headings below.

(https://www.archives.nysed.gov/sites/archives/files/mr_pub75.pdf)

Agriculture The production, processing, and distribution of agricultural commodities**.**

Arts, architecture, and culture The production, presentation, promotion, and sponsorship of visual and graphic arts and design, performing arts (music, dance, theater, performance art), literature, film and media arts, including folk and community-based arts, popular arts and entertainment, and fine arts. Architecture and the built environment, landscape architecture; architectural scholarship and training. The documentation and artifacts that record history and culture. Cultural expressions of everyday life including folklore, language, food, fashion, and family and community events such as festivals and celebrations.

Business, commerce, industry, and manufacturing The production of goods and services for commercial use, buying and/or selling goods and services for a profit, and lobbying for, assisting, or promoting business concerns.

Communications Any means of transmitting information or entertainment. Newspapers and other print media, television and radio stations, the Internet and other electronic communications media; also groups government entities that address public policy aspects of communications.

Economic development and planning Governments, businesses, and organizations that engage in urban, town, and rural planning for economic development and land use; organizations and groups that advocate for, respond to, or engage with economic development and planning issues.

Education The education, training, and instruction of individuals, including public and private education at all levels and settings, and groups and governments engaged in education policy.

Environmental affairs and natural resources The utilization of natural resources (air, energy, plants, animals, minerals, land, and water), their conservation and related environmental issues, the effect of environmental hazards on human populations and other life forms, and the development and implementation of public policy and planning related to the environment.

Health Research in medical and health sciences and public health and the provision of medical and mental health services, including allopathic medicine and alternative approaches to medicine and health care.

Labor and occupations Organized labor for the promotion of better working conditions, employment, security, and related concerns. The organization, economics, social and cultural characteristics, skills, working conditions, and experiences associated with various occupations.

Military The prosecution of war or insurrection, civilian participation in wartime activities, military sites, peacetime military enterprise, and organizations formed to support military action, soldiers, veterans groups, and other related activities.

Politics, government and law Political, governmental, and judicial activity at the federal, state, and local levels that affects the inhabitants of an area. Creation and administration of laws, provision of government services, protection of the rights of citizens. Elected and appointed public officials; government agencies and programs. Such activity creates and administers laws, provides many services, and protects the rights of the citizens.

Populations and social activity Includes groupings by geography or place of origin; cultural, ethnic, religious or racial identity or background; gender, age, sexual orientation, ability/disability, and economic or social class. A broad range of subtopics including activities, lifestyles, and changing ways of life of individuals, families and particular groups. Population movements and settlement; distinctive aspects of living as part of population groups. Groups and organizations formed according to group identity. Also, attitudes and related activities directed toward populations and groups.

Public safety : Managing and preserving public safety by public servants or the community, police/community relations, crime and criminals.

Recreation and leisure Sports, outdoor recreation, hobbies, travel, and group activities occurring during leisure time; related businesses, organizations, and government entities.

Religion Denominations and groupings of all religious faiths; religious and spiritual movements.

Science and technology Research in the natural and physical sciences and its applications to society through disciplines such as engineering, information technology, and bio-technology.

Social reform and welfare *Reform* — Efforts to achieve or oppose social, economic, and political change, including grassroots efforts outside of mainstream organizations. *Welfare —* Efforts to promote the welfare of disadvantaged members of society and other groups with special needs or concerns.

Transportation The development, implementation, and impact of transportation systems.

E. Environmental Topics Matrix

Populate the grid below with significant subtopics, issues, individuals, organizations, events, processes.

Human Responses to Environmental Issues	Human Impact in the domains below from: Conservation/preservation, Extraction (water supply, forestry, hunting) & Alteration (dams, land use, bioengineering), and Pollution/Toxics (Substances added to the environment).						
	Land	Water	Air	Energy	Life forms	Public Health & Welfare	Social, Cultural Economic Life
DIRECT ACTION **Public policy formation** Legislation, executive action; federal, state, local							
Public policy implementation Regulation, litigation, public works; federal, state, local							
Citizen/NGO action Advocacy, protest, recycling, conservation, recreation, arts & cultural expression							
Business action Compliance/non-compliance, litigation, green business, organic farming, recycling							
SUPPORT ACTION **Research** Environmental and social sciences related to environmental activity, history							
Education School-based, higher education, environ-mental education centers, Internet							

F. Defining and describing documentation topics — Examples

The topics list that appears in the documentation guide or plan may need to be annotated with explanatory paragraphs and examples so that it is clear to the reader what exactly is meant by the topic name. Here are examples from the Latino, environmental, and mental health topics lists. (The existing guides remind readers that "possible subtopics recommended for documentation include—but are not limited to—those listed under each subject.")

Migration and Settlement
This subject includes the origins of Latino communities in New York, their ongoing evolution and demographics; also the factors influencing people's decisions about moving to and within New York. Factors may include availability of work and housing; family, friends, or community already at the destination; bilingual education and services; living conditions and quality of life.

> Origins and reasons for migration/immigration
> Settlement patterns at the state, regional, and local levels
> Migration within cities, between rural and urban settings, and between regions
> Communication, travel, and out-migration between NYS and places of origin

Air Quality/Pollution
Wind and the circulation of air make air quality and pollution an interstate and international as well as a statewide issue for New York. It can also be an important local and regional issue in metropolitan areas. Much of the activity in New York in recent years has been centered around obtaining passage or battling over enforcement of clean air laws, statewide and in metropolitan areas, beginning with the Federal Clean Air Act of 1970. While the laws and regulations themselves are documented, the citizen activism, responses to it, pro and con, and the background to litigation are potential areas for important documentation.

> Point-source pollution (power plants, etc)
> Non-point-source (automotive emissions, etc.)
> Acid precipitation

Document the experiences of people who receive mental health services.

The issue: New York's efforts to provide mental health services have spanned two centuries and involved many hundreds of thousands of individuals. In the state system alone, as many as 93,000 individuals in one year have been recipients of mental health services. Yet fewer than 85 collections of records exist in New York that document the experience of individuals. In the main, those consist of medical records and case files that provide one perspective on people with psychiatric histories. The voices of service recipients are virtually silent in the historical record.

*Goal***:** To document recipient experiences of treatment and therapy, including:
- Surgical, electroconvulsive, and homeopathic treatments; psychotherapy; music, art, and occupational therapies; and self-help and recipient-run alternatives
- Forced versus voluntary treatment
- In settings such as state psychiatric centers and their predecessors, hospitals, group homes, out-patient facilities, private offices

G. Using a documentation guide/plan to decide what to collect

A reminder: The purpose of this documentation planning approach is not to tell people what exactly to collect and what not to. Instead, it provides a research-based framework that will help people engaged in documentation projects to make rational decisions about collecting that will lead to a richer, more balanced and complete historical record of the topic.

The method a repository might use for prioritizing what should be collected is as follows:

- **Refer to the high priority topics list** in the plan or guide.

- **Refer to the criteria** in the plan or guide for determining the priority of particular topics.

- **Consider the resources at your disposal** — storage space, staff, funding, and time — which will determine how much of anything you can collect.

- **Ask the following questions** when considering a particular subtopic or organization or collection of records:

    - Does the topic fall within one or more of the high priority topics identified by stakeholders?

    - Does is meet one or more of the criteria?

    - Within the context of the other collections you have or are building and the resources at your disposal, should you document this particular subtopic or organization?

- **Decide whether to collect and at what level**

Acknowledgements

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We welcome your comments and suggestions regarding this manual. If you are interested in becoming involved in the documentation effort in New York State or have questions or thoughts to share about the project, please feel free to contact us.

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[i] These premises are laid out in The Minnesota Historical Society's documentation planning strategy for the state's business records. Known as the Minnesota Method, it represents a synthesis of best practices from archival theory and practice. Although developed for use by a single repository, it has served as a point of departure for the approach taken in this manual. See Mark A. Greene and Todd J. Daniels-Howell, "Documentation with an Attitude: A Pragmatist's Guide to the Selection and Acquisition of Modern Business Records," in *The Records of American Business*, James M. O'Toole, ed. (Society of American Archivists, 1998), pp 161-229.