

New York Documentation Topics Framework*

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Introduction

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.

The paragraph for each main topic first defines the topic broadly, then offers several subtopics and examples. The framework of main topics is intended to be comprehensive; the subtopics and examples suggest the scope of the topic but are not exhaustive. A researcher exploring a subject or an archivist with *any* collection relevant to New York should be able to find at least one home for it within this framework. Similarly, an archivist or repository planning to document a topic, a geographical area, or a population group should find here a comprehensive range of possible topics for documentation.

There is inevitable overlap among the topics. Each main topic serves as a lens through which to gain a particular perspective on aspects of New York history and contemporary life; a subtopic or a collection of documents may be viewed through several lenses, revealing its different dimensions. For example, documentary records pertaining to the siting of solid waste transfer stations in New York City will be relevant to *Environmental affairs and natural resources*, *Health*, *Politics*, *government and law*, *Populations and social activity* (both by region and by ethnicity, since many sites are in Latino/a or African American neighborhoods), and *Social reform and welfare*. Similarly, many topic areas include substantial business sectors, but there is also the umbrella category of *Business, commerce and industry*.

A word about *Populations and social activity*: The members of groups that fall under this category generally participate in the full range of human experience and activity listed under the other seventeen topics. So while the social activities of, say, Latino/as or people from Western New York belong under this category proper, the distinctive Latino/a or Western New York dimensions of *business* or *education* or *health*, for example, may be important subtopics for documentation under these other categories.

The primary purpose of this framework is to serve as a point of departure for documentation planning. It can help archivists and curators place and evaluate the importance of particular collections or kinds of collections within the broad context of New York's history, and it can help them identify and figure out where to look for documentation of important topics that are not well represented in the current historical record.

This is a work in progress, and the editors are eager for suggestions for its improvement — particularly if there are significant topics that do not find a home within these main topic areas. Please contact us with your comments and suggestions. Thank you!

**This framework was developed by the New York State Archives, with cooperation from Northeastern University's Documenting Underdocumented Communities project. It builds upon a New York history topics list developed at the State Archives in 1989. A similar list can be found in Richard Cox's Documenting Localities: A Practical Model for American Archivists and Manuscript Creators (Society of American Archivists 1996) pp 132-147.*

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Agriculture: The production, processing, promotion, and distribution of agricultural commodities. Important components may include: research in horticulture, animal husbandry, other agricultural sciences, and agricultural economics; farming, including small-scale family farms, farming cooperatives, large corporate operations, farming by migrant workers or immigrant groups, including practices related to country or place of origin, organic farming, fish farming, urban agriculture, urban gardens, and other non-traditional methods; distribution and marketing businesses and organizations, including community-based food co-ops; groups such as agricultural societies, agricultural fairs, and professional agricultural organizations formed to advocate, educate, or promote in relation to agricultural policy issues and concerns; and individuals prominent in agricultural affairs. Agricultural topics distinctively relevant to particular population groups.

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, including commercial, residential, institutional, and 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. Important components may include individual artists, and writers; institutions, organizations, and businesses supporting, teaching, presenting, producing, or promoting the arts, including art museums and galleries, concert halls, community arts schools, etc; architectural firms, individual architects, and professional associations of architects; repositories of history and culture such as libraries, archives, museums, and historical societies; scholarly research in the arts and humanities. Cultural topics distinctively relevant to particular population groups. Also professional associations and organizations engaged in issues of public policy in culture and the arts.

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. Important components include single proprietorships, partnerships, corporations, or cooperative associations; chambers of commerce, business councils, boards of trade, service, professional, and trade associations, and benevolent associations; scholarly research in economics and business; topics distinctively relevant to particular population groups, and individuals prominent in business.

Communications: Any means of transmitting information or entertainment. Newspapers and other print media, television and radio stations, the Internet and other electronic communications media, public relations and advertising, directories, citizen media alert or censorship groups that monitor communications, government agencies and regulatory bodies with responsibility for communication services, topics distinctively relevant to particular population groups. Also professional associations and prominent individuals related to communications.

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Economic development and planning: Governments, businesses, and organizations that engage in urban, town, and rural planning for economic development and land use; organizations formed to advocate for and attract business, jobs, and development; organizations, groups, and individuals formed to oppose further development, challenge existing or proposed plans, or propose alternative development and land use strategies; topics distinctively relevant to particular population groups. Scholarly research in economics and planning.

Education: The education, training, and instruction of individuals. Important components may include public, private, and vocational education at the pre-school, primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels; community, after-school, and adult education including speakers bureaus; libraries and archives; individual school administrators, teachers, professional educators and educational theorists and students; and groups formed to support, monitor, or change the educational system or to support students, teachers, parents, or administrators. Educational topics distinctively relevant to particular population groups. Also scholarly research in education and professional associations of educators.

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. Important components may include research in environmental sciences and public health; organizations established to promote environmental conservation, preservation, and increased awareness of environmental affairs; industries, businesses and organizations that make direct use of natural resources or respond actively to environmental issues, topics such as the environmental justice movement distinctively relevant to particular population groups, and individuals prominent in environmental affairs.

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. Important components include individual physicians and other health care personnel; businesses and organizations such as hospitals, clinics (including grassroots neighborhood organizations), public health organizations, and health care organizations involved in research and delivery of health care services; also individuals in private practice; organizations and groups that provide advocacy, education, support and referrals related to general or specific health issues; government regulatory and funding agencies; health topics distinctively relevant to particular population groups; professional and other associations related to the health industry or health issues; and individuals making significant contributions in health research, health care, or health policy.

Labor and Occupations: Organized labor for the promotion of better working conditions, employment, security, and related concerns. Important components may include individuals involved with the development of organized labor, strikes, boycotts or other labor-related events; and organizations such as labor unions, white collar employee associations, and employee support groups or advisory services. Labor issues distinctively relevant to particular population groups. Also working people and working conditions outside of organized labor. Occupations: The organization, economics, social and cultural characteristics, skills, working conditions, and experiences associated with various occupations.

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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. Important components may include individuals who participated in the military or in support services to the military; civil defense, economic impact, and other aspects of civilian participation; organized groups to support the military and related issues through lobbying, education, and promotion; organized groups to protest the military and military action in the United States or other countries; and topics distinctively relevant to particular population groups.

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. Important components may include individuals active in political affairs, holding appointed and elected public positions, and involved in judicial activities, local and county government agencies and programs; state and federal agencies and programs with important ties to the locality and region; and organizations and movements seeking political change or encouraging participation in the political process. Also, organizations and movements seeking political change in other countries. Issues distinctively relevant to particular population groups. Scholarly research in politics, government and law. Professional associations relating to politics and individuals prominent in political affairs.

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 of immigration, migration, and emigration; process of settlement; distinctive aspects of living within communities and neighborhoods or as part of population groups. Groups and organizations formed according to group identity for support, advocacy, or education. Also, attitudes, ranging from high esteem to bigotry and prejudice and related activities directed toward populations and groups. Components include activities and organizations that reveal the nature of domestic, family, and community life, such as social clubs, fraternal organizations; genealogy, daily life, culture and cultural influences, cultural sensibilities, language, family and community associations, friendship networks, and community centers. Historical societies, museums, other associations, and individuals, such as local historians, documentary photographers and filmmakers, and others, who preserve, present, or interpret the history and culture of locales, organizations, individuals, or population groups. Activities and events that celebrate a culture. Research related to populations.

Public Safety: Managing and preserving public safety by public servants or the community, police/community relations, crime and criminals, monitoring and responding to hate crimes and domestic violence, victim recovery. Public safety topics distinctively relevant to particular population groups. Research in criminology and other disciplines related to public safety. Also professional associations relating to public safety.

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Recreation and leisure: Sports, outdoor recreation, hobbies, travel, and group activities occurring during leisure time. Businesses such as resorts, health clubs, and professional sports teams; and organizations, associations, clubs, and advocacy groups formed around specific leisure activities such as mountain clubs, fishing tournaments, and literary societies. Recreation and leisure topics distinctively relevant to particular population groups.

Religion: Religious denominations and groupings of all religious faiths; religious and spiritual movements. Churches, synagogues, mosques and meetings houses; organizations formed to promote religious activities; programs, camps, organizations, social service agencies sponsored by religious denominations. Individual religious or spiritual leaders or exemplars. Religious topics distinctively relevant to particular population groups. Also scholarly research and professional associations relating to religion.

Science and technology: Encompasses both pure research in the natural and physical sciences and its applications to society through disciplines such as engineering, information technology, and bio-technology. Components include individual researchers, academics, others prominent in scientific and technological fields; corporations, businesses and organizations involved in research and delivery of services, such as pharmaceutical firms, manufacturers of information technology, bio-engineering firms, and university-affiliated research centers; government research, regulatory, and funding agencies; professional and other associations formed for the advancement and promotion of science and technology; and topics distinctively relevant to particular population groups.

Social reform and welfare: *Reform* — Efforts to achieve or oppose social, economic, and political change, including grassroots efforts outside of mainstream organizations. Individuals, organizations, and activities that address issues such as civil rights and discrimination related to population groups, animal rights, environmental affairs, war and peace, health care, abortion/reproductive rights, public safety (including domestic violence, neighborhood watch groups, hate crimes, gun control, death penalty, police actions, etc.), welfare reform, trade/globalization. Also scholarly research related to social reform.

Welfare — Efforts to promote the welfare of disadvantaged members of society and other groups with special needs or concerns. Individuals and philanthropic, charitable, and welfare agencies and associations that provide support and services that are otherwise insufficient or not available to a population because of economic status, discrimination, or insensitivity. Community development and improvement including fair housing, and economic reform. Self-help and support groups or organizations that address issues such as parenting, death and dying, addictions, disabilities, and other concerns. Professional associations relating to social welfare. Also scholarly research related to social welfare.

Transportation: The development, implementation, and impact of transportation systems. Components include those of individuals prominent in the development of such systems, the impact of these systems on communities and population groups; businesses involved in the promotion, development, and offering of systems such as air, ground, and water transportation; government agencies and regulatory bodies with responsibility for transportation; organizations formed to advocate for the improvement or change in transportation services.

New York Documentation Topics Framework

Main Topic Headings

Agriculture

Arts, architecture, and culture

Business, commerce, industry, and manufacturing

Communications

Economic development and planning

Education

Environmental affairs and natural resources

Health

Labor and Occupations

Military

Politics, government and law

Populations and social activity

Public Safety

Recreation and leisure

Religion

Science and technology

Social reform and welfare

Transportation