

Documentation Basics

A Guide to Planning and Managing Documentation Projects

by John W. Suter

2003

**A publication of the New York State Archives (a program of the State Education Department)
and the New York State Historical Records Advisory Board**

Publication Number 79

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Introduction

New Yorkers value their heritage. New Yorkers neglect their heritage. Each of these statements is true—and therein lies the challenge.

Diaries of a farm woman, account books from a hardware store, minutes of a local zoning board, an oral interview with a traditional Mohawk basket maker, photos of a Puerto Rican baseball team, and the membership rolls of a Black Baptist church—these are some of the ways New Yorkers preserve their history, their culture, and their collective memory...

More than 2,500 historical societies, libraries, archives, museums, and other organizations in New York State have endeavored to preserve this heritage...Yet many serious issues remain to be addressed. There are significant gaps in our historical documentation, leaving important industries, events, people, cultures, and organizations virtually undocumented, and therefore unknowable for the future...New York's historical records can and should become an enduring resource for generations to come.

(from *Ensuring a Future for Our Past*, the ten-year strategic plan for historical records in New York State, published in 1998 by the Governor's New York State Historical Records Advisory Board)

These lines lay out a challenge for the people and organizations of New York. This manual is part of the State Archives' answer to that challenge. It is a tool that can help people and organizations think about, plan, and conduct projects that enhance New York's historical record. Community by community, topic by topic, documentation projects can build a more comprehensive and balanced record of all New York's peoples and their history.

History starts today!

We tend to think of history as something that stretches back into the past, beginning fifty or a hundred years ago. But history begins each day, each moment. Although historians may not write about today's events for a few years, the documents on which they will base their accounts are being created every day. Therefore, it is critical that we save our historical legacy right now.

How to use the manual

Documentation Basics is written for people in New York who want to learn about the documentation process and how to carry out documentation projects. Most users will fall into two broad groups:

- Those with knowledge of records—usually people from historical records repositories such as historical societies, libraries, museums and other organizations with archives
- Those with knowledge about the topics of documentation but with a limited background in archives and records—people from organizations that generate records and who are interested in having their group or activity better documented

People will bring to this manual varying degrees of knowledge and experience, different perspectives, and diverse needs for information and guidance. Therefore, we urge you to look through the table of contents and go directly to the sections that most interest you. Read the manual straight through if you want the full picture in the order in which we conceived it, or jump around between topics, following

your own logic, questions, and trains of thought. You will find a “Glossary of Terms” in Appendix I, beginning on page 71.

What is documentation?

Documentation is 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” can also refer to the records themselves—the papers, photographs, etc.—but to avoid confusion, in this manual we use the term only to refer to the process.)

Documentation may also involve creating new records to provide context for existing ones or to fill gaps in the historical record. For example, an oral history interview might be recorded to fill in or complete a set of someone’s family papers or an organization’s records. Similarly, photographs of an individual or a building, or a videotape of a community event, may flesh out information on paper, or it may help tell a part of the story that isn’t reflected in the records. Although this manual does not address this aspect of documentation (which cannot be funded by State Archives grants), creating new records might be a component of your project. (Resources on oral history are available on the Web.)

Why is documentation important?

- The decisions we make in the present and will make in the future—in our personal lives, organizations and businesses, and governments at all levels—are based on our understanding (or misunderstanding) of the past. Access to the historical record enables us to make better-informed decisions.
- Our relationships and our dealings with others are based on our knowledge and perceptions of their stories and histories. The historical record gives us access to the raw materials of history; it enables us to tell our own stories more fully and accurately and to better understand the stories of others.
- Our lives and our very identities are enriched by our knowledge of and connections with the histories of our families, communities, and the many kinds of groups to which we belong.
- Our human, civil, and legal rights are often dependent upon our having access to the records of the past.

Yet the records of many significant groups and topics are seriously under-represented in New York’s historical records repositories. These include:

- Population groups: Latinos, African Americans, Native Americans, Asians, Irish, Poles, Italians, and other immigrant communities, many of them long established in New York
- Communities and associations: affiliations based on shared identity, community, occupation, religion, gender and sexual orientation, disability, avocation or recreation, and so on
- Business and industry: industries in fields such as agriculture, science and technology, and broadcast media; businesses in a particular city or region; business-related organizations and associations
- Non-profit organizations: social service, cultural, educational, advocacy, and other types of non-profit organizations in a wide range of fields
- Social and cultural history: of communities, towns, and cities, particularly related to the lives of ordinary people

Documentation identifies and makes accessible unique records that reveal details of history, evidence that confirms or challenges our beliefs about the past, and narratives and images that bring a human perspective to issues of public policy or large historical events. For example:

- Records of migrant agricultural workers and the organizations that serve them, which reveal the changing demographics of the workers over time, the conditions of their lives and work, and the efforts to meet their needs
- Records of community-based and statewide AIDS organizations
- Minutes, position papers, and publicity materials from both sides of Adirondack Park land-use disputes
- Records of immigrant-owned businesses (Norwegian or Korean, for example) that have been significant in their communities
- Business accounts of a family farm in the 1950s
- Records of a key state legislator or legislative committee that show how important policies were developed or crucial decisions made
- Correspondence, e-mail, and publicity materials from non-profit agencies and businesses that responded to the World Trade Center catastrophe

Who uses historical records?

- **People researching family or community history** Genealogists and others who study family or local history comprise one of the largest constituencies for historical records. In *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*, Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen report and analyze the results of a large nationwide survey of ordinary Americans' engagement with and attitudes about history and the past. They found that "One third of the Americans we interviewed were involved in tracing their family's history—which suggests that more historical research is done on families in this country than on any other subject."
- **Teachers and students** The engagement of these important user groups with historical records now has behind it the force of state policy. Under the New York State Learning Standards, the new Social Studies Resource Guide and Core Curriculum states that "The use of primary sources and other documents should be an integral part of a social studies program. Students should learn how to analyze historical documents and prepare essays and reports that describe different perspectives on various historical issues, events, and questions."
- **Citizens researching issues** Individuals and organizations engaged in advocacy, education, and a host of other enterprises use historical records to learn more about the issues that affect them and the topics they care about.
- **Legislators and other officials** Policymakers rely on archival records for a detailed understanding of the precedents set by earlier laws and policies, as well as on the past actions and views of organizations, individuals, and governments.
- **Scholars in many fields** Historians are the most obvious scholarly users of historical records, but all scholarship relies on quests for knowledge conducted in the past, some of which is still relevant.

Much of the detail and context needed by current researchers is to be found in historical source materials.

- **Journalists, novelists, other writers** Fiction and non-fiction writers often find in archival research important evidence to bolster their arguments, details about their subject matter, or information that provides background or context for a story or essay.
- **Researchers for film, video, television, and the Web** Credits at the end of a feature film often provide a list of archives from which images, sound recordings, quotations, and numerous other kinds of documents and information have been drawn. These sources often provide much of the social and cultural context of the film.

Why might you undertake documentation work?

- If you represent a historical records repository with a clearly defined organizational mission and collecting policy, documentation is a crucial way of furthering your mission while helping improve New York State's documentary heritage. Documentation projects can help you build valuable relationships with existing constituencies and develop new constituencies, patrons, supporters, and advocates.
- If you represent an organization or group that is doing work in your community or the state, and you want to be sure that the record of your work and its impact survives as part of New York's history, initiating a documentation project can help make that goal a reality.

The purpose of documentation is to identify and ensure the systematic preservation of papers and other records that provide information about people, groups, events, and changing political, economic, or social conditions. A documentation project seeks to contribute to the building of a comprehensive and equitable historical record by making unique, original source materials available to researchers and citizens. These materials enable us to better understand the present and to plan more intelligently for the future.

Who initiates documentation?

Any organization with an interest in documenting a population group or topic can sponsor a documentation project. The initiative for documentation work generally arises from either repositories that collect records or organizations that generate them.

Historical records repositories

Since the missions of many repositories pertain directly and explicitly to historical records, they are most likely to initiate documentation projects. Repositories range from large educational institutions, corporations, or governments that have archives to small non-profit community organizations. Some examples:

- **Historical societies and museums** While many are best known for object collections and related programs, manuscript collections are often an essential and heavily used component of these cultural organizations.

- **Public and academic libraries** Although their primary focus may be books and other published works, many also maintain archival or manuscript collections, for example, in the local history room of a public library.
- **Other institutions and agencies** Large businesses, law firms, religious organizations, and other organizations or agencies may maintain archives of their own records and collect other records related to their areas of interest and activity.
- **Governments** State, county, or municipal governments may maintain historical records in their archives and choose to undertake documentation projects to enhance their holdings.

Organizations that generate records

Working with historical records is usually not part of the mission of records-creating organizations, so they are less likely to initiate projects. However, as organizations come to see the historical importance of their accomplishments and the value of preserving their stories, more are becoming active in documentation. Documentation projects may be initiated by

- Community organizations and groups
- Educational, religious, and cultural institutions
- Health and human service agencies
- Issue-oriented organizations and groups
- Businesses large and small
- Governments at all levels in New York State

If you represent an organization that generates records that are likely to be historically valuable, your first step might be to contact the Documentary Heritage Program (DHP) at the State Archives (see “Documentary Heritage Program—Technical Assistance,” page 38). The archivist may be able, through a free consultation, to help you learn about the likely value of your records, the options available for preserving them, and the process of making them available for research. (See also “Find the Right Home for Historically Valuable Records,” page 27).

Partners in documentation

Documentation nearly always involves a partnership between the entity that creates the records and the organization that will care for them and make them available. The partnerships can be initiated and structured in various ways:

- A records creator, such as an ethnic community organization, may work with a repository that will collect its records.
- A repository might collaborate with several organizations engaged in a particular topic; for example, environmental affairs or the development of tourism.
- Two or more repositories might agree to collect records on a topic. For example, a university archives might partner with a community historical society to document an important issue that affects both the university and the surrounding community, or a consortium of universities and public libraries could collaborate to document immigration to the region.

When two or more repositories are involved, it is important that they come to agreement regarding which groups of records should go to which repository, based on mission, location, resources, user clientele, or other factors. It is essential that the organization that initiates a project commit the necessary support and encouragement to carry out the project, and that repositories that collect the records commit to their ongoing care and accessibility.

Important concepts

The field of archives and historical records, like other fields, has developed a specialized vocabulary that invests common words with specific technical meanings. You will find a glossary of such terms in Appendix I, beginning on page 71. A few fundamental concepts, however, are central to understanding documentation; these are explained in more detail below.

Record

A record is information in any format created by an organization or received in the formal operation of its responsibilities. The term also includes recorded information created or held by individuals in the course of their daily lives.

Records are found in a wide range of formats, including paper, photographs and slides, motion picture film, audio- and videotape, and computer files.

Records are by-products of what we do as individuals and groups involved in life activities. We create a record to assist with administration, to help us remember something later, to persuade or inform others; we don't usually create a record to contribute to history. For example:

- The current financial records of your business or non-profit organization are essential to the effective management and survival of your entity. As these records age, they lose their management value. However, saved records can eventually reveal important information, not only about the history of your business or non-profit, but also about the economic conditions and dynamics of the place and time, how organizations and businesses operated and responded to changing conditions, and so on.
- Your agency maintains case files of its clients so it can gain access to relevant information about each one, track his or her relationship with the agency, and meet legal and ethical obligations. When people cease to be your clients, you may no longer need the records for these purposes, but as a group the records may contain historically valuable information about your constituencies and the services you provided.
- You write grants for your organization to fund programs. Once the programs are funded (or not) you no longer need the applications. But those may be the documents in which you most clearly summarize your organization's activities and the importance of its programs, so they may have historical value.
- The e-mail or letter you wrote to a loved one right after the World Trade Center attacks was an urgent expression of your thoughts and feelings at that moment, a by-product of your life experience. But it may also be a valuable record of your personal history, your family history, and possibly even New York's history.

Historical record

A historical record contains information that will have enduring value. Most historical records are no longer needed for their original purpose, and the person or organization that created them rarely, if ever, needs to consult them. For example, correspondence between the president of an advocacy organization and key legislators discussing the organization's and legislators' positions on an upcoming bill was written to influence legislation. A year later, their primary purpose fulfilled, some items may be consulted only occasionally. In a few years, the correspondence may be forgotten altogether, but it may have long-term historical significance and be worth saving. (For more information, see "Determine Which Records to Save" on page 29). Some records, however, are both permanently active and historical (for example, an organization's articles of incorporation or charter, which will be needed periodically throughout the life of the organization).

Note: Most records (the usual estimate is 95%) are not historically valuable. You can schedule these for recycling when they are no longer needed (see Appendix E, "Records Management," page 46, for more information).

Types of historical records

Many kinds of records may have important historical value:

- Diaries, correspondence, photographs, slides, tapes, and other sound or graphic records that document family or community life, events, and activities
- Maps, photographs, slides, tapes, and other sound or graphic records that document a group or organization, scientific data, or other features, events, or changes
- Minutes, summaries, or transcripts of meetings, hearings, or conferences
- Correspondence, including e-mail, of people in responsible positions or who have led noteworthy lives
- Reports, grant proposals, position papers, academic papers, and other unpublished documents that present what an organization does or that discuss historically important topics
- 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

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 in New York State that are committed to collecting artifacts 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.)

Groups of records: archives, manuscripts, series

Archives (the records of an organization) and *manuscripts* (generally the papers of an individual or family) are most commonly and most appropriately managed and described at an aggregate level. That is, they are kept and described in the same groupings that were created by the person or organization responsible for the records. Sometimes, when the group of organizational archives or personal papers is small or homogeneous enough, a single description of the records as a whole will suffice. Larger or more diverse groups of organizational records and manuscripts, however, are described based on the groupings, or *series*, created by the organization or individual. The records of a business or organization—an arts organization, for example—might contain several series, such as newsletters, program files, board minutes, annual reports, personnel records, financial records, and so on. Similarly, the papers of an individual, also referred to as a manuscript group, might contain series containing personal correspondence, diaries, journals, or unpublished writings, files related to organizations in which the person was active, and so on.

SUMMARY of the Documentation Process

Now we move from learning what documentation is, who is involved in it, why it is important, and some central concepts, to a discussion of the process itself—how to carry out the work of documentation. The table below summarizes the steps involved. They are described in detail in the sections that follow.

The Documentation Process at a Glance	
Select the Topic, Plan and Publicize the Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Select, define, and research the documentation topic• Develop a project plan• Publicize the documentation effort
Identify Stakeholders and Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with stakeholders: create an advisory committee• Identify and assign project personnel• Develop a contact list of people and organizations likely to hold historical records.
Survey the Records	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a survey work plan• Develop and test the survey instrument• Conduct the survey• Assess the survey results: What records were discovered? Which are historically valuable?• Make information about the surveyed records available• Survey follow-up: Cultivate future donors of records; write archival descriptions and make them available.
Find the Right Homes For Historically Valuable Records	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Steps for a historical records repository or an institution with its own archives• Steps for an organization without its own archives
Determine Which Records to Save	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appraisal: Decide what to save
Make the Records Available	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Negotiate the donation and transfer of records• Arrange and describe the records• Publicize the availability of the records

Select the Topic, Plan and Publicize the Project

Select, define, and research the documentation topic

The first step in documentation is to identify a potential group or topic and find the answers to several questions about the topic:

- **How will you define the topic—its scope, limits, and components?** Most topics tend to merge into other topics at the edges. Therefore, it is important to set clear boundaries, so that when you consider a particular subtopic or an organization with records, you have a basis for deciding whether it should be a focus for documentation or not. If health care is your topic, for example, will it include health-related social services provided by non-medical agencies? Will it include health insurance companies, alternative health practices, yoga centers, fitness clubs?
- **What are the broad historical outlines of the topic?** Continuing with the health care example, if you are examining health care in the past half-century, you might want to learn what health care facilities existed in your region at the turn of the twentieth century, when the local hospital was built, what major statewide or national health care policies or programs had major impacts on the region, what major health crises or issues have arisen in the community and when, and so on.
- **Is the topic significant and under-documented?** Is it significant within your locality, region, or statewide? What kinds of documentation already exist related to the topic, and where are the records located—in repositories or in homes or offices? Are there enough organizations and individuals with significant records to warrant the project? Given the scarce resources for documentation—space, time, and money—it doesn't make sense to survey and collect materials on a topic that is already well documented.
- **What are the important gaps in the historical record of the topic?** Once you have a general sense of the history of the topic and know what already exists in repositories, you will be able to see where the important gaps are. Will your documentation efforts be able to help fill the gaps?
- **What is distinctive about the topic?** Are there special characteristics of organizations, activities, issues, or events in your area that are particularly unusual or important? If the broad topic is environmental affairs, for example, and your community was selected as a potential site for a hazardous waste facility, the community's response and the eventual outcome could be an important episode in the region's environmental history.
- **Does the topic fall within your organization's mission and resources?** Does your existing mission and collecting policy encompass the topic? Do you have space, staff, and funds to devote to collecting, processing, and making accessible the records you hope to acquire?
- **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

Collecting Policy Every archives, historical society, museum, or other organization that collects historical records should have an acquisitions or collecting policy. An effective policy will state explicitly and in detail the topics that are the focus of collecting, so that the archivist or curator has a basis upon which to make decisions regarding what to accept and what not to accept, what to seek out and what to ignore. (For more information and sample acquisition policies, see *Strengthening New York's Historical Records Programs: A Self-Study Guide* listed in Appendix H under "Publications in Print.")

or county lines) coincide with the service areas of the repository? Will you confine your project to your city, county, or region?

- **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 the most significant activity concentrated in a particular period?

The following steps will help you answer these questions:

- **Consult widely**
 - ◆ Meet with DHP staff in Albany (see “Getting Help,” page 38) for advice about your project. He or she can help you answer some of these questions, flesh out your ideas, suggest resources, comment upon your grant application, and even participate as an *ex officio* member of your project’s advisory committee. Consider using discussion groups and brainstorming sessions to develop topic ideas.
 - ◆ Talk to people knowledgeable about the topic—local historians, your own board and staff, other organizations—who can help you define the topic and learn about its history.
 - ◆ Discuss the project with key staff and board members to determine its feasibility and relevance to your organization’s mission and collecting policy. Make sure they fully support the project. They can provide guidance and encouragement and help you determine what is important to document in your area. Also, they have ties to the community and can spur public awareness about the project and its importance.
- **Conduct preliminary research**
 - ◆ Prepare an overview of the history of the topic, drawn from secondary sources and knowledgeable individuals, to identify the main events, trends, issues, organizations, and individuals that have shaped the history of the topic in your area. For instance, an ethnic community might want to learn what brought its initial members to the area. How did they fit into the surrounding community? What were their most common occupations? What were the central issues the community faced during different periods of its history?
 - ◆ Search the *New York State Historical Documents Inventory (HDI)*, an online resource available through Excelsior, the online catalog of the State Archives and the State Library, to see what groups of archival records related to your topic already exist in your region and around the state (go to www.archives.nysed.gov and click on “Online Catalog”).
 - ◆ Search the websites of libraries and other repositories in your area, and of organizations active in the topic area, and talk to repository staff to find out what has already been collected locally.
 - ◆ Review the collecting policies and holdings of historical records repositories in your area.
 - ◆ If your topic is related to one of the topic areas for which the State Archives has published a documentation planning guide (mental health, environmental affairs, and Latino/Hispanic history and culture), refer to it for guidance. Guides are listed under “Resources for Documentation in Print and on the Internet” in Appendix H, page 68, and are available free in electronic form from the State Archives.

- ◆ Develop criteria for deciding whether a particular topic, subtopic, or particular groups of records should be considered priorities for documentation. (For guidance in this process, see “Criteria for Prioritizing Topics and Subtopics,” Appendix C, page 43.)
- **Prepare a written definition of the topic**, describing its parameters and the main subtopics that are included within it. This will guide your exploration of potential sources of records for documentation.

Develop a project plan

Planning for a documentation project is an ongoing process, because the details of each phase of the project depend on the results of the previous phase. The planning process began when you first sat down to talk about documentation with a colleague or two and jotted down some ideas. It probably took formal written form for the first time as a grant proposal for funding or a presentation to a director or board of directors. It would have included at least an introduction to the topic, a basic outline of the documentation process, and a rudimentary work plan—perhaps with this manual as your guide. But depending on your degree of familiarity with the topic, the organizations and individuals active in it, and the kinds and quantities of relevant records that may exist, this first plan may contain little detail and leave lots of questions unanswered.

At this point you have identified, researched, and refined your topic, and you have consulted, at least informally, with knowledgeable people. You may have begun to develop a contact list and establish relationships with important stakeholders. You should now be in a position to develop a more complete and realistic project plan. This manual describes the basic elements of the documentation process (summarized in the table on page 9) and raises some of the issues and decisions that you will need to consider along the way. You may now be able to determine some parts of the plan in detail; others will require fleshing out or revision as the project unfolds.

For more detailed guidance in planning your documentation efforts, see *A Manual for Documentation Planning in New York State*, available from the State Archives. Although its focus is on planning for documentation at the statewide and regional levels, much of the information is applicable to local documentation projects. The State Archives has also published guides to documentation in the areas of mental health, environmental affairs, and Latino/Hispanic history and culture. If your topic is related to one of these areas, be sure to obtain the relevant guide. (See “Resources for Documentation in Print and on the Internet,” Appendix H, page 68.)

The elements of the documentation process are presented in this manual in logical order, but they are not always carried out in strictly chronological order. For example, your repository may already be working with an organization whose records you would like to collect, at the same time that you are defining your topic. Similarly, your community organization, which intends to document the community’s history, may be negotiating with potential repositories before you have even begun to identify the organizations and individuals that may have records to donate. In fact, you may need to do preliminary work on all the elements to sell the project to your agency, your partners, or your funders.

Components of the plan (See “Sample Project Plan,” Appendix F, page 47.)

The project plan has several components. Depending on when during the project the plan is written, some of these components may be fully developed, while others may be only projections. They include:

- Goals and objectives

- Expected outcomes and products
- Resources needed (personnel, facilities, funds) and how they will be obtained
- Steps involved in carrying out the project and how they will be accomplished
- Publicity plan
- Timeline that indicates how long various phases of the project should take
- Anticipated next steps related to documentation at the conclusion of the project

Organize the project into manageable phases

Documentation is a process that begins with selecting a topic and ends when records have been preserved and made available to the public for use. As you will see, a documentation project entails careful planning and a number of steps, many of which involve building relationships with stakeholders and gaining their trust and active participation. The process often takes more time than one might expect. If the organization conducting the project already has extensive contacts and relationships with the main stakeholders in the topic area, the process may move quickly. If the topic is broad, the number of potential records holders is large, and the stakeholder community is new to the lead organization, the process may take significantly longer. For an organization new to documentation or new to the topic area, it often works best to select a narrow topic and expand it later if time and resources permit.

For example, as a general rule, allow at least two years for a survey project. It is always a good idea to conceive and organize the project into manageable segments or phases. The following outline offers a typical and recommended approach:

- Year 1: Planning phase
 - ◆ Develop and research the chosen topic
 - ◆ Prepare a project plan
 - ◆ Establish advisory committee
 - ◆ Develop contact list
 - ◆ Develop and test survey instrument
 - ◆ Create work plan for year 2
- Year 2: Survey phase
 - ◆ Conduct survey and assess results
 - ◆ Develop descriptions of the groups of records identified
 - ◆ Find homes for records in historical records repositories
 - ◆ Develop finding aids and guides
- Year 3 and ongoing

The first two phases should lay the groundwork for ongoing documentation in subsequent years. If grant funding has supported the initial effort, the ongoing work will either require new funding or need to be integrated into the normal operations of the repository.

 - ◆ Continue collecting records identified during the earlier phases
 - ◆ Arrange and describe records collected in the repository

- ◆ Publicize the records and develop products and programs that encourage their use

Publicize the documentation effort

Documentation work is important, but very few people even know that the process exists. Publicizing your documentation efforts well is an important part of the project and can further several important goals:

- To draw attention to and educate the public about historical records, their importance, and the topic you are documenting
- To draw attention to the repository and other organizations participating in the project
- To contribute to the development of your contact list, particularly if, in your publicity materials, you encourage people who have records to contact you
- To help you learn about important groups of records to include in your survey.

There are many ways to draw public attention to your project, several of which overlap with the activities involved in building your contact list (see page 17). The list below begins with common steps that announce your project to a broad public audience. Your advisory committee may be able to provide names of organizations, newsletters, radio stations, etc. used by your target group, and they may know other ways to spread the word.

- Send news releases to the local press and media outlets.
- Arrange to be interviewed on radio or public access TV channels.
- Send releases or notices to newsletters of organizations related to your topic; call first to spark interest in your project and to encourage a willingness to use publication space to announce it.
- Attend organizational meetings and make presentations.
- If language is an issue, bilingual releases, brochures, flyers, etc., can make a huge difference. Even if most of your target population is bilingual and reads English well, the effort you make to produce materials in a community's own language sends a powerful message of respect and interest that can open doors and win community support.
- Post or hand out flyers in neighborhoods, clubs, places of business, or at events frequented by your target population.

Remember that publicity is not something you undertake once in a project. It should be an ongoing aspect of the work, marking milestones in the project, reaching new stakeholders, and keeping the public and your stakeholder groups aware of what you're doing so they stay interested and supportive.

Identify Stakeholders and Participants

Work with stakeholders: create an advisory committee

A successful documentation project depends on the active engagement of stakeholders—the range of people and groups to whom the project and its outcome will matter. The advisory committee is the most important vehicle of such engagement.

The ultimate goal of the documentation project is to make historically valuable records about your topic available to people for use. This means that many people who have a stake in the topic and may have devoted their lives to it will have to give up, often to another organization and to public view, records that are very important to them.

If your topic is a population group, say the Latino communities in your county, a major stakeholder group will be members of those communities and should represent the range of constituencies within them. Other stakeholders will include scholars, policy makers, businesses, health and social services agencies, cultural organizations, and others that serve or interact with the Latino community. If the topic is defined by a subject or kind of activity—for example, the arts, or business, or mental health—the stakeholders will include experts in the topic, people working in the organizations associated with it, the people served by the organizations, people who make or influence policy in the area, and so on.

Be sensitive to community issues and community dynamics

It is important to remember that any community of stakeholders is really several communities—sub-groups, factions, or constituencies—which may have complex relationships among themselves. If the staff carrying out the documentation project are not members of that community or are not privy to its subdivisions and internal dynamics, they will need guidance from people who are. Moreover, the quest for a balanced historical record entails a conscientious effort to document the internal diversity of communities—both significant sub-groups and contrasting viewpoints.

Equally important, the stakeholder community will likely share values, concerns, customs, distinctive language, and ways of looking at the world, or at least at the topic, of which an outsider may not be aware. Identifying a few people from the stakeholder community who can guide you through these cultural, social, and political thickets can help the project go smoothly and avoid pitfalls.

Who should serve on your advisory committee?

The advisory committee needs to be large enough to include people who represent and can provide entrée into the key stakeholder communities, but it should not be too large to work effectively as a group. Eight to fifteen people is a good size. It should include people knowledgeable about the topic, its current dynamics and history, and archives. The committee can include

- Key project staff, including the project director and archivist
- Members of stakeholder communities
- Subject specialists: people with knowledge and experience related to the topic

- Likely users of records: historians, sociologists, educators

Be sure to discuss with potential advisory committee members the nature of their roles and how much of their time you expect their work will take.

What does the advisory committee do?

The advisory committee should meet regularly throughout the project to

- Provide context and guidance and keep the project on course
- Introduce project staff to key stakeholders
- Provide political and cultural insight in sensitive situations
- Review products such as the survey form and consultant's action plan
- Assist with press releases, other public awareness activities, and outreach
- Suggest innovative ways of using the historical materials discovered

Identify and assign project personnel

The advisory committee is important, but most members will be volunteers, and you can't expect them to do the bulk of the work. You will need staff, including

- A project director to oversee the project
- A project archivist to provide the historical records expertise
- Other staff, depending on the size of your project

Project director

The project director should be familiar with the topic or group being documented and be responsible for

- Managing the project and adhering to its work plan and schedule
- Overseeing the work of the project archivist and other staff
- Monitoring the quality of products: survey form, contact list, consultant's report
- Working with and reporting to the advisory committee
- Building public awareness and support for the project
- Preparing grants and reports associated with the project

Project archivist

The project archivist provides the records expertise and must work closely with the project director and advisory committee, particularly if he or she is not a member of the community being surveyed. When selecting the archivist:

- Look for previous experience with documentation fieldwork and archival description
- Look for evidence that the candidate works well with diverse communities

- Ask for a résumé, and be sure to check references
- Contact the person's past employers and ask for an honest evaluation of previous work.
- Ask for samples of work, such as survey forms or consultant reports
- Get a signed contract or letter of agreement so both parties know what is expected

The DHP office at the State Archives has a list of archival consultants who have experience with documentation projects.

Other staff

You may also need a community liaison, a translator or interpreter, survey workers, and/or clerical support.

- A **community liaison**, or “**community scholar**,” is a member of the stakeholder community who knows the community and its history well, is known and respected by or most of the community, and can help the project archivist and survey workers establish and sustain good relationships with community members. In many instances, volunteer members of the advisory committee can adequately fill that function. But in some instances, particularly where language or cultural differences between the target community and the sponsoring organization are great (for example, between a mainstream museum or university archives and an immigrant community with no prior connection to the institution) a paid “community scholar” may be an invaluable addition to the team.

An important additional outcome of hiring a community scholar is that he or she may acquire training in archival work and the care of historical records that can be an important benefit to the community for years to come.

- A **translator** or **interpreter** may be required for projects documenting communities where for many English is a second language.
- **Survey workers**, trained by the project archivist, may be required on large projects to help conduct the survey. It is often possible to find individuals with some background in history or historical records who are also members of stakeholder communities or knowledgeable about them, and therefore have both some awareness of the topic area and contacts within the communities being surveyed.
- **Clerical workers** may be needed to compile the contact list, facilitate communications with the advisory committee and other stakeholders, compile collected surveys, and so on.

Develop a contact list

The purpose of the project contact list is twofold:

- *It provides a road map to sources of records.* The list will contain contact information for the organizations and individuals who are likely to have significant records related to the topic.
- *It builds the constituency for the project.* People you contact become potential participants, supporters, or advocates for the documentation project as a whole.

Kinds of data to include in the contact list

Depending on your topic, you will want to think carefully about what kinds of information to collect about the people and organizations in your contact list, such as:

- Personal contact information: Name, address, phone number, e-mail address
- Work contact information: Occupation, title, organization, address, phone number, e-mail address
- Affiliations besides work: Organizations, groups, or networks in which the person participates, particularly if they are related to subtopics of your documentation topic. For example, in a health care documentation project, it might be useful to know whether a person or organization is associated with mental health, public health, clinics, hospitals, or private practices. Affiliations can also reveal positions or points of view related to the topic.
- Ethnic or cultural background, when the topic is an under-documented community or this information is relevant to the topic. For example, in a Latino documentation project, it might be important to know whether a person or organization is part of the Puerto Rican, Colombian, Mexican, or other community. In a health care project, it might be important to know that the contact list and the survey include representation from different segments of the community.

How to develop the list

You will be looking for individuals and organizations who are or have been involved in the topic or group being documented and have generated records, some of which are likely to have historical value. The research already done will have given you a sense of the overall history of the topic and some of the key players in that history.

Some of the steps suggested below will be more relevant than others, depending on your topic. As you go through this process, you will not only build the list; you will also publicize the project to people who are likely to care about it, and you will learn more about the topic itself and about the stakeholder communities.

- Engage members of the advisory committee to suggest contacts and introduce you to key stakeholders.
- Talk with people at civic, business, and professional associations, labor unions, religious organizations, advocacy groups, social clubs, and so on, that are relevant to your topic.
- Search the local press and broadcast media and talk with editors and broadcasters.
- Write letters, make telephone calls, and informally “ask around.”
- In your press releases, ask people to contact you if they have records or know of someone who does.
- Use ideas listed under “Publicize the Documentation Effort” (page 14) to help generate names and make connections for your contact list.

Developing the contact list will probably begin informally. In your very first meetings, as you develop your topical focus, names of important organizations and individuals will come up in conversation. If your topic is narrow and the region is small, the contact list may be relatively short and obviously complete early in the project. If the topic is broad or the area large, the list may grow as you build your

advisory committee. The resulting list can become an important asset to your organization for years to come.

Prioritize contacts: how much effort you expend to reach them

As you review your contact list, certain organizations and individuals are likely to stand out as particularly important. They may include the largest, oldest, or best-known organizations in the topic area. There may be an individual or group that is known to have exercised special leadership or was active during a seminal or critical event in the history of the topic. You may know of an organization that has kept particularly complete records. There may be a segment of the stakeholder community that is considered particularly significant historically or likely to be responsive to historical records issues. You may wish to make a special effort to reach these constituents through personal calls, site visits, follow-up calls, or invitations to visit your repository.

On the other hand, there may be other groups of stakeholders who you think may have some interest or relevant records but who may not warrant as much energy or attention. Some of these who receive the survey will respond with enthusiasm, others won't. For these lower-priority constituents, it will be the recipients' interest and initiative that determine the outcome.

Thus it is wise to prioritize your contact list and allocate your time and resources where you think they will be most productive.

Survey the Records

The purpose of a survey is to locate records that are related to the topic of the project, learn basic information about them, and determine whether they have long-term historical value (whether they are archival).

Develop a survey work plan

By now you have identified, researched, and refined your topic, and formed an advisory committee. You have developed your contact list and established relationships, recruited and hired some or all of your staff, and begun to publicize the project. Before you launch the survey itself, it is important to summarize what you have learned and decided so far, think through in detail how you are going to carry out the survey, and draft a plan of work for this next phase. (See "Sample Survey Work Plan," Appendix F, page 49.)

The work plan has several components. They include:

Current status of the project

- A list of current or prospective advisory committee members
- A list of current staff and positions to be filled
- A contact list: the individuals and organizations whose records you intend to survey. This list will grow as the project unfolds.
- A list of resources necessary to undertake the survey:

- ◆ Computer software and hardware for databases and for cataloging of records
- ◆ Supplies, including archival supplies for storing important records
- A brief narrative summary of the project to date, noting any unexpected developments, changes in plans, key individuals, organizations, or groups of records identified or acquired, etc.

Survey work plan

- Goals and objectives
- Steps involved in carrying out the survey and how they will be accomplished
- A project timeline that indicates how long various phases of the project should take

Considerations in developing your survey plan

Your capacity

The research and planning you have completed may have generated a potential project that is beyond the capacity of your organization and its resources. The survey plan needs to be created within a realistic context and set realistic goals.

- Do you have enough time and money to reach all the people and organizations you have identified?
- Is it more important to send the survey to as large a constituency as possible and learn at least something about most of them, or does it make more sense in your situation to concentrate on a smaller number and survey them in greater depth?
- Does the likely repository have enough space, time, and money to process the records that might be donated as a result of the survey, and to maintain the records and access to them in years to come?

Prioritize the survey: how in-depth should your survey of each group of records be?

For most organizations and individuals identified in the survey, a single survey form can be filled out for the whole grouping of records, from which the archivist can write a group-level description. If the group of records is particularly large, varied, or important enough, it may make sense to survey them in greater depth than is usually required. The person or organization holding the records may be able to do this with some advice from the archivist, but it's more likely that the project archivist or a records surveyor on the project will need to make a site visit and survey the records in person.

You will probably not know before the initial survey forms are disseminated how many or which groups of records should receive this deeper level of survey, but advisory committee members may be able to identify some likely candidates. In any case, it is wise to budget time and funds to allow for some site visits for more in-depth surveying of especially important groups of records.

Timing

The timing of the project itself and of individual contacts can affect the success of the survey. If the main stakeholder group consists of organizations with regular business hours, then weekday meetings during working hours will be fine. However, if the topic is labor or an ethnic community in a city, for example, then many key leaders might not be able to take time off from day jobs, and you will have to schedule calls and meetings for evenings or weekends. If your target population includes many teachers

or others tied to the academic calendar, you may want to time the project to avoid extremely busy periods or vacations. Religious or occupational groups may have similar calendar issues to consider.

Involve community members in the survey team

Members of some communities and groups may be reluctant to talk freely with outsiders, especially about matters related to their history or about records that might be considered sensitive. It is often important, therefore, to include members of such groups on the team that makes calls and conducts site visits. A community scholar or survey worker drawn from the community can be very helpful in this role, as can members of the advisory committee. During a site visit, the community member can visit with organizational representatives while the project archivist is surveying the records. It can be particularly helpful if someone involved in the project knows the contact personally and can facilitate communication.

Public accessibility of historical records

In planning the survey, especially the allocation of resources to fill out survey forms and write the archival descriptions, remember to give priority to records that the current owner wants to make publicly accessible for research. If an individual or an organization with valuable records is ready to donate the records to a repository or to create its own accessible repository, those records should be at the top of the list. If an organization isn't "ready" yet, but understands the importance of accessibility and is considering donation at a later time, it's certainly worth doing the survey. But if an individual intends to keep his or her records in private hands and to withhold them for the foreseeable future, it helps to know the records exist, but it does not make sense to devote scarce resources to surveying and describing them.

An important product of the survey project will be descriptions of the groups of records, following standard archival descriptive practices (see "Standardized Description" on page 25 and Appendix F, "Sample Forms and Documents," page 47.) The extent of description done for a group of records should depend on the degree to which the owners are willing to make the records, and information about them, publicly accessible. For guidelines on making these decisions, see "Extent and Distribution of Archival Description," (Appendix D, page 45.)

Even if records will remain in the current owner's possession and information about them will not be publicly accessible, it is important to know that records of historical value exist. The organization conducting the documentation project can maintain contact with the records' owners, and over time the owners may change their minds about allowing access. Cultivation of a potential donor of records can take years of patient contact, and knowing the records exist and where they are located is the necessary first step. However, given the importance of documenting historical records that can be made publicly accessible, funding agencies, such as the State Archives, will not support efforts to identify and describe records that won't be made available within the foreseeable future.

Allow plenty of time

If you have done a thorough job working with your advisory committee, developing relationships with key stakeholders in the community, building your contact list, and publicizing the project, you should have a firm foundation for a successful survey. Even so, the process may take longer than you expect. You are asking people who are deeply engaged with a topic to tell you about the records related to the topic and about their involvement with them. You may be asking individuals to let allow or other project

personnel to look through the records; in the long run, you are asking those individuals to donate their records to a publicly accessible repository. This requires a high degree of trust and confidence in the people surveying the records, in the organization directing the project, and especially in the repository that may eventually hold the records. Building such trust and confidence can take time. Conducting the survey can easily take a year, perhaps two or three years for a broad topic and many contacts. Survey forms may trickle in, sometimes followed by donated records, for several years after the formal end of the project.

Develop and test the survey instrument

This form is developed, usually by the project archivist, to gather significant details about groups of records held by organizations and individuals. Members of the advisory committee may also provide valuable input during the design of the instrument. (Sample documentation survey forms are included in Appendix F, on page 52.)

The survey form needs to be simple, easy to understand, and presented in a manner and through a medium with which members of the target audience are likely to be comfortable.

Major components of the survey form:

- The name and address of the individual or organization contacted
- Descriptive information about the topical scope and content of the group of records
- The date span of the records
- The size of the group of records or manuscripts
- Languages used in the records, if other than English
- The physical condition of the records
- Any restrictions on their access or use
- The accessibility of the records to researchers: whether the owner wishes to retain the records or transfer them to a willing repository. If the owner will retain the records, will he or she make them publicly accessible?
- Permission to make information about the records available to the public online. (If permission cannot be obtained, it is probably not worth surveying the records further.)

The structure the survey form will take depends in part on how the survey will be conducted—through one or a combination of the following media:

- telephone
- mail or e-mail
- site visits to the record holder

The way you conduct your survey is important and may strongly influence the results. For example, if your topic points you toward organizations that are likely to see the value of their history and therefore the value of your project, a mailed or e-mailed survey form with a cover letter may be quite adequate to

produce a good response. At the other end of the spectrum, if your project wants to document the founding and evolution of an ethnic community in your county that includes recent immigrant populations, a mailed survey form with a cover letter in English will be unlikely to stimulate a positive response. You will need bilingual language forms, and you may need a member of the community to make initial phone calls and accompany the archivist on site visits. The design of the form and its medium of delivery need to be carefully thought out for each topic. Several factors should be taken into account:

- Your organization's existing relationship with the target community. Are you part of the community? Are you an outsider but well known and respected for your involvement with and service to the target community? Or are you an outsider and an unknown quantity?
- Cultural issues. This includes not only race and ethnicity, but also class, levels of education, language, and other factors that may shape people's attitudes and receptivity to different approaches and choices of media.
- Size and scope of the project. If the topic is broad, the region or population large, and the number of potential records holders many, you may be able to afford only a small number of site visits or phone calls relative to the number of organizations you want to survey.

Your advisory committee should be able to help you think through these issues.

It is important to test the form and its medium of delivery with a random or selected sample of project contacts during the planning phase. The testing phase can yield important feedback about the design of the form and the way it is delivered. For example, you may discover that a segment of people surveyed are uncomfortable talking on the phone, and that site visits might be more successful. Another segment may not want to take the time for a phone call or a visit but would be willing to complete a survey via e-mail. Be sure to test the survey process early enough to leave time for any necessary revisions.

Conduct the survey

Make initial contacts, explain the project, and disseminate the survey

In some instances, it may be possible to simply write a cover letter to accompany the survey form and send it out to the people on the contact list. But in most situations, it will work better to begin with a more focused, personal approach—a telephone call, an e-mail exchange, a group meeting—that allows the targeted individuals to hear directly about the project, ask questions, and agree to participate. It may be that different stakeholder groups within the contact list will need to be approached differently.

The advisory committee may be able to offer helpful advice in this area, and your experience testing the survey form may have provided valuable clues as to which approaches work best. In any case, the first step is to get the survey into the hands of people likely to have important historical records.

Often the people you contact may be surprised that you are interested in their papers and records, and it may be necessary to raise their awareness and interest as well. Try to indicate how important their papers may be and how they may reveal the organization's or individual's contributions to the history of the region and the state.

Be sure to discuss the question of accessibility with the records creators. They need to understand that the descriptions of the records, based on their survey forms, may become publicly available in print, on the web, and in online databases. The survey forms should include a field where the owner grants permission to make information about the records publicly available. (See “Public Accessibility of Historical Records,” page 21.)

Follow up with contacts to encourage participation

Most people lead busy lives, and dealing with the potentially valuable historical records they have lying around is unlikely to be at the top of their agenda. Therefore, if you are using a mailed survey, following up after people have received their survey forms may be an essential step in getting them to participate. A mail or e-mail reminder may work for some, but a phone call or visit is usually better.

Assist or participate in surveying records

People willing to participate in the survey may nevertheless be uncomfortable with the process and need some help. Project staff may be able to assist in several ways:

- By filling out the survey form based on a phone interview with the records holder
- By helping participants fill out the form, either by phone or in person
- By surveying the records in person, usually after either a call for help from the owner or upon receipt of the survey form, when you may decide that seeing the records warrants a closer look

Rather than fill out the survey form directly, the surveyor may choose to take notes on the records first, then fill out the form based on the notes. (See “Sample survey form (filled out),” Appendix F, page 54.)

Offer advice on the care and retention of records

Some individuals and organizations may wish to retain and care for their own records—if not forever, at least for an extended period. You can help them by providing guidance on how to care for their records and by directing them to publications and resources for supplies. (See Appendix E, “Records Management,” page 46, and other State Archives’ resources on the topic, Appendix H, page 68.) Be sensitive to the fact that some records creators are more at ease with oral than written communication. You also may be able to guide them through the process of deciding whether to manage their own records or place them with a different organization or historical records repository.

Collect completed surveys

Depending on the size and scope of the survey and the characteristics of the groups surveyed, collecting the surveys may require some encouragement and reminders. You will need to set a deadline so you can move on to the next phase of the project. It is likely, however, that surveys will continue to come in after the deadline, perhaps for years to come. Since documentation is an ongoing process with a continuing commitment by the repository, these new survey forms can be integrated into your existing data and may alert you to important records available for collection.

Assess survey results

It is not possible to collect everything that might be of possible interest in the future. Therefore, it is necessary to assess the likely historical value of records—to appraise them—before they become part of

an archives' holdings. Most appraisal takes place later in the documentation process (see "Determine Which Records to Save," page 29), but it is important to make a preliminary assessment of the historical value of each group of records identified in a survey before making information about them available or deciding on the next steps. It may become clear during the survey process that some organizations contacted do not have historical records relevant to the topic, and thus there is no point in pursuing the relationship beyond a gracious letter or call to thank them for their participation. On the other hand, you may discover a group of organizational records or personal papers of unexpected size or significance that requires a more in-depth look by the archivist. The project may also identify significant records that are in immediate danger—stored in damaging conditions or at risk of being discarded.

Once the surveys are in hand or enough of them to begin assessing them:

- Review completed surveys and evaluate their information against what you know about the history of the topic and the key players.
- Identify a manageable number of the most promising groups of records or manuscripts:
 - ◆ Those organizations and individuals that stand out as most important to document
 - ◆ Those groups of records or manuscripts likely to be historically valuable
- Visit the most promising sites and look at the actual records. Make a preliminary assessment of their historical value.

Make the information available

Write archival descriptions based on the surveys

Once the surveys have been completed and collected and the project archivist has determined that certain records appear to be archival, he or she will write a description of each organization's records or individual's papers ("archival" means records that probably have historical value). There will usually be one description for each respondent to the survey. The description will relate, in general terms, what the group of records or manuscripts is about. In some cases, a site visit or a thorough survey form may reveal enough information to warrant writing a description for each records series held by the organization or individual, depending on the quantity of records, their importance, and your resources.

Standardized Description Descriptions should follow standard archival practice. A formal archival description contains numerical codes and a very specific format, but this degree of detail may not be necessary in creating the descriptive records from a survey project. The most important elements are that the right kinds of information are grouped together and in the right order, so that later on an archivist can enter the data into a standard format. (See "Description," page 34, and "Sample Archival Summary Description Records" in Appendix F, beginning on page 58. For detailed information, see the State Archives publication *Guidelines for Arrangement and Description of Archives and Manuscripts*.)

Copies of the descriptive records should be sent to the State Archives where staff will add them to the *New York State Historical Documents Inventory (HDI)*, an online resource available through Excelsior, the online catalog of the State Archives (www.archives.nysed.gov).

Privacy and Contact Information The archivist and project director will need to be careful about privacy and contact information. If records creators are keeping their records, make sure you have their

written permission in advance to publicly describe their records, and make sure they agree to be contacted, directly or through you, by researchers interested in looking at their records. The description should clearly state any restrictions on access to the records and whom potential researchers should contact first.

Guides to Groups of Records and Manuscripts The project may include publication of guides to the records and manuscript groups surveyed—compilations of the archival descriptions—in printed form or on the Web.

Prepare a final report

It is important at the end of the project to prepare a final report or evaluation that:

- Summarizes the project's goals and objectives
- Outlines its methodology and process
- Lists its accomplishments
- Discusses the obstacles or issues encountered, changes made to the project plan, and other lessons learned from the project
- Evaluates its strengths and weaknesses
- Recommends follow-up actions or next steps related to documentation, accessibility, and use of historical records.

Such a report may be required by the project's funding agency, the organization's director or board, or other interested parties. It can also be an important management and planning tool, and it can become, itself, a valuable historical record of an important project.

Survey outcomes

A successful survey project should yield the following outcomes:

- You know what records exist relevant to the topic you have chosen.
- You know which records are likely to be historically valuable.
- Descriptions of the groups of archival records are publicly available.
- Relationships have been established between records creators and repositories.
- The stakeholder groups engaged with the topic are aware of the project and have a heightened awareness of the importance of historical records; participating organizations have a higher profile in the community as a whole.

See also "Products at the End of the Documentation Process," page 35).

Survey follow-up: cultivate future donors of records

The documentation survey begins ongoing relationships between the repository and the organizations and individuals who have created the surveyed records. Some records creators may donate records to the repository, as a direct result of the project. These may be from an earlier period in the organization's

history, but if the organization or individual is still active in the field, they are probably generating new archival records regularly in the course of their work. If so, it might make sense for them to periodically donate records they no longer need to the repository.

Some people or organizations will keep their records—for now. But as individuals and organizations age and records pile up and become candidates for disposal, people may change their minds and later agree to part with records that document their history and their contributions to the field of activity. An occasional friendly follow-up call from the repository to such holders of records can keep the relationship alive and remind people about their records. When circumstances change—a move from an office or home, a change of organizational leadership, aging, or simply the desire to clean house—they may be ready to donate their records or to will them to the repository.

Cultivating such relationships can benefit the repository and donors or potential donors in other ways as well. People may choose to become engaged with the repository as users of records, volunteers, members, or financial supporters. Few organizations will have the time or resources to follow up consistently with all participants in a survey project, but a selective relationship-building program can reap important benefits for the repository—and for the historical record in New York.

Find the Right Home for Historically Valuable Records

A survey project may turn up quantities of important records, held by a number of organizations and individuals, for which you need to find an appropriate repository. Or you may represent an organization that has generated historically significant records, and you need to figure out where and how to save them and make them available. Depending on the kind of organization you represent, its mission and resources, and the kinds and quantity of records you have identified, there are several options to consider.

For a historical records repository or an institution with its own archives

Options

- Take all the historical records into your archives.
- Add the records most relevant to your mission, and seek other repositories for the records you cannot collect.
- Collaborate with other repositories from the beginning on a documentation effort. For example, a university archives might partner with a county historical society to document a topic, such as land use or civil rights, that is important to both the university and the community.
 - ◆ Assess the resources, topical interests, location, clientele, mission of each participating repository.
 - ◆ Determine which organizational records or manuscript groups are best suited to which repositories.

Considerations

- Do you have adequate space with the necessary climate controls to preserve historical records?

- How well do the records fit with your organization's mission?
- Can you handle the costs of maintaining these records?
- Is yours the most appropriate repository, in terms of location, nature and content of the records, accessibility, and use?

For an organization without its own archives

Options

- Create an in-house archives.
- Keep the records safe, let the public know they exist, and offer limited access to them. This can be done by appointment to avoid disruption of your work environment.
- Find a home for the records in an appropriate, publicly accessible archives.

What it takes to properly manage historical records

The whole purpose of documentation is to make archival records available in perpetuity for use by researchers and the public.

To operate a publicly accessible archives, you need

- A secure, environmentally stable storage area
- Adequate shelving and archival storage containers
- Good finding aids that help users locate the records they need
- Space to provide access—a research room open to the public
- Technology to provide access—computer software and hardware
- Archival staff to appraise, collect, arrange and describe, and catalog records; staff the reading room; and administer the program

For detailed information on the management of archives, see *Strengthening New York's Historical Records Programs: A Self-Study Guide*. The State Archives also publishes technical manuals on various aspects of archives management. The complete list of State Archives publications is available on its website.

In short, there is more to establishing an archives than putting records in a room or on the Web. Consider carefully the immediate and long-term expenses of starting a repository. The State Archives has publications and offer workshops covering these topics. They may also be able to provide one-on-one assistance.

Considerations

- Does managing an archives fit within your mission?
- Do you have, or can you raise, the funds to establish, staff, and maintain an archives over time?
- How often would you need access to the records?
- Would the records be better housed and made available in an already established archives?

- Are there other records-creating organizations engaged in the same topic area that might work with you to find a repository to collect your records? Your collaboration might generate stronger interest and commitment on the part of a repository than your organization would operating alone.
- On the other hand, it might work better to encourage the repository to begin collecting in this topic area, beginning with your organization's records. Your decision will depend on your assessment of the situation in your community.
- Whether you decide to collect and keep your records or place them in an already established repository, would it be possible to provide copies of all or part of a group of records (on paper, film, magnetic tape, or in electronic form) to other stakeholders and users—a repository, the donor organization, or other local institutions?
- Characteristics to look for in a potential repository include:
 - ♦ **Mission and commitment:** The mission is relevant to your topic and the organization is committed to ongoing documentation of the topic and to promoting the existence and use of the records.
 - ♦ **Institutional stability:** The organization is well established and supported, and is unlikely to go out of business or cut back on its support for archival collections.
 - ♦ **Location:** The repository is relatively accessible to the communities or stakeholders represented in the records.
 - ♦ **Adequate facilities:** There is sufficient storage space and public access.
 - ♦ **Sufficient staff, some with archival training**
 - ♦ **Adequate financial resources**

Determine Which Records to Save

Appraisal: Decide what to save

Having surveyed the records, you've laid the foundation for appraisal. You know that the topic is important and why it needs to be documented; you know what has already been documented; you have identified records that are likely to be historically significant; and you have determined that at least some of those records are likely to be appropriate for your repository. The next step is appraisal.

What follows is a brief outline of the process of appraising records for historical value. Its purpose is not to teach someone how to do appraisal; rather, it should help others involved in the project understand what the archivist and the subject expert conducting an appraisal are doing. (The New York State Archives offers workshops and publications on appraisal. These and other resources are listed in Appendices G and H, beginning on page 64.)

Engage a qualified archivist for appraisal

Repositories cannot afford to collect everything that might be interesting or useful someday, so thoughtful, careful, and sometimes difficult choices must be made. Appraisal—deciding which records to collect in your repository—is a complex process that requires knowledge and judgment; there is no simple formula. Personal and institutional priorities and preferences, current historical and cultural

values, and the intellectual and conceptual frameworks of those conducting the appraisal inevitably shape such decisions. An archivist trained in history or working with a historian, for example, will ask certain questions of the material and will value certain materials more highly than others. If the archivist works on the same material with an expert in the subject, a different set of questions will arise, and some different judgments are likely to be made as to which materials will be kept or rejected. **Appraisal should be done by a trained archivist working closely with people who are familiar with the topic and the records. Both archival skill and the knowledge of the subject are essential.**

Understand the repository

Appraisal is not about deciding which records have historical value to all people in all places. Rather, it entails deciding which records that have historical value are appropriate for a particular repository.

- **Acquisition (Collecting) Policy** The repository should have a clear acquisition policy, a written statement that guides its staff in seeking and selecting historical records. The acquisition policy should be based on:
 - ♦ Institutional mission
 - ♦ Activities the repository supports
 - ♦ Clientele the repository serves
 - ♦ What other related repositories are acquiring
- **Resources** Know what kinds of resources are available in the repository—space, staff, funds.

Guidelines to archival value

Archivists have developed guidelines that make the appraisal process more objective and give a standard structure to the inquiry. In general, they look for records that should be kept permanently because they have

- **Informational value:** significant information about people, organizations, communities, events
- **Evidential value:** significant information about the nature of the organization or person that created the records or about the activities of the organization or creator
- **Legal value:** the usefulness of a record to support an organization's business agreements and ownership rights, and to document the rights of citizens (for example contracts, deeds, funding documents, release forms, or financial records)
- **Fiscal value:** the usefulness of a record in documenting financial accountability, decisions, and activities
- **Intrinsic value:** the value inherent in an item as an artifact, not only because of its intellectual content. Its intrinsic value requires its preservation in its original form rather than as a copy. Items with intrinsic value are very rare. Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation held by the New York State Library is an excellent example.

Ask questions about the records

Now the archivist is ready to ask questions about the records and make decisions based on the answers. She or he will assess the records as manuscript groups or series, not as individual items.

- **When were the records created?** What is their age? Are they from an important time period? Are they scarce?
- **Who created the records?** Which office, group, or person created the records? Do the records reflect a routine or individual point of view? What is the position or role of the creator? Was the creator prominent in the field? Was the creator personally involved in the events recorded? Did the creator possess the expertise needed to understand the events recorded? Does the creator represent a culturally distinctive group (ethnic or racial, religious, occupational, gender, etc.)? Does the creator exhibit a bias?
- **Why were the records created?** What are the principal activities or functions of the office, group, or person? Do the records document principal activities or functions?
- **What is in the records?** The appraisers need to know the topic and its history to evaluate the records' contents, in order to understand their meaning and significance. Do the records cover important activities? Are they routine or not? Are they an important source of information? Are they the only source, or the best source of information? Do they contain unique information or dispute other records?
- **Are the records accessible?** Are they legible or playable? Is access to them restricted forever or for a very long time? What are the likely costs of conserving the materials, processing them, and making them accessible to users?
- **Why do the records belong in this repository?** Do they fit within the mission statement? Does the geographical focus of the records match that of the repository? Do the records duplicate, complement, or enrich current holdings? What is the research potential of the records?

Make decisions based on the answers

Some factors may weigh more heavily than others, and most groups of records will have a mixture of characteristics, some of which argue for saving them in this repository, others for disposing of them or finding a more appropriate repository.

Make the Records Available

Negotiate the donation and transfer of records

If the documentation effort will result in records being moved to a repository, then you must negotiate the terms of agreement governing ownership of the records and their intellectual content. As a rule, repositories cannot invest precious time, money, and space to process and make available records they do not own, so they will generally not accept records on loan or deposit. Therefore, the donation of records to a repository involves a change of legal ownership. It is essential that the donor, whether an individual or an organization, and the repository reach a clear and explicit agreement on terms of the donation based on a shared understanding of the wishes of the donor and the repository's mission, policies, and procedures relevant to the records. This agreement will be expressed in a deed of gift.

Deed of gift

The deed of gift is a formal, legal agreement that transfers ownership of the materials being donated and specifies the legal rights of each party to the materials and the information contained in them. It usually includes the following elements:

- **Name of the donor and recipient.** This is simple and straightforward if the donor is also the creator of the records. But if the donor holds records that were created by someone else (for example, a family member; an artist, writer, or photographer; a folklorist who collected original materials from informants), then the donor will need to explain how she or he has the right or authority to donate them.
- **Title and description of the materials.** This is a brief summary (“Jane Doe Papers,” or “Records of the New York Environmental Advocacy Association”) usually written by the repository staff working with the donor.
- **Transfer of ownership.** This section specifies the terms of the transfer of legal ownership and physical custody of the materials from the donor to the repository. The terms may cover materials that will be donated later, and may include the time at which the legal transfer takes effect and how and when the physical transfer will occur.
- **Access to the records.** As stated earlier, the purpose of documentation and the mission of most archives is to make their collections available for research use. Most donors understand and share this goal, but there may be cases when a donor or repository wants to restrict access to all or a portion of the materials for a limited and clearly stated period of time. Medical or legal case files, and manuscripts that contain sensitive information about people still living, are good examples; some of this information is covered by state or federal privacy laws. The donor and repository should discuss such records and the restrictions that might apply; they can then develop language in the deed that meets the needs of the donor and the repository.
- **Transfer of intellectual property—copyright.** The transfer of ownership refers to the physical materials—the papers, photographs, etc.—and the terms of access specify any restrictions on who can see the materials and when. Access to the materials usually means that a researcher can see them, take notes, perhaps make photocopies, and use brief quotations from them in publications, under the somewhat murky legal concept of “fair use.”

However, intellectual ownership of the records, principally copyright remains with the creator of the records unless those rights are explicitly given over to the repository. It is important that both the donor and archivist understand that while both physical ownership of the materials and intellectual ownership (that is, literary rights) belonging to the donor may be transferred by the negotiated agreement, the literary rights of *others* who created the records (such as letters received by the donor, other original writing, music, or photographs) are not transferred by the agreement. These rights remain with the creator of the records unless she or he has explicitly conveyed them to the donor or the repository.

The donor and the repository need to discuss, understand, and clearly specify in the deed of gift who owns the copyright to which records and what copyright is being transferred to the repository.

- **Separations (Weeding).** When a repository takes in a group of organizational records or personal papers, it is likely to find among them materials that are duplicates, routine, or that fall outside of the collecting policy of the repository. The repository will probably choose to weed these out. The deed

of gift should indicate what the repository must do with those separated records: discard them, transfer them to a more appropriate repository, or return them to the donor.

- **Signing the Deed.** Both the donor and a representative of the repository must sign and date the deed of gift. It can be amended later if both sides agree.

(The above information is borrowed in part from *Deeds of Gift: What Donors Should Know*, an online publication of the Society of American Archivists. See the “Sample Deed of Gift” in Appendix F, page 64, and Appendix H, “Resources for Documentation in Print and on the Internet,” page 68, for this and other SAA online publications.)

Arrange the records

Once the repository has received the records, its staff should prepare to arrange and describe them so that users can gain access to them. **Arrangement and description of archival records requires technical training and experience and should be done by a trained archivist.**

The first step, arrangement, is to organize the boxes and folders into an order that allows access. Archival records that come from institutions or organizations often have an existing arrangement based on the way they were filed and used before coming to the repository. Such records may need very little arrangement by the archivist. Manuscript groups donated by an individual often lack a clear structure and may require more work to put them in a usable order. Arrangement follows the two key principles of *provenance* and *original order*.

Provenance

Records should be kept together on the basis of who created them. One of the fundamental principles of archives, provenance reveals important information about the **context** within which the records were created. The context influences the content of the records and can reveal attitudes reflected in them. For example, the body of records of an environmental organization opposing a power plant siting would be very different from those of the utility that proposed the power plant, and from those of the regulating authority dealing with the same issue; but the context of the records as a whole could shed important light on the meaning and significance of particular records. Therefore, groups of records from a single source should not be broken up among different repositories, nor should they be rearranged on the basis of subject, chronological period, or some other classification scheme unless their provenance cannot be determined.

Original order

Series or other groups of records should be kept in their original order. Maintaining records in the order in which the donor kept them preserves important information about why records were created and how they were used. Do **not** rearrange records according to subject, form, time period, or any other category that makes sense to you (unless they are in no discernible order to begin with). If the records are in disarray, the archivist should develop a clear plan for arrangement that tries to recapture the probable original order or that reflects the work or activities of the person or organization.

Description

Archival description provides information about the physical characteristics of a group of records, its intellectual contents (the information in the records), and the context within which the records were created. Archival description follows a professional standard that archivists have developed over the years for making information about archival records easily accessible worldwide. When information about records is organized the same way in archives across the country, it can be distributed through online information databases and websites, making it much easier for researchers to locate the information they seek as they move among archives. Archival description generally proceeds by these five main steps:

- Assign a main entry and title for the records: the person or group that has the main responsibility for the material being described and a very brief descriptive title.
- Describe the physical characteristics of the records: the volume of records and how they are arranged.
- Provide historical and background information: when, where, how, and why the records were created.
- Describe the intellectual content of the records: what information they contain, their scope and content.
- Provide access points to the records: indexing terms that allow researchers to search for information by names, subject, place, form, occupation, or function.

(To describe records, follow the procedures in the State Archives publication *Guidelines for Arrangement and Description of Archives and Manuscripts*.)

Finding aids

Archival descriptions serve as the basis for the creation of finding aids in printed or electronic form that

- Help researchers in a repository figure out which files or folders are likely to contain the kinds of information they are looking for.
- Help researchers using the Internet learn about the existence and location of records they may want to see.

Publicize the availability of the records

Once a repository has arranged and described the records and created finding aids, the documentation process for those particular records is complete, and they are ready for use.

The final step is to make sure potential users of the records find out that they are in the repository and available. If the new records represent a change in the repository's collecting focus, if they are the first records on this topic, or if they are likely to be of interest to a group of stakeholders that is new to the repository, then it is especially important to get the word out.

You may use the same methods outlined in the discussion of publicizing a survey project (See "Publicize the Documentation Effort," page 14) as well as methods that are only possible when you have the records in hand. For example:

- Create an exhibit that highlights the new records and hold a public reception.
- Invite a speaker to give a talk on the topic based on the records, or an artist to give a performance relevant to the records.
- Make presentations to teachers and other educators that emphasize the potential uses of these historical records in classrooms or other settings.
- Create a website that describes the project, presents information about the records and how they can be used, and perhaps features digitized images of a few particularly interesting documents.
- After sending the archival descriptive records to the State Archives so they can be added to the Historical Documents Inventory (HDI), publicize their availability there.

Outcomes of Documentation

A successful documentation process should yield important products of lasting value and generate other but valuable outcomes that benefit the organizations and individuals directly involved, the various stakeholder communities related to the topic, and the historical record of New York State.

Products

- **Contact lists or database:** People and organizations whose records were surveyed or collected, advisors, and other stakeholder groups
- **Completed survey forms:** These may contain information not included in the archival descriptions, and they will be a valuable record of information about important records that remain in the hands of the organizations or individuals who created them.
- **Standardized records descriptions:** These descriptions, even if not in electronic form, constitute the basis for electronic records that can be distributed via the Internet and in published guides.
- **Guides or other finding aids to the records:** In print and/or electronic formats
- **Publicity materials:** Releases, brochures, newspaper clippings, broadcast interview tapes, and any other materials created to inform or educate the public about the project
- **Final report on the documentation project:** Project staff may be required by a funding source or by the organization to prepare a final report on the documentation process or on individual projects undertaken as part of the process. (For the components of a final report, see “Prepare a Final Report,” page 26.) This report is an important element in the documentation of the project itself.
 - ◆ It allows the project, the topic, and the repository’s commitment to be understood by future leaders of both the repository and stakeholder groups.
 - ◆ It can serve as a template for documentation of other topics.
 - ◆ It contributes to the historical record of both the repository and the stakeholder communities.

Other results

- **Increased awareness about the group or topic:** A successful and well-publicized documentation project will raise public awareness about the group or topic being documented and about the key organizations and individuals whose records have been collected and made available. Subsequent use of the records, and products based on them, will educate stakeholder communities and the public about the topic.
- **Increased awareness of the repository and its work:** The contacts made and relationships nurtured during the documentation process can yield ongoing engagement with new constituencies, including new sources of records, volunteers, and financial support. A documentation project can also heighten awareness of the repository by the community at large.
- **Increased visibility and stature of the archives within its institution:** A documentation project can draw increased attention, resources, and prestige to a historical records program within a larger institution, such as a university or public library.
- **Increased awareness of records:** Documentation provides an opportunity to raise people's awareness of and interest in their records, whether or not they choose to donate them to a historical records repository. People are often surprised at the potential importance of *their* papers and records for scholarly research and as resources to help communities or stakeholder groups learn more about themselves and their histories. They may be inspired and educated to take better care of their records and perhaps to donate them to a repository when the time is right.
- **Better records management:** Records management is the process of organizing and filing all kinds of records, including scheduling their final disposition when they are no longer needed for their original purpose. The focus of the documentation process on historical records often reveals records management problems and opportunities in the organizations that have become involved in documentation. People often come to see ways to improve their management of records at relatively little cost, leading to more efficient and productive work, less clutter, less cost for space, fewer file cabinets, and so on. (See Appendix E, "Records Management," page 46, for more information.)

Keys to a successful documentation project

- **Divide the documentation process into phases of manageable size and duration.** It takes time for records creators to learn about documentation, develop trust in potential repositories, open their records to outsiders, and perhaps donate them to a repository. Depending on the condition, size, and complexity of a group of records, it can take longer than expected to arrange and describe them. It is wise to get expert advice in planning a project and to devote adequate time and resources to each phase. (See "Organize the project into manageable phases," page 13.)
- **Develop a good understanding of stakeholder communities involved with the project.** Learn about their history, culture and values, important issues, internal politics and dynamics, key leaders, and so on.
- **Allocate adequate staff and resources.** Invest in skilled people with archival expertise—documentation is not a do-it-yourself project. Support your staff with adequate time, space, and other resources to do a good job.

- **Manage the project effectively.** Careful planning, wise allocation of scarce resources, clear expectations regarding process and outcomes, and regular communication with and among staff and stakeholders are essential.
- **Generate measurable outcomes of high quality.** Products such as contact lists, records descriptions, and finding aids are the tangible outcomes that will enable the repository to sustain and build on the work of the documentation project.
- **Commit to ongoing care of, and attention to, the topic and the records acquired.** Documentation is worth doing only if the records will be fully accessible and used. Making sure the records are maintained in good condition, and that potential researchers know about them, requires an ongoing institutional commitment to the records and the topic.

One of the best ways of generating interest in and support of a group of records is to produce products or programs based on the materials that draw attention to them—a new or expanded finding aid, a new website, publications by the repository that highlight use material from the archives.

- **Document the project itself.** Create a thorough record, including the final report, of the documentation project itself.

Keep the documentation going

The repository

The documentation process builds relationships with stakeholder communities, especially the people and organizations who create records. Some of these will donate records during a documentation project; some may not be ready to donate records to a repository or even pay significant attention to the care of the records they hold. Still others may learn of the project after it is over and be receptive to donating records to the repository. Successful documentation entails sustaining the promising relationships begun or enhanced during a documentation project. It is particularly important to

- Stay in touch with donors who continue to generate records. Encourage them to develop retention schedules, or at least to periodically transfer archival records to the repository when they are no longer needed on site.
- Stay in touch with potential donors who have records the repository believes are historically significant. A sustained relationship, even with minimal but regular contact, can lay the foundation for the donation of records later on.
- Draw public attention to the group of records in the repository and encourage continued donation.

The records creator or donor

Once the relationship with a repository is established and the documentation effort has been launched, it's not hard to keep it going. The documentation project sets up the system, educates the records creators about repositories and how they work, educates the repository about the topic and the stakeholder groups and organizations, and results in the donation of some records to the repository.

- With some attention to improved records management—for example, organizing folders by year so that you know when a folder should become inactive and when it can be transferred to the archives or moving inactive records into boxed and labeled storage—it should require little time or money to

periodically transfer the next batch of archival records to the repository. Keep in touch with the repository, ask for help when you need it, and you will see that ongoing documentation both improves the historical record and makes your office environment a more orderly, efficient place to work.

Conclusion

The documentation process as set forth in this manual is, at first glance, about historical records: what they are and why they are important, how to locate and identify them, how to determine which are most important to preserve and make accessible, how to find an appropriate repository for them, how to make them accessible for researchers.

But fundamentally, documentation is about people: Citizens of the recent and distant past whose lives and work, ideas and aspirations, values and expressions, organizations and institutions, and contributions to New York's history are reflected in and illuminated by records that are not yet publicly accessible. It is about people who become directly engaged in the documentation process itself. And it is about the people of the present who care about and are engaged in the topics which are being documented—the people who, directly through research or indirectly through the products of research, can better understand themselves, other people, and the society and world we share. Effective documentation relies on knowledge and skill dealing with both records and people.

Documentation also may benefit from a kind of empathetic, forward-looking imagination. We have learned over the past half-century or so, with the emergence of social history and women's history, for example, that dimensions of our lives that are dismissed as historically irrelevant in one age can be understood as central in a later one. We cannot, of course, step forward altogether out of our own time and culture, with our associated assumptions and biases. But it is useful to ask ourselves about any topic of documentation: what information that seems commonplace or trivial in our records now might, in fifty or a hundred years, be considered important for the understanding of our period?

We encourage organizations, individuals, and groups to make use of this manual. The State Archives is eager to help with advice, encouragement, access to resources, and funding through its Documentary Heritage Program. DHP grant guidelines are available from the State Archives via e-mail, on our website, or by regular mail.

Getting Help

The Documentary Heritage Program (DHP)—Grants

Within the State Education Department, the New York State Archives Documentary Heritage Program (DHP) provides funds to non-profit organizations through a program of grants-in-aid.

The Documentary Heritage Program (DHP)—Technical Assistance

The State Archives also provides advice to historical records repositories and other non-profit organizations through statewide advisory services. The State Archives DHP program can provide free consultation in planning documentation projects and other archival issues and projects. The DHP can

answer questions, flesh out your ideas, offer suggestions, suggest possible resources, provide input to your grant application, and even participate during the project as an *ex officio* member of your advisory committee.

Grants and technical assistance to local governments

The State Archives provides grants to local government entities through its Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund (LGRMIF), and it offers publications and workshops dealing with a wide range of records management and archival issues. The State Archives' network of Regional Advisory Officers (RAOs) also provides technical assistance to local governments. If you are part of a local government entity interested in documentation, contact your RAO or the Albany staff.

Colleagues and other local resources

Other resources to consult include colleagues and members of your organization's board. Discuss your documentation project with them and make sure they fully support it. They can provide guidance and encouragement and can help you determine what is important to document in your area.

New York State Archives

9D46 Cultural Education Center

Albany, New York 12230

E-mail Archives: dhs@mail.nysed.gov

Website: www.archives.nysed.gov

Telephone: (518)474-6926

For More Information and Assistance

Appendix A: New York Documentation Topics Framework (Abridged)

This framework of eighteen 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. Without some rational framework for organizing the range of possible topics for documentation, it would be nearly impossible. 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 documents 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 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 and 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 enterprises, 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.

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 or 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 biotechnology.

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.

Appendix B: Using a Documentation Guide to Decide What to Collect

The New York State Archives has prepared documentation guides in several topic areas (three specific areas as of 2003: mental health, environmental affairs, and Latino/Hispanic history and culture). Each of these guides, developed through extensive involvement and input from the main stakeholder communities in each topic area statewide, establishes a framework of subtopics within the topic and proposes criteria for determining whether any particular subtopic, or even any particular organization, should be considered a priority for documentation. The purpose of this documentation planning approach is not to specify what should be collected. Instead, it provides a research-based framework that will help those engaged in documentation projects make rational decisions about collecting that will lead to a richer, more balanced, and complete historical record of the topic.

If you are contemplating a documentation project in one of the topics where a documentation guide exists, you are strongly urged use it to help shape your project. (The guides are available free of charge from the State Archives. See “Publications in Print” in Appendix H, page 68.)

The following is a method that a repository might use for prioritizing what should be collected:

- Refer to the high-priority topics list in the plan or guide.
- Refer to the documentation 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 the amount you can collect.
- Ask the following questions when considering a particular subtopic, organization, or group of records:
 - ◆ Does the topic fall within one or more of the high-priority topics identified by stakeholders?
 - ◆ Does it meet one or more of the documentation 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.

Appendix C: Criteria for Prioritizing Topics and Subtopics

During the process of selecting and defining a topic for documentation at the local, regional, or state level, planners and stakeholders will probably suggest the most important topics that should be documented. But many of these topics are still broad categories. When it comes to prioritizing a particular subtopic or organization, how should those decisions be made? The following criteria are presented in the context of determining statewide and regional-level priorities, but the approach is applicable to planning local documentation projects as well.

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. Some of these criteria may not be relevant, others may need to be revised, and new ones may need to be added.

- **The topic represents a contribution by New York that is distinctive, seminal, or precedent-setting to the field 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, 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.

- **The topic has had a 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, may not have affected a large area or stimulated statewide activity. This issue could be a high priority, however, in a regional documentation plan.

- **The topic reflects the beginning of a trend or issue or an important milestone in the history of the field.**

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.

- **The topic has had significant impact in several other areas of the field.**

Example from environmental affairs: Love Canal engaged issues of toxic waste, public health, and water quality; it stimulated citizen action statewide and nationally; and it 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 topic 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 from the point of view of service recipients.

- **The topic 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.

- **The topic contributes significantly to the knowledge base about the field.**

This criterion may involve information generated statewide, regionally, or locally, because local or regional information may be important for 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.

- **The topic 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 of these 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.

Appendix D: Extent and Distribution of Archival Description

Determining Extent and Distribution of Archival Description		
Records Creator's Position	Extent of Survey	Distribution of Descriptive Record
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records will remain in the current owner's possession, with no public access to them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not survey the records. Keep a list of records creators who do not intend to make the records available, so they can be approached later if appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No descriptive record will be created.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records remain in owner's possession for now, but may be donated later. Accessible by appointment, either by direct contact or with the owner/organization conducting the screening requests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct full survey and create descriptive record (dependent on resources) appropriate to the importance and complexity of the records. Obtain written permission for distribution (include agreement on survey form). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare copies of descriptive record for all parties. Descriptive record indicates access restrictions. Include in print publication, perhaps on websites, and in State Archives online catalog (Excelsior).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records are already in a publicly accessible historical records repository or are destined for one during or soon after the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct full survey and create descriptive record (dependent on resources) appropriate to the importance and complexity of the records. Obtain written permission for distribution (include agreement on survey form). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare copies of descriptive record for all parties. Include in print publication, websites, and State Archives on-line catalog (Excelsior).

Appendix E: Records Management

Records management is the process of organizing and filing all kinds of records, and scheduling their final disposition when they are no longer needed for their original purpose. From the standpoint of an organization that generates and uses records, dealing with historical records is just one important element of records management. Good records management includes

The State Archives has extensive resources—workshops and publications—that can assist you in addressing your records management needs (See “Resources for Documentation in Print and on the Internet, Appendix H, page 68).

- Creating and using an efficient filing system for the records you use regularly
- Having safe and well-organized storage for the records you don’t use regularly but need to keep
- Knowing what to keep and for how long
- Getting rid of what you don’t need
- Saving permanently valuable historical records in an accessible archives

Attention to records management can make your office a neater, more efficient, more comfortable place to work; it can save space and money; it can get rid of unneeded paper—and it can pave the way for the preservation of historical records. Significant improvements in records management can be achieved with a small expenditure of time, effort, and money. For example:

- Improve your filing system
- Type folder labels (color-coded when possible) so they are easy to find and read
- Use “out cards” when removing a file so that you know where to return it
- Break your folders by year so that you know how old they are and when they become inactive
- Regularly purge your files of inactive records
- Store inactive records in well-labeled boxes (inexpensive) in a designated space to free up file cabinets (expensive)

Appendix F: Sample Forms and Documents

Sample Project Plan

County Historical Association (CHA) Latino Documentation Project

Project Plan

***Note:** This summary provides a sample of the basic structure and contents of a project plan. A full version would contain more detail and might serve as the core of a grant application or statement for support of the project. (See “Develop a Project Plan,” page 12.)*

Goals

- Close significant gaps in the historical record by identifying and preserving records of the large and growing Hispanic community in the city and county.
- Develop a rich collection of records that can serve as a foundation for research and the basis for public programs and services to the Latino community and the city and county at large.
- Create ongoing relationships with individuals and organizations in the Latino community.
- Pilot an approach to documentation to be extended to other constituencies in the region.

Objectives

- Conduct a broad survey of Latino organizations, movements, individuals, arts groups, social groups, businesses, political organizations, and religious groups.
- Prepare descriptive archival records of the groups of records identified and make them available online.
- Begin to collect important archival records to assure their preservation and cataloging; arrange and describe the materials collected.
- Educate and encourage people in the Latino communities to come to the CHA and use their own historical materials.

Expected Products

- A broad survey of sites that hold documentation
- Collection and arrangement of some key groups of records
- Descriptive archival records and finding aids
- Booklet for the community that describes the project and the records that have been located and collected
- Flyers, newsletter articles, and other publicity materials

Resources

- The CHA resource center director will serve as project archivist.
- The project will hire a records surveyor, a community liaison, and a translator.
- The project will purchase archival supplies and materials. Adequate space and shelving already exists on site,
- The CHA is budgeting \$_____ for the project and will seek funding from the New York State Archives Documentary Heritage Program and the County Cultural Foundation.

Work Plan

Year 1

- Identify and recruit advisory committee from Latino community. (project archivist)
- Hire and train surveyor and community liaison. (project archivist)
- Research local Latino community history (preliminary overview—age, demographics, etc.). (project archivist or surveyor)
- Publicize the project, especially in the Latino communities. (CHA publicity staff)
- Build contact list—potential records holders and other interested parties. (advisory group, staff)
- Assess needs, opportunities, and resources; develop survey work plan. (project archivist)

Year 2

- Develop and test the survey instrument (project archivist and surveyor)
- Conduct survey—via mail; site visits as needed. (project archivist and surveyor)
- Create archival descriptive records; make available online. (project archivist)
- Acquire, arrange and describe a few key collections. (project archivist)
- Ongoing publicity. (CHA publicity staff)
- Publish and distribute finding aids/brochure/booklet. (archivist, CHA staff)

Next steps

- Continue documentation of Latino communities and develop related programs.
- Apply methodology and lessons from this project to other communities as CHA expands its constituency base to serve all the communities of the city and county.

Sample Survey Work Plan

County Historical Association (CHA) Latino Documentation Project

Survey Work Plan

***Note:** This plan should be developed at the end of the planning phase of the project and would essentially flesh out the items listed under “Year 2” of the Project Work Plan on the previous page. (See “Develop a Survey Work Plan,” page 19.)*

Project to date

List the advisory committee, staff, contacts, and resources needed to complete the project.

During the planning phase, we identified thirty organizations and community leaders whom we intend to survey. Conversations with the advisory committee and others are expected to turn up another fifty likely prospects for significant holdings. It is clear from our experience in Phase I that a mail or telephone survey will not be effective in this community, so we plan to rely primarily on personal site visits. The Hispanic Service and Community Organization (HSCO), one of the oldest and largest Latino organizations, has already agreed to donate its rich archives to the CHA. Given the number of sites to be surveyed in person, we have decided to arrange and describe only the HSCO collection during this phase. As other collections are acquired, we intend to integrate their processing into the ongoing work of the archives.

Plan of Work

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| <i>July</i> | Convene Project Advisory Committee to gain input and support for the survey phase
Hire translator
Develop survey instrument specific to Latino issues |
| <i>August</i> | Publicize project in CHA publications, newspapers, Latino community communiqués, and on radio and television

Prepare informational flyer for distribution, which will include information about the project and its goals, standards, limitations, and practices

Train surveyor in basic principles and practices of archival surveying |
| <i>October</i> | Accession HCSO records, begin arrangement and description |

For the duration of the project

Survey sites and organizations as suggested by the advisory committee. The archivist will accompany surveyor on at least three of the initial site visits. Each site visit will consist of 1) research; 2) establishing contact with potential records holder; 3) providing surveyees with project information; 4) arrangements and preparation for site visit; 5) site visit; 6) preparation of report and assembling data for descriptive archival records.

Surveyor will address individuals, organizations, and groups regarding the importance of identifying and cataloging existing caches of documentation, and will distribute materials that assist citizens in caring for their own records.

Archivist will create archival descriptive records from data provided by the surveyor as the site visits are completed.

Communicate progress, and highlight interesting records regularly within CHA, to the Latino community and through mainstream media to the general public.

Spring

Submit archival descriptive records to Excelsior and Library of Congress.

Publish a guide to the collections surveyed: a booklet that explains the project and describes the progress of the first year, noting collections surveyed and cataloged, etc.

Develop simple but powerful exhibit of early paper records and photographs from HCSO collection.

Hold project celebration/reception to open the exhibit, highlight the records identified, showcase the HCSO records now available for public access, and encourage community and scholarly research and further donation of records.

Sample Documentation Survey Form (short version)

[sponsoring organization and project heading]

Survey completed by:

Name: _____ Title: _____

Name of business:

Address of business:

Office maintaining the files / materials:

Inclusive dates of files: _____ to _____

Physical form of the material:

- ☐ Subject files
- ☐ Memos
- ☐ E-mails
- ☐ Audio / video tape
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Other (specify) _____

How much material do you have?

- ☐ One folder
- ☐ Some folders
- ☐ One file drawer
- ☐ More

Are you willing for these records to become publicly accessible in the future? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Will you allow a general description of the records to be made publicly accessible now? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Date of survey: _____

Sample Documentation Survey Form (long version)

[sponsoring organization
and project title]

1. Records created by:

Name of organization:		
Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Phone:	E-mail:	
Name of contact person:		
Hours open to the public:		

2. Mission of organization or repository:

--

3. Working title of group of records (what your organization calls them)

4. Quantity of records or manuscripts (in cu. ft.—refer to equivalents table): _____

5. Inclusive dates of files: _____ to _____.

6. Languages in which records are written:

7. General formats of material (choose all that apply):

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> File folders | <input type="checkbox"/> Photographs | <input type="checkbox"/> Audio tapes | <input type="checkbox"/> Videotape |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volumes | <input type="checkbox"/> Maps and drawings | <input type="checkbox"/> Electronic (computer files) | |

8. Types of records:

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial records | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletters | <input type="checkbox"/> Press releases | <input type="checkbox"/> Charters and by-laws |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diaries | <input type="checkbox"/> Letters | <input type="checkbox"/> Minutes | <input type="checkbox"/> Scrapbooks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | | | |

9. Why were these records created?

10. Describe the scope and contents of the records.

11. Describe the access to the records.

Are you willing for these records to become publicly accessible in the future?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are any materials confidential?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there any restrictions on access to any of the records?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If so, what are these restrictions?		

12. List individuals who are familiar with the records or who may know how to locate missing material

13. Are you interested in:

- ☐ Setting up your own historical records program
- ☐ Transferring records to an appropriate historical records repository

14. Best time to contact again is: _____

15. Additional notes or comments:

Sample Documentation Survey Form (filled out)

Note: This is a hypothetical survey form similar to the real one that served as the basis of the archival descriptive record that follows on page 56.

College of Technology, SUNY Delhi Watershed Records Documentation Survey Project

16. Records created by

Name of organization: <i>Watershed Agricultural Council</i>		
Address: <i>33195 State Highway 10</i>		
City: <i>Walton</i>	State: <i>NY</i>	Zip: <i>13856</i>
Phone: <i>[000-000-0000]</i>	E-mail: <i>[username@domain.org]</i>	
Name of contact person: <i>[contact name]</i>		
Hours open to the public: <i>by appointment</i>		

17. Mission of organization or repository:

A partnership between watershed farmers and New York City that balances pollution prevention, economic viability, and public health concerns. It enables farmers to control their own destinies while protecting the quality of New York City's water supply.

18. Working title of group of records

Watershed Agricultural Council administrative files, reports, maps & photos

19. Quantity of records or manuscripts (in cu. ft.—refer to equivalents table):

5 cu. ft. _____

20. Inclusive dates of files: __1991__ to __2000__.

21. Languages in which records are written

English

22. General formats of material (choose all that apply):

☒ File folders ☒ Photographs ☐ Audio tapes ☐ Videotape
☐ Volumes ☒ Maps and drawings ☐ Electronic (computer files)

23. Types of records:

☐ Financial records ☒ Newsletters ☒ Press releases ☐ Charters and by-laws
☐ Diaries ☒ Letters ☒ Minutes ☐ Scrapbooks
☐ Other _____

Why were these records created?

They were created in the process of administering the activities of the WAC and generating data relevant to its programs..

24. Describe the scope and contents of the records.

News clippings and articles, 1993-2000; meeting minutes, reports, drawings, engineers' reports, legal files; outreach files, 1993-2000; press releases, correspondence, grants, teacher training, articles in publications, annual reports, progress reports, newsletters and WAC publications; slides of farms, farmsteads, before -and- after improvement views, animals, and all-season view; maps showing location of farms, hydrology maps, aerial photographs and GIS information.

25. Describe the access to the records.

Are you willing for these records to become publicly accessible in the future? ☒ **Yes** ☐ **No**
Are any materials confidential? ☒ **Yes** ☐ **No**
Are there any restrictions on access to any of the records? ☒ **Yes** ☐ **No**
If so, what are these restrictions?

Access is at the discretion of the Watershed Agricultural Council. Some series are restricted.

26. List individuals who are familiar with the records or who may know how to locate missing material:

27. Are you interested in:

- ☐ **Setting up your own historical records program**
☒ **Transferring records to an appropriate historical records repository**

28. Best time to contact again is: _____

29. Additional notes or comments:

Participating members include the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Cornell University, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, US Environmental Protection Agency, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; USDA Farm Service Agency, USDA Forest Service, New York State Water Resources Institute, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, New York State Department of Health, New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee, New York Farm Bureau, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, American Farmland Trust, Catskill Forest Association, Empire State Forest Products Association, Catskill Watershed Corporation, Delaware County Chamber of Commerce

Sample Archival Summary Description Record for an Organization #1

Creator: **Watershed Agricultural Council**

Title: **Watershed Agricultural Council records**

Date: **1991-2000**

Quantity: **5 c.f. + additional material**

Arrangement: **Series**

Biographical/Historical Note: **Founded in 1991, the Watershed Agricultural**

Council (a not-for profit organization) describes itself as “a partnership between watershed farmers and New York City that balances pollution prevention, economic viability, and public health concerns. It enables farmers to control their own destinies while protecting the quality of New York City’s water supply.” Approximately 350 dairy and livestock farms and 90 other agricultural enterprises are in the watershed; the Watershed Agricultural Council promotes voluntary Whole Farm Planning based on scientific research and local leadership. The Agricultural Council serves as a national model for collaborative efforts to preserve agriculture and maintain water quality. Participating members include the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Cornell University, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, US Environmental Protection Agency, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; USDA Farm Service Agency, USDA Forest Service, New York State Water Resources Institute, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, New York State Department of Health, New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee, New York Farm Bureau, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, American Farmland Trust, Catskill Forest Association, Empire State Forest Products Association, Catskill Watershed Corporation, Delaware County Chamber of Commerce

Scope and Content: **Newsclippings and articles related to the watershed, 1993-2000; confidential records include monthly meeting minutes, reports, drawings, engineers reports, legal; outreach files, 1993-2000; press releases, correspondence, grants, teaching training, articles in publications, annual reports, progress reports, quarterly newsletter and Agricultural Council publications such as “Best Management Practices for Water Quality,” (for foresters) and “Pollution Prevention Through Effective Agricultural Management,” December, 1997; slides of farms, farmsteads, before and after improvement views, animals, and all-season view; maps showing location of farms, hydrology maps, aerial photographs and GIS information.**

Restriction on Access: **At the discretion of the Agricultural Council; some series are designated as restricted.**

Restriction on Use:

Finding Aid: **folder headings**

General Note: **see also: www.nycwatershed.org**

Preferred Citation: **Watershed Agricultural Council Collection, Watershed Agricultural Council, Walton, New York**

Related Collections:

Additional Physical Form Available: **Slides are presently being converted to digital format**

Personal Name:

Corporate Name: **New York City (N.Y.)\$Department of Environmental Protection**

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Cornell University

United States\$Environmental Protection Agency

USDA\$Natural Resources Conservation Service

USDA\$Farm Service Agency

USDA\$Forest Service

New York State\$Water Resources Institute

New York State\$Department of Agriculture and Markets

New York State\$Department of Environmental Conservation

New York State\$Department of Health

New York State\$Soil & Water Conservation Committee

New York Farm Bureau

SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry

American Farmland Trust

Catskill Forest Association

Empire State Forest Products Association

Catskill Watershed Corporation

Delaware County Chamber of Commerce

Subject headings: **Water, political aspects\$New York (State)**

Public health\$New York (State)\$Delaware County

Water pollution\$New York (State) \$Delaware County

Watersheds\$New York (State)

Farmers\$New York (State)

Farms and farming\$New York (State)

Ecology and environmentalism\$Study and teaching

Geographical headings: **Delaware County (N.Y.)**

Walton (N.Y.)

New York (N.Y.)

Form and Genre: **slides, maps, photographs**

Sample Archival Summary Description Record for an Organization #2

Local system #: (NIC)NYOD872-610-0383
Author: Onondaga Valley Community League (Syracuse, N.Y.).
Title: Onondaga Valley Community League records, 1970-1972.
Quantity: 2 folders.
Summary: Correspondence, petitions, photocopies of certificate of incorporation and constitution and by-laws, pamphlets, an environmental report, and newspaper clippings related to the efforts of the league to have Webster's Pond and the Rand tract in Syracuse, New York, be designated a wildlife refuge.
Preferred citation: Onondaga Valley Community League Records, 2003.74, Onondaga Historical Association.
Personal subject: Fluke, Harry.
Corporate subject: Onondaga Angler's Association (Syracuse, N.Y.).
Subject: Housing, Low income--New York (State)--Syracuse.
Subject: Community organization--New York (State)--Syracuse.
Subject: Birds, Protection of.
Subject: Wildlife conservation.
Subject: Race relations.
Subject: Real estate developers.
Geographic terms: Webster's Pond (Syracuse, N.Y.).
Geographic terms: Rand tract (Syracuse, N.Y.).
Geographic terms: Syracuse (N.Y.)--History--1970-1980.
LOCATION: Onondaga Historical Association Research Center, 311 Montgomery Street, Syracuse, NY 13202.

Sample Archival Summary Description Record for a Family

Author: Wuersig, Klaus.
Title: Klaus and Celeste Wuersig collection, 1989-1990.
Quantity: 1.2 cubic ft.
Historical/biog note: Klaus Wuersig and his wife Celeste were actively involved with Allegany County's successful struggle to keep New York State from locating its low-level radioactive waste dump in the region. They were both members of Allegany County Nonviolent Action Group (ACNAG) and the Concerned Citizens of Allegany County (CCAC). Klaus, a professor at Alfred State College, was a member of that campus' United University Professions (UUP) chapter. He served as chairman of the chapter's Nuclear Waste Dump Committee.
Summary: Broad­sides, correspondence, research files, newspaper clippings, and other printed material relating to protests against the siting of a low-level radioactive waste dump in Allegany County.
Access restriction: At the discretion of the Archivist.
Preferred citation: Klaus and Celeste Wuersig Collection, Special Collections, Herrick Memorial Library, Alfred University, Alfred, New York.
Corporate subject: Allegany County Nonviolent Action Group (ACNAG).
Corporate subject: Concerned Citizens of Allegany County (N.Y.).
Corporate subject: United University Professions. Nuclear Waste Dump Committee.
Subject: Nuclear waste disposal facility siting--New York (State)--Allegany County.
Subject: Radioactive waste disposal--New York (State)--Allegany County.
Geographic terms: Allegany County (N.Y.)--Protest movements.
Form/genre terms: Broad­sides. aat
Occupation term: Professors. aat
Personal author: Wuersig, Celeste.
LOCATION: Special Collections, Herrick Memorial Library, Alfred University, Alfred, NY 14802.

Sample Archival Summary Description Record for an Individual

(See sample finding aid based on this record, page 62.)

George Cooley

Local system #: (N) SC18858

Author: Cooley, George Ralph, 1896-1986.

Title: Papers, ca.1946-1986.

Quantity: 9 boxes.

Arrangement: Arranged into ten series : I. Botany files. II. Conservation-Miscellaneous files. III. Nature Conservancy. National Office files. IV. Nature Conservancy, Lower Hudson Chapter files. V. Nature Conservancy, Eastern New York Chapter files. VI. Nature Conservancy, Florida State Chapter files. VII. Conservation files. VIII. Field Books. IX. Miscellaneous files. X. Tapes of an interview with George Cooley.

Historical/biog note: George R. Cooley was born May 29, 1896 in Troy, N.Y. In the fall of 1917 he enrolled at Colgate University, three years after his graduation from high school, during which time he worked at a variety of occupations in order to save enough money for school. Six months after entering Colgate Cooley joined the United States Army, leaving the service ten months later as a second lieutenant. Upon his return to Troy, Cooley sought employment from a local banker, who instead of giving him a job, advised him to seek his fortunes in bonds. Cooley eventually landed a position at the private banking house of Dillon, Read and Company, here he learned the investment banking business. After being transferred to Albany, Cooley formed his own investment firm, George R. Cooley and Company (now known as First Albany Corporation). Cooley's success in the investment banking business allowed him to "retire" in 1953. Cooley's retirement from investment banking allowed him to embark on his second career as a botanist and naturalist. He became a fellow of Harvard University's Gray Herbarium and, in 1960, joined the Board of Governors of the Nature Conservancy. He authored a number of papers on botany, especially the plant life of Florida and the Caribbean Islands. Cooley identified several new varieties of plant life and was responsible for the further development of botany through the establishment of Cooley Fellowships and Cooley Herbaria at three universities in the United States. Cooley's interest in the conservation of nature and the Nature Conservancy is further evidenced by his role in founding the Eastern New York Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, and the acquisition of several preserves by the conservancy including the Big Bear Swamp and the Hannacroix Ravine.

Summary: The collection contains correspondence, clippings, printed materials, and fieldbooks relating to Cooley's activities in botany and nature conservation. Included are letters to Cooley regarding surveys of plant life, the establishment of nature preserves, monetary gifts to colleges and universities by Cooley, the formation of local chapters of the Nature Conservancy and other related materials. Also included in the collection are Cooley's fieldbooks, containing the names and locations of thousands of species of plant life observed by Cooley, and two tapes of an oral interview with Cooley, conducted in the early 1980's.

Summary The collection is currently unprocessed.

Finding aids: No finding aids are currently available.

Preferred citation: George R. Cooley, Papers, ca.1946-1986.

Associated materials: Related records : Nature Conservancy (U.S.). Eastern New York Chapter, Records, 1970-1985. Manuscripts and Special Collections, New York State Library, Albany, NY 12230.

Corporate subject: Nature Conservancy (U.S.)

Corporate subject: Nature Conservancy (U.S.). Eastern New York Chapter.

Corporate subject: Nature Conservancy (U.S.). Lower Hudson Chapter.

Corporate subject: Nature Conservancy (U.S.). Florida Chapter.

Corporate subject: Colgate University.

Corporate subject: Harvard University. Gray Herbarium.

Subject: Botany--Nomenclature.

Subject: Botany--Classification.

Subject: Botany--Research--Florida.

Subject: Botany--Research--Massachusetts.

Subject: Botanists--New York (State)

Subject: Natural areas--New York (State)

Subject: Natural areas--Florida.

Subject: Natural resources--New York (State)

Subject: Natural resources--Florida.

Subject: Nature conservation--New York (State)

Subject: Nature conservation--Florida.

Subject: Nature centers--New York (State)

Subject: Nature centers--Florida.

Subject: Conservation of natural resources--New York (State)--Citizen participation.

Subject: Conservation of natural resources--Florida--Citizen participation.

Subject: Conservation of natural resources--Societies.

Geographic terms: Albany (N.Y.)

Geographic terms: Sanibel Island (Fla.)

Form/genre terms: Personal letters. aat

Form/genre terms: Field notes. ftamc

LOCATION: Manuscripts and Special Collections, New York State Library, Albany, NY 12230.

Sample Finding Aid

George R. Cooley Papers, 1941-1986

Quantity: 14 Boxes (6 cubic ft.)

Access: Open to research.

Acquisition: September, 1988.

Processed by: Thomas E. Lavery, Student Intern, The College of Saint Rose, June 1990.

Biographical Note

George R. Cooley was born May 29, 1896 in Troy, New York. He graduated from high school in 1914 and subsequently joined the armed forces to fight in the first World War. After his tour of duty, he returned to the Albany area and got a job with the banking house of Dillon, Read, and Company. Shortly thereafter, he opened his own investment house and became a successful investment counselor in the Capital District. After he retired he became interested in the field of botany and deeply involved in the modern conservation movement. In 1960, he joined the Board of Governors of The Nature Conservancy and was responsible for the establishment of several sanctuaries in Florida and New York State. He later received the 1971 American Motors Corporation Conservation Award and the 1985 Oak Leaf Award. He died at his home in Rensselaerville, N.Y., September 27, 1986.

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains material on George R. Cooley's personal interests in botany and conservation. It also contains various papers concerning his involvement with the Lower Hudson, Eastern New York, and Florida chapters of The Nature Conservancy, an organization committed to the preservation of ecologically significant areas. Also included are general files that deal with his contributions to various religious and wildlife protection organizations. It consists of an assortment of letters, articles, maps, cassette tapes, printed brochures, reports, and field books generated between 1941 and 1986 which comprise approximately six cubic feet of material.

The fact that Mr. Cooley was an important figure in the field of botany is well documented in this collection. For instance, he made major financial contributions to sustain many botanical research projects. He also sponsored the Cooley Award that some consider to be "the most prestigious annual prize available to plant systematists in North America." In 1955, he also published an article on the vegetation of Sanibel Island in *Rhodora*, a journal of the New England Botanical Club. Also included are letters to and from prominent botanists from the United States, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Jamaica, and Taiwan. Reports on Cooley's Jamaican expeditions of 1951 and 1952 are also available.

The fact that Cooley was a major force in the modern conservation movement is also well documented in this collection. For example, he made financial contributions to many organizations, such as the Florida Conservation Foundation and the Hudson River Conservation Society. A large portion of these papers reveal that he was an indispensable component of The Nature Conservancy. For instance, he was instrumental in the acquisition of several chapter preserves, such as Big Bear Swamp, Hannacroix Ravine, and Little Cumberland Island. The fact that he played a pivotal role in saving Tiger Creek is also documented. In addition, he was a trustee of The Mohawk Trust that was set up to "preserve the unspoiled natural beauty of the Shawangunk Mountains."

This collection unveils Cooley's interests in other areas as well. For example, he made substantial contributions to the National Council of Churches, the World Wildlife Foundation, "The 1001 : A Nature Trust," the American Baptist Historical Society, and the Colgate Rochester Divinity School.

The Cooley collection also contains material that might be of special interest to researchers in the field of environmental history. Included are financial reports of the Vroman's Nose Preservation Corporation, annual reports of the Nature Conservancy, financial and legal documents of the Mohawk Trust, and master plans for the Ten Mile Creek and Tiger Creek preserves. Also included is a copy of *World Conservation Strategy: Living Resource Conservation for Sustaining Development* that was prepared by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. This collection also contains a 1986 report by the Mohawk Preserve, Inc. on the endangered plants of the Shawangunk Mountains.

In short, the Cooley collection gives valuable insight into not only the field of botany, but it also provides the reader with the opportunity to peruse the papers of an extremely generous man who was dedicated to the preservation of our natural environment.

Box	Contents [excerpts]
1	BOTANY FILES A Correspondence, 1954-1985 Africa - New Guinea, 1963-1965 Allen, John S., 1948-1982 American Society of Plant Taxonomists, 1957-1985 Auckland Institute and Museum, 1964-1972
8	CONSERVATION FILES, 1954-1986 B Conservation, 1966-1983 G Conservation, 1983 Goodwin, Richard H., 1957-1986 H Conservation, 1956-1974 J - M Conservation, 1968-1986
11	THE NATURE CONSERVANCY, EASTERN NEW YORK CHAPTER, 1952-1986 Barberville Falls, 1968-1972 Bear Swamp, 1965-1967 Bergen Swamp Preservation Society, 1956-1967 Christman Sanctuary, 1970 Dome Island, 1961 Emmons Pond George, Carl, 1969-1981 Hannacroix Ravine, 1970-1977 International Paper, 1966-1976

Sample Deed of Gift

This agreement, made in duplicate between _____ (the Donor, understanding this term to encompass the Donor's legal representative) and _____ (the Repository), deposits and transfers to the Repository, under the terms below, physical custody and ownership of certain materials, described as follows and collectively referred to as the materials:

Terms of Agreement

1. The Repository agrees to protect and preserve to the extent feasible and consistent with the Repository's usual practices the physical as well as the intellectual contents of the materials, but the Repository assumes no responsibility in case of loss or damage by theft, fire, or any other cause whatsoever. The Repository need not specially insure the materials covered by this agreement.
2. The Repository may arrange or rearrange these materials, according to accepted archival principles, to make them more accessible to researchers.
3. The Donor warrants that no other individuals, institutions, or other entities have interest in the materials covered by this agreement except as stated below. (Please indicate, if appropriate, whether copyright has been waived by release forms or agreements made with correspondents, interviewees, or others represented in these materials.)

4. Following its normal practices, the Repository will allow researchers to both examine the materials and to receive copies of specific items.
5. The Repository may, without notice or fee to the Donor, publish, in whatever forms it chooses, descriptions of, catalogs to, or announcements of the availability and contents of the materials in the customary places and manner.
6. The Repository may, without notice or fee to the Donor, make copies of any of the materials for purposes of preservation and, within the limits set forth in these terms, public use.
7. The Repository will respect the Donor's wishes, as stated below, regarding disposition of such materials the Repository deems to be duplicative, lacking archival value, or better placed elsewhere.

(Please indicate either that you want such materials returned to you or that you grant the Repository permission to discard such materials as the staff sees fit.)

8. The Donor may add other items from time to time, to be receipted for and covered by this agreement. This agreement may be amended by written documents accepted and signed by the Donor and the Repository.

9. Except for limited periods, when certain portions of the materials may be undergoing preservation treatment, the Donor has the right of onsite access to the materials covered by this agreement at all times the Repository is open to the public. Further, the Donor may request copies of any of the materials covered by this agreement, with the proviso that the Donor shall be responsible for payment of the customary charges for such copies and that the Repository may deny such requests if it deems that copying would be dangerous to the physical preservation of the original items.

10. If the Repository should be judged to have failed to carry out its responsibilities under this agreement, and if the Donor or any other entity seeks to enforce this agreement or claim damages for breach of it, the Repository shall have the option of satisfying any obligation imposed upon it by this agreement by returning the given items (and all archival copies of same) to the Donor or the Donor's legal representative.

We, _____, hereby donate the materials as listed in the opening paragraph above or subsequently added under Term 8 above and agree to the other terms set forth within this contract.

Signed for the Donor: _____

Signed for the Repository: _____

Date: _____

Appendix G: Programs and Services of the New York State Archives

www.archives.nysed.gov

The State Archives' website provides extensive, detailed information about the grants programs and other programs and services of the State Archives that are described in the three sections below. Click on Services, Managing Historical Records, for a basic online introduction to the topic and for links to other resources at the State Archives and elsewhere.

Documentary Heritage Program—Grants

What is the Documentary Heritage Program?

The Documentary Heritage Program (DHP) is a statewide program established by law in 1988 to ensure the identification, sound administration, and accessibility of New York's historical records. The DHP provides grants to not-for-profit organizations in New York State that collect, hold, and make available historical records. Funding is available for strategic planning projects for archives, arrangement and description of historical records, surveying of records of under-documented populations and/or activities, and regional documentation planning.

DHP grants are awarded annually in a competitive process. Guidelines are generally released in the summer or fall for an application winter deadline.

Who does the DHP serve?

Any not-for-profit organization that holds historical records and makes or plans to make them publicly accessible may use the DHP's services and apply for a DHP grant. Such organizations include archives, libraries, historical societies, museums, and similar institutions that collect records within New York State, as well as organizations that create records in the course of their work.

What are the DHP's priorities?

The DHP competitive grants program concentrates on identifying, collecting, and making available historical records relating to under-documented groups in twentieth-century New York. Many of the records from this period are in serious danger of being lost or neglected; yet they document major changes in local communities, the state, and the nation.

Assistance

- Grant Application Workshops are especially helpful for first-time applicants. Check the current online workshop catalog for information on current DHP workshop offerings.
- Documentary Heritage Program publications. Visit the "Managing Historical Records" section of the "Publications" area on the State Archives' website to obtain a PDF or print copy of DHP publications. (See also "Resources for Documentation in Print," Appendix H, page 68.)
- Documentary Heritage Program can provide advice on developing a grant project and submitting an application.

Documentary Heritage Program—Services

What services does the DHP provide?

The DHP office of the State Archives is responsible for:

- Coordinating historical records training workshops
- Working with regional organizations, businesses, ethnic and racial groups, libraries, archives and museums to ensure the identification of, permanent care for, and availability of historical records for previously under-documented groups and topics
- Raising public awareness of the importance of historical records, especially for under-documented groups and topics
- Working with repositories and organizations regionally to seek local, state, and federal funding for projects to support historical records programming
- Providing advice to historical records repositories to strengthen their programs
- Offering competitive grants for projects that address the DHP priorities
- Providing statewide coordination of regional services and documentation projects
- Encouraging the development of finding aids and access to information about historical records holdings
- Developing workshop curricula and publications on historical records techniques and issues
- Encouraging coordinated efforts to seek federal and private funding

For more information, contact:

Documentary Heritage Program
New York State Archives
9C35 Cultural Education Center
Albany, NY 12230
(518)474-6926
fax: (518)473-4941
e-mail: dhs@mail.nysed.gov

Local Government—Grants

The Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund (LGRMIF) supports records management and archives-related projects in local governments of all types and sizes throughout New York. In addition to the competitive grants program, the LGRMIF also supports disaster recovery grants.

LGRMIF application materials are available from the State Archives' website

- [Grant Application Guidelines and Reference Materials](#)
- **Assistance**
- [Grant Application Information Sessions](#): offered throughout the state.

- [Records Advisory Officers](#) (see listing on the State Archives' website): State Archives staff members who can provide information on developing a grant project and submitting an application.

To order a print copy of the LGRMIF competitive grants materials contact:

New York State Archives
 Grants Administration and Program Support
 9A81 Cultural Education Center
 Albany, NY 12230
 E-mail: archgrants@mail.nysed.gov
 Phone: (518) 474-6926

Local Government—Services

Knowledgeable, experienced records management and historical records professionals are based in Albany and in nine regional offices around the state. A Regional Advisory Officer, who acts as a free consultant, trainer, and technical advisor to local governments and state agencies, manages each region. Albany-based staff provide additional expertise on micrographics, electronic records, and archives management.

Appendix H: Resources for Documentation in Print and on the Internet

New York State Archives

Website: www.archives.nysed.gov

The State Archives website offers extensive resources related to documentation, among many other topics. From the home page, most of the resources that can assist with documentation are found under the following links:

- **Services** The resources listed here provide guidance and tools under topics such as Managing Government Records, Managing Historical Records, Advisory Services, Training, and Publications. Under Managing Government Records and Managing Historical Records, there are links to lists of **consultants** and **vendors**, some of whom offer products and services relevant to documentation.
- **Research Room** These resources provide information related to documentation and archival collections under subject areas such as Family, Community, Education, Environment, People/Groups/Culture, and more. The Research Room also provides information on reference services and the use of online databases and other resources.
- **Rediscovering New York** This site is a gateway to a vast array of historical records and resources around the state that includes documentation projects, historical records repositories, digital collections, online exhibits, and more.

Publications

The publications listed below are available in various formats, including paper, PDF, and Microsoft Word. Most are also listed on the website, and some can be read and downloaded there. An extensive catalog of State Archives publications on topics other than documentation is also available on the site.

Call or e-mail the State Archives, or check the website to learn which formats are available for specific publications.

A Guide to Documenting Environmental Affairs in New York State, Pub. #73, 2001, 41pp. Discusses priority topics for documentation, examples of documentation projects, where to look for records, and potential sources of assistance and funding.

A Guide to Documenting Latino/Hispanic History and Culture in New York State, Pub. #67, 2002, 36pp. Discusses priority topics for documentation, examples of documentation projects, where to look for records, and potential sources of assistance and funding.

A Manual for Documentation Planning in New York State, Pub. #74, 2002, 34pp. Presents a method for planning the documentation of important topics in New York history on a statewide or regional basis.

A Strategic Plan for Documenting Mental Health in New York State, Pub. #69, 2001, 16pp. Explains how to document the mental health field. Defines scope of plan, outlines documentation priorities, and suggests where to look for records.

Appraisal of Local Government Records for Historical Value, Pub. #50, 1996, 41pp. Offers basic information on how to identify, evaluate, and select records that have ongoing historical value. Written for local governments, but also useful for non-governmental organizations.

Documentary Heritage Program Grants Application Booklet (revised annually by August 15 for December 1 application deadline).

Guidelines for Arrangement and Description of Archives and Manuscripts: A Manual for Historical Records Programs in New York State, 1995, 35pp. These guidelines provide basic instructions on describing archival and manuscript materials at a collection and series levels.

Historical Records and the Local Government Historian, Pub. #81, 2004, 10pp. Suggests ways that New York's public historians can encourage and support records management and historical records programs that are adequate to the needs of local governments and their constituents.

New York Documentation Topics Framework, Pub. #75, 2001, 6pp. A comprehensive list, with suggestions for organizing the range of possible topics to document in New York history and culture.

Strengthening New York's Historical Records Programs: A Self-Study Guide, 1989, 192pp. A guide to the essential elements of historical records repository programs, fundraising, and cooperative approaches to administration.

Society of American Archivists

The following are online publications available at SAA's website (www.archivists.org):

- ◇ [Deeds of Gift: What Donors Should Know](#)
- ◇ [Guide to Donating Your Personal or Family Papers to a Repository](#)
- ◇ [Guide to Donating Your Organizational Records to a Repository](#)
- ◇ [Standards for Archival Description](#)

The SAA has an extensive catalog of print publications (including the seven-volume Archival Fundamentals Series) which is available in PDF format on their website.

Other Resources

Corsaro, James and Karen Taussig-Lux. *Folklore in Archives: A Guide to Describing Folklore and Folklife Materials*. Ithaca, NY: New York Folklore Society, 1998 (looseleaf binder, 156 pp.)

Cox, Richard J. *Documenting Localities: A Practical Model for American Archivists and Manuscript Curators*. Lanham, MD. & London: The Society of American Archivists and The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1996, xii, 182 pp.

Suter, John W., ed. *Working with Folk Materials in New York State: A Manual for Folklorists and Archivists*. Ithaca, NY: New York Folklore Society, 1994 (looseleaf binder, 200 pp.)

Appendix I: Glossary of Terms

access permission, opportunity, and ability to use a record

access point a particular term used to catalog and facilitate access to a set of records, including creator's name, series title, and subject terms

acid-free having a pH value of 7 or higher

active record a record used frequently (at least once per month per file drawer for paper records)

administrative value the usefulness of a record to an organization in the conduct of its daily business

alkaline having a pH value of 7 or lower (the opposite of "acidic")

appraisal the process of evaluating records based on their value to an organization, particularly when used to determine whether the records have permanent historical value

archival quality chemically and physically stable and, thus, suitable for preservation purposes (a non-technical term generally not used by archivists)

archival record a record that should be kept permanently because of its administrative, legal, fiscal, or research value; also called "historical record"

archival value the long-term usefulness of a record for research that determines whether a record should be kept permanently

archival and manuscript materials the non-current records of an organization (archives), or those of individuals (manuscripts) that have been selected for preservation because of their continuing value

archival and manuscript materials the non-current records of an organization/institution or individual(s) that have been selected for preservation because they have continuing value. The term *archives* is used to refer to the non-current, permanently valuable records of an organization or institution that are preserved by that organization or institution itself...Similarly, the term manuscript collections is used to indicate records created or gathered by an individual, group, or organization which are given, sold, or transferred to some repository for permanent retention. (from *Guidelines for Arrangement and Description of Archives and Manuscripts*; see Appendix H, page 68.) This distinction between archives and manuscripts is somewhat technical; both are treated the same way in a repository. Both terms are used in this manual, but *archives* considered the more general term to comprise all historical records.

archives 1. the facility that preserves records with historical value; 2. archival records in general

arrangement the act or result of placing records in a particular sequence

bibliographic record See "catalog record"

biographical note a written summary, in a finding aid, of an individual's life and accomplishments

catalog (noun) a set of entries arranged in a definite order that describes and indexes groups of records

catalog record an entry in a list that identifies and describes the contents of a set of records; also called a "bibliographic record" or a "descriptive record"

collection a body of records deliberately collected by an organization or individual from different sources (as distinct from organizational records or manuscript groups created or received by organizations or individuals as by-products of their ongoing activities)

community scholar a member of a stakeholder community who knows that community and its history and who can help outsiders understand and work with the community during a documentation project

confidential record a record that is not accessible to the public, usually to protect the privacy rights of individuals; sometimes called “restricted record”

conservation the professional repair and stabilization of damaged documents

creator *See* “records creator”

deed of gift a legal document that transfers the ownership of a set of records from one party to another

deposit the physical transfer of a set of records from one party to another that does not include the transfer of ownership

description detailed information about archival records compiled to help researchers use and understand the records; also, the process of developing such information

descriptive record *See* “catalog record”

DHP *See* “Documentary Heritage Program (DHP)”

disposition the final action performed upon records: either destruction or transfer to an archives

document a single record item; a container of information in any medium, generated in the normal course of business, that facilitates the management of that information (such as a letter, an e-mail message, or a completed form)

Documentary Heritage Program (DHP) a program of the State Archives that promotes the improved management of historical records across the State including advisory services and grants to historical records repositories and other non-profit organizations

documentation the process of identifying and collecting existing records of enduring historical value with the intent of making them publicly available

documentation guide a document describing a strategy for collecting information on records covering a specific topic and for finding suitable repositories for records that are discovered to be historically significant

documentation plan a document that describes the topic, resources, personnel, phases, and specific step-by-step process of work associated with a documentation project

documentation project an undertaking designed to gather information on the records relating to a specific subject or population group and to develop a plan for preserving them and making them available for use

donor a person or organization that gives a set of records to a repository

environmental control the maintenance of a storage environment for long-term storage of records by monitoring and stabilizing the temperature, humidity, light, and impurities in the air

ephemera objects, especially small objects, intended to last for a short time, such as ticket stubs and playbills

evidential value the worth records have because of the information they provide about the nature and activities of the organization or person that created them (as opposed to “informational value”)

file (noun) a collection of related records that are treated as a unit; (verb) to arrange documents in a logical sequence, or to place a document in its appropriate location within a set of documents

finding aid a tool (such as a series description, catalog, or index) that is designed to help users find information within archival records

fiscal value the usefulness of a record in documenting financial decisions and activities

FOIL *See* “Freedom of Information Law” (FOIL)

Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) the New York State law that outlines the rights of the public to access public records

historical note a written summary, in a finding aid, of the significant events and achievements of an organization

historical record *See* “archival record”

historical value the potential ability of a record to support historical research

inactive record a record accessed infrequently (for paper records, less than once per month per file drawer) but that is not yet ready for disposition

inactive storage the maintenance of inactive records in a storage area separate from an active office

index an information guide that identifies the location of specific pieces of information within a document or a set of documents

indexing the process of designing a guide to identify and locate specific pieces of information within the records of an organization

informational value the worth records have because of the information they provide about people, organizations, communities, and events (as opposed to “evidential value”)

intrinsic value the worth a permanent record has that requires its preservation in its original form rather than as a copy

inventory *See* “records inventory”

legal value the usefulness of a record to support an organization's business agreements and ownership rights, and to document the rights of citizens

lignin a chemical that provides strength and rigidity in the woody cell walls of plants and that causes the chemical degradation of paper made from wood pulp

main entry the primary access point in a descriptive record, usually the name of the organization or individual that created a particular set of records

manuscript group a set of records that includes more than one records series maintained by a private individual or family

manuscripts *See* “personal papers”

MARC *See* “Machine-Readable Cataloging (MARC)”

Machine-Readable Cataloging (MARC) a standard of archival description that prescribes codes that precede and identify specific elements of a catalog record, allowing the record to be “read” by machine and displayed in a way designed to make the record intelligible to users

neutral having a pH value of 7, which is neither acidic nor alkaline; sometimes called “pH neutral”

official record a record produced or received in the formal conduct of an organization’s business

original the final version of a document, as opposed to copies or duplicates made of it

original order the manner in which a creator arranged a set of records; the principle of maintaining records in such order to preserve their context

papers *See* “personal papers”

permanent record a record that must be retained forever because of legal requirements or its continuing research value; also called “archival record” or “historical record”

personal papers the records maintained by a single private individual or family

preservation the use of procedures and environmental standards to minimize the deterioration of records

preventive care actions taken to slow deterioration and reduce the chances of damage to historical records by following protective storage, display, use, and handling procedures

provenance 1. the origin and original recordkeeping environment of a set of records; 2. a record’s history of ownership

record (informal definition) information, in any format, that is created by an organization or received in the formal operation of its responsibilities; also includes recorded information created or held by individuals.

(legal definition for local governments in New York State) any book, paper, map, photograph, microphotograph or any other information storage device regardless of physical form or characteristic, which is the property of the state or any state agency, department, division, board, bureau, commission, county, city, town, village, district or any subdivision thereof by whatever name designated, in or on which any entry has been made or is required to be made by law, or which any officer or employee of any said bodies has received or is required to receive for filing

(legal definition for state agencies in New York State, plural) all books, papers, maps, photographs, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by any agency of the state or by the legislature or the judiciary in pursuance of law or in connection with the transaction of public business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that agency or its legitimate successor as evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities, or because of the information contained therein

records creator a person or organization that generates or receives and files a certain set of records

records inventory the process of locating, identifying, and describing the records maintained by an organization; sometimes called “inventory”

records management the systematic control of all records in an organization throughout their life cycles

records series a group of related records (such as minutes of a board, payrolls, or purchase orders) that are normally used and filed as a unit and that normally have the same retention requirements

rehouse to place documents within new storage receptacles (including encapsulating polyester, folders, and boxes)

repository a facility or organization that stores and provides access to historical records

research value the usefulness of a record to support historical and other research

restricted record *See* “confidential record”

retention the act of keeping records for the amount of time required, given their administrative, fiscal, legal, or historical value and use; also called “records retention”

scope and contents note a written summary, in a finding aid, of a set of records, including function, record types, and types of information

secondary use any use of a record other than the use for which it was originally created, including any use for historical research

separation *See* “weeding”

series *See* “records series”

source document the record on which an original transaction was captured

State Archives the New York State Archives, the state agency that provides records management and archives services to local governments and state agencies

survey a review that gathers basic information about the quantity, type, function, location, and arrangement of records in an organization

temporary record a record with short-term or limited value that has been approved for destruction either immediately or after a short retention period

tickler file a collection of pending items arranged by the date of action and kept to remind someone to resolve the contents of the items on time

user a person who uses historical records for any purpose

vital record (records management definition) a record essential for the protection of the financial well-being of an organization, its legal rights, and the rights of its citizens and employees; a record without which an organization could not carry out its business

(birth, death, and marriage definition) a birth, death, or marriage record maintained by the official registrar of a New York State local government or by the New York State Department of Health

weeding the process of removing and usually discarding unnecessary papers from a file

Acknowledgements

This manual is a publication of the New York State Archives, Office of Cultural Education, State Education Department, in cooperation with the New York State Historical Records Advisory Board

Richard P Mills	Commissioner, State Education Department
Carole F Huxley	Deputy Commissioner, Office of Cultural Education
Christine W Ward	Assistant Commissioner, New York State Archives
Kathleen D Roe	Chief, Archival Services, New York State Archives

Geoffrey P Williams	Chair, State Historical Records Advisory Board
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Documentation Basics Project Team

John W Suter	Author; coordinator, Documentation Planning
Raymond LaFever	Coordinator, Archival Advisory Services
Gloria Bartowski	Senior Archivist, Archival Advisory Services

The project team is grateful to James Corsaro, Susan D'Entremont, Donna Eschenbrenner, Kathleen Hynes-Bousca, Susan Hughes, Joan Krizack, Geri Solomon, Joseph Swinyer, and Diane Strock-Lynskey for their careful readings of drafts of the manual.

Contact Information

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

The New York State Archives
9D46, Cultural Education Center
Albany, New York 12230
E-mail: dhs@mail.nysed.gov
Telephone: (518)474-6926