

# NYC DEPARTMENT OF RECORDS & INFORMATION SERVICES LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

## I. Agency Mission and Background

We are empowered by Charter mandate with managing New York City's records. The Department, through its unique Library, is the provider of information concerning the government of the City. Through our Records Management Division, we provide for and facilitate the professional administration, storage, and retrieval of the working records for City agencies. Our outstanding Municipal Archives preserves and provides public access to the historic records of the city called "The Capital of the World", which is certainly truer now than at any other time. Documents of all types detail the history of our pluralistic form of government and serve as the collective memory of our great City. Indeed, preserving the City's records makes possible the transmission of our democratic cultural heritage to the future generations. From our earliest Native American, Dutch, and English roots, these records are priceless, unique, and among the richest of our legacies.

### A. Direct Services

#### 1. City Hall Library

##### PAPER AND MICROFILM PUBLICATIONS

Most of the library's collections-dating back to the 17th century-are in paper or microfilm. These rich research resources include:

- Annual and other reports of City agencies
- Budgets and other financial materials
- Proceedings and minutes of the City Council, boards and other legislative bodies
- State, Federal and other public agency publications
- Extensive clipping and pamphlet files on New York City matters
- Newspapers daily and specialized such as New York Law Journal, The Chief, The City Record. Back years of the New York Times and the Chief are on microfilm.
- Microfilm of City Council and predecessor proceedings, annual reports of agencies, Board of Estimate proceedings
- Biographies of city and state officials
- Mayoral committees and commissions

- New York City neighborhood files
- New York City history
- Annotated New York City street name index
- Rules and regulations of New York City agencies
- Civil service collection of job descriptions, previous examinations (1970s and 1980s), eligibility lists, and salary ranges for New York City positions
- The annual Civil List of current New York City Employees

## **SERVICES AND REFERRALS**

Librarians provide reference assistance for brief inquiries and help with use of the collection:

- Walk-in or by appointment
- Telephone reference
- E-Mail
- Correspondence
- Interlibrary loan
- Referral to other libraries

## **2. Municipal Archives**

Founded in 1950, the Municipal Archives preserves and makes available the historical records of New York City municipal government. Dating from the early seventeenth century to the present, the Municipal Archives holdings total approximately 160,000 cubic feet. Accessioned from more than one hundred city agencies, the collections comprise office records, manuscript material, still and moving images, ledger volumes, vital records, maps, blueprints, and sound recordings.

Collection highlights include vital records, census, and city directories that are an essential resource for patrons conducting family history research, the number one hobby in America. Records pertaining to the administration of criminal justice, dating from 1684 to 1966, constitute the largest and most comprehensive collection of such material in the English-speaking world. There are more than one million photographic images in fifty collections including pictures of every house and building in the city, ca. 1940. Legislative branch records date back to the first Dutch colonial government in New Amsterdam. Robert Moses' papers document the city's vast infrastructure from 1934 through 1959, and the records of mayoral administrations provide extensive information about every aspect of New York City from 1849 to the present.

The Municipal Archives is committed to long-term preservation of the materials in its care. The institution maintains a [conservation unit](#) that performs complex document treatments, a [micrographics unit](#) to reformat materials, and a [photography unit](#) that produces new prints, transparencies, negatives, and scans from vintage photographic materials for both in-house use and for patrons.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY UNIT**

The Municipal Archives Photo Unit was established in 1984. This preservation unit is engaged in a number of different activities ranging from collection maintenance to the production of new prints, negatives, and digital conversion. A staff of three is employed to make images more accessible to the public, to professional researchers, and to public agencies. The Archives now houses close to two million photographic items. Many of the photographs and negatives in the collection are not only historical artifacts, but artistic images.

The Archives maintains a traditional black-and-white darkroom with one 8x10 enlarger and two 4x5 enlargers. Staff are capable of producing both resin-coated prints and fiber prints up to 16x20 inches. There is also a copy-stand studio with setups for both small table-top prints and over-sized objects. The photographers can produce 35mm, 4x5, or 8x10 copy negatives and transparencies. Averaging over 500 photo orders per month, the photo unit processes orders for prints, researches negative locations, shoots copy negatives when necessary, makes prints, and can produce digital output in the form of high-resolution scans and digital prints.

In 2003 the Archives established a digital lab, in partnership with Department of Environmental Protection (DEP.) In addition to annual scanning projects completed for DEP, the Archives has used the lab to preserve and make available collections on fragile paper or those which only existed on glass plates. The most note-worthy of these images are exhibited in the [online photo gallery](#). Patrons can choose to order high-resolution digital files in place of traditional prints or transparencies. The lab has now expanded to include two Macintosh G5 workstations, a 13x19 inch reflective and transmissive flat-bed scanner, and a 5x7 inch drum scanner. In the future, the Photo Unit plans to expand its presence on the web and improve online-user accessibility, and to increase its digital holdings

## **NEW YORK CITY VITAL RECORDS AT THE MUNICIPAL ARCHIVES**

The Municipal Archives has records of births reported in the five Boroughs of New York City (Manhattan, Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens and Staten Island), prior to 1910; deaths reported prior to 1949, and marriages reported prior to 1930. For a complete description of our vital records collection, please see a [list of the Municipal Archives Holdings](#).

Please note that New York State Vital Records outside the five boroughs of New York City are maintained by [NYS Department of Health](#).

There are two ways you may obtain a copy of a vital record. You may use one of our convenient forms to receive your search result by mail. Alternatively, you may visit the Municipal Archives to use our self-service microfilm facility to research the genealogy collections. You can access all indexes and certificates on microfilm and receive certified copies of certificates.

### LIST OF HOLDINGS

Birth, death and marriage records are filed and indexed according to the locality (Borough) in which the event occurred:

MANHATTAN		
Births	Deaths	Marriages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• July 1847-1848;</li> <li>• July 1853-1909</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1795;</li> <li>• 1802-1804;</li> <li>• 1808;</li> <li>• 1812-1948</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• June 1847-1848;</li> <li>• July 1853-1929</li> </ul>

BROOKLYN		
Births	Deaths	Marriages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1866-1909</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1847-1853;</li> <li>• 1857-1948</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1866-1929</li> </ul>

**There are separate marriage and death records for Kings County Towns:**

- Flatbush, 1847-1851; 1880-1894,
- Flatlands, 1880-1895,
- Gravesend, 1880-1894,

- New Lots, 1881-1886 and New Utrecht, 1880-1894.

BRONX		
Births	Deaths	Marriages
• 1898-1909	• 1898-1948	• 1898-1929

The Bronx did not exist as separate Borough until 1898.

New York City (Manhattan) annexed the area west of the Bronx River in 1874 and annexed the area east of the Bronx River in 1895.

For vital records in those areas after the date of annexation through 1897, request a search of Manhattan records.

QUEENS		
Births	Deaths	Marriages
• 1898-1909	• 1898-1948	• 1898-1929

Pre-consolidation Town and Village vital records, 1847-1849; 1881-1897, and Long Island City, 1871-1897.

RICHMOND		
Births	Deaths	Marriages
• 1898-1909	• 1898-1948	• 1898-1929

Pre-consolidation Town and Village vital records, 1847-1849; 1881 - 1897.

## CENSUS

### MANHATTAN

- 1890 New York City "Police Census." (MANHATTAN ONLY)
- Listed according to address, the census recorded the name, age and sex of each resident, including children.
- **No mail search service.**

## **BROOKLYN**

- New York State Census, Kings County, 1855, 1865, 1875, 1892, 1905, 1915.
- Not indexed; listed according to Ward, and/or Assembly, and Enumeration District number.
- Recorded name, family relationship, sex, age, nativity, occupation, and citizenship status.
- **No mail search service.**

## **RICHMOND**

- New York State Census, Richmond County, 1855, 1865, 1870, 1875, 1880, 1915, 1925.
- Not indexed; similar information as Kings County Census.
- **No mail search service.**

## **CITY DIRECTORIES**

- **MANHATTAN** 1873-1913; 1915-1918; 1920; 1922; 1924; 1931; 1933
- **BROOKLYN** 1796; 1802; 1811; 1822-1826; 1829-1910; 1912-1913; 1933
- Listed alphabetically, by last name, head of household (male adult primarily; women usually only if widowed), his or her occupation, home address and/or business address.
- **No mail search service.**

## **MUNICIPAL ARCHIVES' COLLECTIONS**

With records dating back to the earliest days of European colonial settlement in the seventeenth century, up to the present mayoral administration, the Municipal Archives houses 150,000 cubic feet of historical government records, including manuscripts, official correspondence, vital records, ledgers, several thousand feet of moving images, over one million photographs, sound recordings, maps, and architectural plans.

N.B. The following collections descriptions are not meant to be entirely comprehensive. Patrons who require more specific information are encouraged to contact the [Municipal Archives](#).

- [Almshouse, 1758-1953](#)
- [Assessed Valuation of Real Estate, 1789-1979](#)
- [Court Records, 1684-1966](#)
- [District Attorney Records, 1895-1971](#)

- [Board of Education, 1842-2002](#)
- [Brooklyn Bridge, 1867-1938](#)
- [Department of Buildings, 1866-1975](#)
- [Census](#)
- [City Cemetery, 1881-1950's](#)
- [City Council, 1647-1977](#)
- [Civil List, 1883-1967/68](#)
- [Coroner and Office of Chief Medical Examiner, 1823-1946](#)
- [Genealogy, 1795-1948](#)
- [Mayor Dinkins, 1990-1993](#)
- [Mayors, 1849-present](#)
- ["Old Towns," 1663-1898](#)
- [Department of Parks, 1850-1960](#)
- [Photographs, 1889-1956](#)
- [WNYC, 1936-1981](#)
- [WPA Federal Writers' Project \(NYC Unit\), 1936-1943](#)

## **TAX PHOTOGRAPHS**

Between 1939 and 1941, the city photographed every house and building in the five Boroughs. Copies of these unique images are now [available for purchase](#).

## **HISTORY OF THIS COLLECTION:**

During the 1930's, local governments began to use photography as a tool for appraising real property for taxation purposes. New York City was the largest municipality to adopt this technology. The result was 720,000 35mm black and white images of every property in the five Boroughs. The Municipal Archives acquired the original negatives (20,000 strips of film stored in cans) in the early 1980s. The original film stock was nitrate and some negatives had begun to deteriorate and exhibit signs of "redox" blemishes (which look like giant snowflakes). With grant funds from federal, state, and private sources, the Archives duplicated the original negatives so that new prints can be produced and copied them to microfilm so that patrons can easily and safely view the entire collection.

## **VISIT MUNICIPAL ARCHIVES TO VIEW THE PHOTOS:**

The tax photographs are on microfilm for researcher convenience. In order to view the tax photograph of a particular house or building it is necessary to determine the official block and lot number of the property. If you do not know these numbers you can research them at the Archives using our historical map collection. Once the block and lot number has been determined, it is necessary to consult an index to find the film roll number; with this number the appropriate microfilm roll can be selected and placed on the microfilm reader machine to view the picture. It is possible to make paper print-outs of the photographs from the microfilm, although the quality is often very poor.

## **HOW TO ORDER A COPY FROM THE COLLECTION:**

It is not necessary to visit the Municipal Archives to order a copy of the tax photograph of your house or building. You can order a copy online or by mail using the forms below. If the official block and lot number of the property is not known, the Municipal Archives will research it for an additional \$5.00 fee. If the Municipal Archives does not find a tax photograph of the property or for some other reason cannot produce a print, your payment will be returned.

### **3. PHOTO GALLERY**

We have chosen some of our most popular images for the Photo Gallery. They have been arranged in sixteen thematic categories based on the subject matter of the image. The WPA category includes pictures taken or acquired by staff of the New York City Unit of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Federal Writer's Project, a Depression-era program that employed professional writers, journalists, and photographers.

The Municipal Archives Photo Gallery is intended as a pilot project and will eventually contain up to 1,000 images. Researchers are encouraged to re-visit the Gallery frequently, as we will be adding images on a regular basis. The Municipal Archives is currently planning a large-scale project that will digitize as many as 50,000 photographs.

Researchers can browse the images in each category by clicking on the appropriate legend. Or, researchers can view images pertaining to a particular subject by typing in a word, or words, in the "Search Photo Gallery" box. This function will return all images in which the word, or words, appears in the title, description, or remarks. Associated keywords have been assigned to each image. Researchers can also click on the keywords to view other related images. To purchase prints of these classic images, please use our [Order Form](#).

### **4. GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS**

The City of New York intends to make municipal information more readily accessible to the public and to encourage the increasing use of information technology resources as a means of improving government.

To fulfill this intention, a new [Local Law \(11-2003\)](#) obligates City agencies to submit official publications in electronic format to the Department of Records. The Department will make these available to



the public through its website within ten business days after publication.

- ▶ [Business and Consumers](#)
- ▶ [Cultural/Entertainment](#)
- ▶ [Education](#)
- ▶ [Environment](#)
- ▶ [Finance and Budget](#)
- ▶ [Government Policy](#)
- ▶ [Health](#)
- ▶ [Housing & Buildings](#)
- ▶ [Human Services](#)
- ▶ [Labor Relations](#)
- ▶ [Public Safety](#)
- ▶ [Recreation/Parks](#)
- ▶ [Sanitation](#)
- ▶ [Technology](#)
- ▶ [Transportation](#)

## **II. Agency Language Access Goals**

The Department of Records and Information Services has developed this plan to serve all our patrons or members of the public who are interested in our services but are limited English proficient. This plan will ensure that all patrons and prospective patrons will receive adequate and professional treatment to obtain the documents they desire no matter what language they speak.

The agency Language Access Coordinator will monitor the plan with the assistance of the Director and supervisors of the two divisions that will be using the language interpretational services. The Language Access Coordinator will hold quarterly meetings with the Directors and supervisors of these divisions. At these quarterly meeting they will submit reports indicating the number of request for interpretation received and what languages were requested. Were they able to assist the patron in getting the document they requested, did the refer them to correct agency if we were unable to assist them. They will also look for ways to improve on the existing plan. At the last quarterly meeting of the year we would discuss and implement changes and improvements to the plan.

## **III. LEP Population Assessment**

The Department of Records will utilize the top six citywide LEP languages (Spanish, Chinese, Russian Korean, Italian, and Haitian Creole) as stated in the 2006 American Community Survey. The agency has yet to identify which LEP language is predominate for our customer base.

### **A. Federal Department of Justice “Four-factor Analysis”**

I. The Department of Records only has two divisions that have direct contact with the public. These divisions are the Municipal Archives and the City Hall Library which are located in our Manhattan Offices at 31 Chambers Street. According to the 2006 American Community Survey, the following are the six languages spoken at home in Manhattan:

1. Spanish
2. Chinese
3. French
4. Japanese
5. Korean
6. Russian

It has been the agency experience that these languages are not our primary source of our customer base. In fiscal year 2008 the Municipal Archives process 37,505 requests for vital records and the City Hall Library received 5,096 requests for information, no one can recall the need for interpretation services. Since Department of Records services can be accessed by anyone in the city we have decided to focus our plan on the top six citywide LEP languages. Once we have determined the languages that most requires assistance for our agency then we will update our plan accordingly. We hope to have this information by January 2010, since the employees of these areas are tracking the need for interpretation on tracking log on a monthly basis commencing in January 2009. We will also use Language Line usage records to help determine the top LEP language for the Department of Records.

II. Language Access is new to our agency we currently do not have any data on the need for interpretation services in our divisions that are access by the public. Commencing in January 2009 the Department of Records will be using a monthly log to track how many patrons serviced required interpretation and what are the languages needed. If the translation was performed in-house using the agency volunteer language bank or was it perform on the phone by Language Line. The Department of Records has acquired a contract with Language Line in December 2008. We believe that the employee monthly tracking logs and the Language Line phone bills will help us identify which languages should become the main focus of our plan.

- III. It is important to the agency that we provide equal service to all our patrons no matter what language they speak. As the Department of Records we house so much of the New York City History. We believe with the implementation of our language access plan that it may expose the agency to a whole new customer base that probably was not aware that the agency existed. It has always been the Department of Records critical objective to increase the volume and availability of public records and publications. As a result of the plan we want to continue to respond promptly to all research request no matter what is the language spoken by the requestor.
- IV. Due to current budgetary constraints we are only able to designate a small amount of funding for our Language Access program. As a result of that funding we were able to acquire a Language Line contract. We have also established an agency volunteer language bank. As a result of the agency volunteer language bank we are able to provide assistance to our customers in the following languages: Spanish, Cantonese, Italian, French, French Creole, Russian, Arabic, Urdu, Bengali, Darija, Gujrati, Punjabi and Hindi.

#### **IV. Implementation Plan Logistics**

- January 2009 - The Department of Records will commence with the implement of the agency language access plan.
- January 2009 –Staff meeting with the Municipal Archives to begin to familiarize them with our language access plan. We will use this meeting to distribute language access materials to the staff.
- February 2009 – Staff meeting with City Hall Library staff to begin to familiarize them with our language access plan. We will use this meeting to distribute language access materials to the staff.
- April 2009- Hold the first language access quarterly meeting with the Directors and Supervisors of the Municipal Archives and the City Hall Library the two divisions that will utilize interpretation services.

- June 2009 -Hold training for all staff hold have direct access to the public on the agency language access plan and on Language Line services.
- September 2009 - Translation for the agency documentation that is issued to the public in the top six LEP languages. We currently have 8 forms for translation, this forms consist mainly of order forms.
- January 2010- Identify the top LEP language for the agency. The Department of Records will revise the language access plan if necessary.

### **Major Milestones**

- Establishing an agency volunteer Language Bank –Dec. 2008
- Obtaining Language Line contract Services – Dec. 2008
- Initial meeting with agency staff to familiarize them with the agency language access plan – Municipal Archives – Jan 2009  
City Hall Library – Feb 2009
- Training staff on Language Line Interpretation Services - July 2009
- Translation of essential public documents and signage – September 2009
- Translation of agency selected website pages-Dec. 2009

### **Language Access Coordinator**

The Department of Records & Information Services has appointed a Language Access Coordinator. As the Language Access Coordinator their responsibilities will be:

- Establish and maintain the agency volunteer Language Bank database to ensure that all agency personnel have access to interpretational services when needed.
- Implementation of staff training to ensure that the staff is prepared to provide language assistance upon request. Provide support and

guidance to agency personnel regarding the language access services offered at the agency whether through contracted interpreters or onsite volunteer interpreters

- Identify and ensure that all essential documents and signage are translated by contracted Interpreter services.
- Developing and maintain statistical information regarding the agency Language Access Plan

## **V. Service Provision Plan**

The Department of Records will provide in person interpretation in the two areas that are accessed by the public by the agency language bank volunteers. We will also offer phone interpretation through Language Line. The agency is currently identifying groups, organizations, and associations that are employees are members of or work with that can help spread the word that we provide free interpretation services at our offices. We will also be posting on our website that we offer free interpretation services.

The Department of Records has just acquired a contract with Language Line thorough DOITT. Initially we have started with a small contract until we are able to asset the agency needs for interpretation via phone and documentation translation.

If the language spoken by the customer is not immediately identifiable by our staff, they will use "Language Identifications" card or "I Speak" cards to identify the primary language of the customer. If the staff are unable to identify the language needed using these methods, they will utilize Language Line to identify the language and translate for the patron.

The Department of Records will translate all informational and order forms in the six Citywide LEP languages. The agency only has 8 order forms that are issued to the public. Due to the small number of forms for translation we will be using the Records language bank volunteers to translate these documents. At which time will seek assistance for the City's volunteer language bank to double check for accuracy of the translation. We will also use Language Line if we are unable to translate the documents in house. These forms should be available by September 2009. The agency has identified an additional 11 forms for possible

translation but due to complexity and cost to translate these forms we will not precede at this time. By January 2010 when we have determined the top LEP languages for our agency we will develop a plan to ensure that these forms are translated. In the interim we will post the "Notice of Free Translation Service" to make patrons aware that documents will be translated upon request. This notice was supplied by the Mayor's Office of Operations.

The Department of Records intends to use the plain language guidelines and standards in all our information that is distributed to the public. We believe that the more clear and concise we are the better we are in servicing the public.

The Department of Records has just starting exploring options on how to translate our website in an effective and economical matter. Our agency averages about 100,000 web hits a month and we need to start identifying which areas we need to focus on first. The agency has been in communication with DOITT to set up a link to a website that will translate pages of our website into other languages. This method is currently being use by other City Agencies. We see this as an interim solution to translating our web pages since we have yet to determine the top LEP languages for our agency. The Department of Records will look to the Office of Operations and DOITT for any guidance regarding this issue and will adhere to any citywide standards. Our goal is to have this interim method in place by September 2009.

The agency will be posting language ID posters throughout the two divisions that are open to the public which are the Municipal Archives and the City Hall Library. These posters have been provided by the Mayor's office

The two areas that offer services to the public are the Municipal Archives and the City Hall Library which is located in Manhattan at 31 Chambers Street. In the Municipal Archives and the City Hall Library there is not much directional signage. When you enter the Municipal Archives that is a large counter were the employees are readily accessible to assist the patrons. In the City Hall Library the employee's desk are in the main room also readily accessible as soon as you enter. The only directional signs we have posted are a large customer service sign that is located on the wall behind the counter in the Municipal Archives. In the Municipal Archives they do have written instructions on how to use are microfilm readers. Once we have determined the top LEP language for our agency by January 2010 we would like to translate these instructions in those

languages. The agency will translate directional signage or instructions using our volunteer in house language bank. We will also utilize the City's language volunteer bank to assist in accuracy of the translations or in the case that we are unable to translate in house. When we are unable to utilize these methods we can use on Language Line contract to translate the documents.

## **VI. Training**

All current staff or new staff that has direct contact with the public will be required to attend annual training sessions. These training sessions will focus on the policies and procedures of the agency Language Access Program.

The Department of Records will conduct training sessions with the staff and the supervisor of the staff that directly deal with the public. These training sessions will focus on trying to identify the language spoken by the patron using the "Language Identifications" card or "I Speak" cards to identify the primary language of the customer. We will also be receiving training on Language Line interpretation service; the agency has just acquired a contract with Language Line.

The Department of Records will incorporate cultural competency training as part of the agencies EEO training curriculum.

## **VII. Record Keeping and Evaluation**

The agency would develop a small survey and ask patrons to give feedback on the interpretation services. We will focus on the services they receive and did it meet their expectations. These survey forms will be completed by our in house staff that performs the translation for the patron. The languages that are available for in house translation are Spanish, Cantonese, Italian, French, French Creole, Russian, Arabic, Urdu, Bengali, Darija, Gujrati, Punjabi and Hindi. We currently do not have any measures in place to certify our bilingual employees. The agency would like to send our bilingual employees to any citywide training or certification programs if they become available.

The Language Access Coordinator will maintain all data supplied by the divisions that use interpretation services. They will also maintain all reports supplied by Language Line. We want to create a spreadsheet to monitor usage on a monthly basis. As mentioned previously the Municipal Archive and City Hall Library staff will be using monthly data tracking log to track the number of patrons serviced that require interpretation.

All Directors and supervisor will be held accountable for the implementation of the Executive Order. The agency will conduct spot check of the divisions that use interpretation services by having people call or come in who will identify themselves as not being English proficient and seeing what services are offered by our staff. We want to measure that the division is complying with the Executive order. If a staff member is not complying with the order they will be required to attend a retraining session.

### **VIII. Resource Analysis and Planning**

The agency will use the Language Line to train staff on their services. The Language Access Coordinator will be responsible for training the on the agency Language Access Plan.

We have created a volunteer language bank in the agency. It currently consists of thirteen volunteers. We can offer the following languages: Spanish, Cantonese, Italian, French, French Creole, Russian, Arabic, Urdu, Bengali, Darija, Gujrati, Punjabi and Hindi.

Since we are a small agency with a limited budget to implement this plan we are taking advantage of all the assistance that is available throughout the City. The agency will use the "I speak" cards, "Language Identifications" cards and the guidelines for accessing Interpreter services desktop display that has been provided by the Mayor's office. We will be in contact with DOITT ways of translating our website. We will be looking at other agencies that have an established program to see their best practices and how we can incorporate them in our program.