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*a r c h i v e s*

New York Heritage  
Documentation Project

# **A Guide to Documenting Latino/Hispanic History & Culture in New York State**

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# Documenting Latino/Hispanic History and Culture in New York State

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# Introduction

Long a home for Puerto Ricans, New York has in recent years become a destination for immigrants from throughout Mexico, South and Central America, and the Caribbean. Diverse and growing Latino communities are found in urban and rural communities all over the state, contributing enormously to the cultural, social, political, and economic fabric of New York. Within the next decade Hispanics will become New York's largest minority population, yet only a handful of repositories in New York are actively collecting Hispanic materials.

Much of the documentation that records the rich history and culture of these diverse communities statewide is in danger of being lost. Historical information is inadequately represented in the documentation of broad areas of Hispanic culture, including the fine arts, popular music and dance forms and folk and traditional arts. Similarly, information is extremely limited about Hispanic businesses and social, political, community, and religious organizations. Latino/a experiences with and responses to issues of immigration and migration, discrimination, economic opportunity, public education, health care, law enforcement, and social services are poorly represented in the historical record. Even the substantial contributions of various Latino/a community leaders and politicians from New York at the local, state and even national level are seriously lacking adequate documentation.

The New York State Archives, in cooperation with the New York State Historical Records Advisory Board, has developed this guide as part of a statewide initiative called the New York Heritage Documentation Project. It is working to ensure the equitable and comprehensive documentation and accessibility of all of New York's history and peoples. The project has involved working with people from many Hispanic and non-Hispanic sectors of the community—people who create, care for, use, and are the subjects of historical records—to identify the issues, people, organizations, and events that are most critical to document. The State Archives is also seeking appropriate repositories, community-based when possible, that are interested in collecting Latino records. The project has been made possible by a major grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

## ***The purpose of the guide:***

**The main purpose of this guide is to help create a comprehensive, equitable historical record of New York's Latino/Hispanic populations, one that represents fairly the full spectrum of communities, facets of life, and activities that have contributed to New York's evolving history and culture.** More specifically, the guide aims to:

- Provide guidance in documenting Latino history and culture to Latino and non-Latino people and organizations;
- Raise awareness of the importance of documenting Hispanic history and culture among the creators, custodians, and users of relevant records;
- Identify the priority areas for documentation of New York's Latino/Hispanic history and culture in the next decade and guide records creators, repositories, and funding sources in their decisions about what is most important to preserve and make accessible;
- Demonstrate an approach to documenting Latino populations statewide that can guide the development of local and regional plans.

## The Guide in a Nutshell

Welcome to this brief summary of *A Guide to Documenting Latino/Hispanic History and Culture in New York State*. We have tried to make the whole guide accessible and useful for people who have different degrees of experience with historical records and with Latino history and culture. But this is a large, varied topic, and the documentation of historical records is a complex undertaking. That size and complexity are reflected in the guide, so this brief version will give you an overview of the main points.

### ***Why it is important to document Hispanic history and culture***

Hispanics will soon be the largest minority population in New York. Latino communities exist in every city and in towns and villages throughout the state. They have roots in diverse cultures and communities from Mexico, Central America, South America, and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, and they contribute enormously to the history and culture of New York State. Yet the historical record of Latinos in New York is very limited. One major and exemplary repository, the Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños at Hunter College, documents Puerto Ricans in New York City, but only a handful of other repositories collect Latino materials. As a result, many Hispanic communities and important aspects of Latino history and life are absent altogether from the historical record. It is up to people who have or create records, particularly in Latino communities, and to those in libraries, archives, and other repositories who collect records, to do what they can to preserve the history of Latinos in New York. This guide can help you discover what role you might play in this process and offer guidance as to how to go about it.

### ***Who this guide is for***

The State Archives has prepared this guide mainly for three groups:

- **Records Creators — Hispanic communities and organizations, and others engaged with Hispanic communities** often create records in the course of their work, and some have long-term historical value. A Latino organization or business, or an organization, business, or government active in a Latino community or serving the Hispanic population, may have letters, reports, files, photographs, and other materials that should be saved in an archives once the organization no longer needs them. Individuals and families may have correspondence, photographs, videotapes or film they no longer need at home that shows important parts of community history and cultural life.
- **Records Custodians — Historical records organizations** collect historically valuable records and make them available to the public for research. If you are affiliated with a community cultural organization, historical society, museum, library, or archives, it may make sense for you to begin collecting records related to the Latino communities in your area. This collecting focus can be of great benefit to your organization and your community.
- **Users of Records**, individuals who use historical records in the course of their lives and work, have an interest in preserving and making accessible the documentation of Latino/Hispanic History and Culture. Scholars, teachers, students, policy-makers, and community members are typical users of Latino documentation.

## ***What we mean by Latino/Hispanic What we mean by Documentation***

- **Latino/Hispanic** For the purposes of this guide Latino/Hispanic populations include migrants, immigrants, and descendants of people from Mexico, Central America, South America, Puerto Rico, and the rest of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean who live in New York State. Also included are people from Brazil and Spain. The history and culture of Latino communities needs to be documented from the time they were established in New York to the present — and on into the future.
- **Documentation** consists of valuable information found in “records,” which may exist in a wide range of formats (paper, photographs and slides, motion picture film, audio- and videotape, computer disks and tape) typically collected by archival repositories. Records that have enduring value once they are no longer needed for their original purpose are known as “archival records.” For example, the 20-year-old board minutes of a Latino organization are probably no longer needed to keep board members current, but they may document an important part of the community’s history. If so, they would be considered archival, and it may make sense for them to be in a publicly accessible archives

## ***What to document***

It is impossible to document everything that might be interesting, and not everything is of equal historical importance. To help you determine what is most important to document, we offer here a set of **criteria** that a documentation topic should meet, a list of high priority **subjects**, or topic areas, and three **themes** that run through most of the subjects. These criteria, subjects, and themes are summarized in the Documentation Priorities table on page 16. You can use these sections together to help you decide whether a particular topic would be a priority for documentation in a statewide, regional, or local context.

## ***How to document Latino/Hispanic History and Culture***

Documentation is a cooperative effort between the creators and custodians of records, each of whom has different roles to play.

**Records Creators** may want to take the following steps:

- **Improve the management of your current records**, so that you can operate more efficiently, locate files you need more quickly, get rid of records you no longer need, and save office and storage space;
- **Identify records likely to be of enduring historical value**, probably with the assistance of a qualified archivist;
- **Identify and develop a partnership with a repository** to care for the historically valuable records you no longer need in your office. Or become a “records custodian” and create an accessible archives within your own organization.

**Records Custodians** may want to take the following steps:

- **Organizational context — mission, collecting policy, resources** Determine whether collecting Latino history and culture fits your organization’s existing mission and

collecting policy and what kinds of resources are needed and available. Change the collecting policy, even expand the mission, if necessary.

- **Find the creators of important records** Identify the organizations, businesses, agencies, and governments in your field or service area that have made important contributions to Hispanic history and culture and whose documentation might enrich the historical record.
- **Design, obtain the resources for, and carry out a documentation project** Beginning on page 28 you will find examples of various kinds of documentation projects and potential sources of assistance and funding, including the State Archives.

## ***Regional and Local Documentation Planning***

This guide is statewide in scope, and the criteria, subjects, and themes it lays out are based on statewide significance and impact. But it is also intended to stimulate and guide documentation planning at the regional and local levels. Some topics, events, or organizations that have not had a statewide impact may be very significant in a region or locality and should be represented in the documentary record. The methodology used to develop this guide is also adaptable to regional planning. **The State Archives and the State Historical Records Advisory Board are interested in encouraging and supporting the development of regional and local documentation plans for Latino history and culture.**

## ***Documentation Planning Methodology***

A central principle of the method used to develop this guide was the understanding that we would need input from throughout the state, from diverse Latino communities, and from all walks of life, particularly in determining the most important themes and subjects for documentation. This principle of community involvement should be applied in regional and local planning as well. The methodology is summarized in the table in Appendix B, page 34.

## ***Where you can get help***

This guide offers an introduction to the documentation of Hispanic history and culture, but it cannot answer every question you might have or lead you step by step through the process, partly because the steps won't be the same in every situation. The staff at the State Archives is available and eager to help you make sense of this guide, think through documentation issues, plan documentation projects, and seek support for documentation efforts. At several places below we urge you to contact us, and Sources of Assistance and Funding describes other resources as well. Please do get in touch with us anytime.

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The New York State Archives  
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Telephone: 518.474.6926  
Email: [dhs@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:dhs@mail.nysed.gov)  
Website: [www.archives.nysed.gov](http://www.archives.nysed.gov)

## How to Use This Guide

People will bring to this guide different degrees of knowledge and experience, different perspectives, and different needs for information and guidance. Therefore, we urge you to look through the Table of Contents and go to the places that most interest you. Read the guide straight through if you want the full picture in the order we conceived it, or jump around, following your own logic, questions, and trains of thought.

### *Who is the guide for?*

This guide is intended for members of Latino/Hispanic communities from all cultural backgrounds and all walks of life and for people who work with or serve Hispanic communities. It is also for archivists, librarians, and other historical information specialists. Finally, it is for those who use records relating to Latino communities and want to ensure the survival of critical information. These groups all have important roles in identifying, preserving, and making historical information accessible in appropriate ways.

The following table lists the kinds of people and groups for whom this guide is written.

<b>Records creators such as:</b>	<b>Records custodians such as:</b>	<b>Records users such as:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hispanic organizations and other organizations related to Latino communities</li> <li>- Latino activists and their opponents</li> <li>- Latino legislators, their committees and their staffs</li> <li>- State and local government agencies and other entities that serve or interact with Hispanic communities</li> <li>- Latino businesses and businesses that deal with Hispanic populations</li> <li>- Latino historians and other scholars</li> <li>- Entities, public and private, that fund Latino endeavors</li> <li>- Hispanic families and individuals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Records managers and archivists in               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- State government</li> <li>- Local government</li> <li>- Colleges and universities</li> <li>- Private and non-profit Hispanic organizations</li> <li>- Corporations and businesses</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Public and university librarians</li> <li>- Museums and historical societies</li> <li>- Regional and local historians</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- People engaged with Latino communities in:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- State government</li> <li>- Local government</li> <li>- Private and non-profit organizations</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Policy researchers and analysts</li> <li>- Latino action and advocacy groups</li> <li>- Historians and other scholars of Hispanic history, life, and culture</li> <li>- Genealogists and family historians</li> <li>- Artists and Writers</li> <li>- Students and Teachers</li> </ul>

Most people who use this guide will be or represent either:

**Creators of records** — People and organizations who are part of or involved with Hispanic communities and who generate records, some of which may be of historical value; or

**Custodians of records** — Archivists, librarians, and others who work with organizations such as archives, libraries, historical societies, community organizations, museums, and colleges and universities that collect historically valuable records and make them accessible to the public for research.

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

Because the creators and custodians of records have different roles to play in the documentation process, some sections of the guide are addressed especially to one group or the other.

### ***Creators of records — Why documentation is important***

Most people and organizations that generate historically important records in their work or their private lives are unaware of their enduring value. They may feel they don't have the time or resources to deal adequately with even their current papers, much less archival records they don't use regularly. As a result, all across the state treasures of Latino history and culture are at risk.

- A woman has been a leader in the Puerto Rican community for decades in New York City. A founder of three community organizations over the years and an activist on many important issues, she has dozens of boxes of files in her apartment that would help document many organizations, issues, and key people that have shaped Puerto Rican history in New York. If she makes no arrangements for the records, what will happen to them when she is gone?
- A Latino cultural and service organization that has been a mainstay of the Hispanic community in an Upstate city is moving to a new office. They are reluctant to move all the boxes of papers from the early years that they no longer use. Those papers reveal much about the early history of the community — its leaders, early organizations that have come and gone, and of course the organization's own history. But if they have nowhere else to put them, no way for them to be preserved and made accessible, they will probably throw them away.
- A woman whose parents were among the first Hispanics in an Upstate city has been documenting her family history all her life. Her father, too, has kept many photographs and papers of all kinds about the family and the community. Many were destroyed recently when their basement flooded during a storm. She is now anxious to find a safe repository for the rest of her collection, but she knows of no place in the area that collects Latino materials.
- An Hispanic chamber of commerce has records about most of the Hispanic businesses in the area over the past forty years. A new director has just been hired. He wants to clear out the storeroom that is cluttered with boxes of old papers no one uses anymore. One of the staff is concerned about the loss of the organization's history and information about

many of its member businesses, some of which are now gone, but she doesn't know what to suggest. Where should those valuable records go?

- A health care facility serves several neighborhoods, one of which is a large Latino community. It has records that, without releasing names of individuals, would reveal important information about health issues in the Latino neighborhood. But it has no archives and no arrangement with a public archives, so periodically it throws away the records it no longer needs or is not required to keep. Another source of vital information is gone for ever.

If these conditions persist and large parts of the Latino historical record are lost to the recycling bins and the dumpsters, the history that survives will be skewed and misleading. Will your organization and its contributions be remembered? Will the story of your family or your community become part of the written history of Hispanics in New York? Will people in the future be able to base their judgments, decisions, and actions on an accurate, balanced picture of Latino history in New York?

In *How to Document Latino History & Culture* below (page 25) you will see that devoting even a modest amount of time and resources to dealing with your records can bring significant benefits to your family, organization, or community and help preserve their contributions to the history of Hispanics in New York.

### ***Custodians of records — Why documenting Latino/Hispanic communities is important***

Collecting records pertaining to Hispanic history and culture can make sense and be good policy for many kinds of repositories, from a small Latino cultural organization or county historical society to large institutional libraries and archives. As you will see below in *What to Document in Latino History and Culture* (page 15), this topic is vast and varied, and the need for improved documentation is enormous. Because Latinos participate in every aspect of life (education, the arts, business, religion, to name a few), documentation in this area allows an Hispanic repository to develop relationships with many kinds of constituents in its community, selecting those that are most appropriate to its mission (see *Organizational context — matching mission and project*, page 26). A non-Latino repository, such as a public library, may have the opportunity to serve and build new relationships with an important segment of its community. Here are a few ways different kinds of repositories might approach documenting Latino history and culture:

- A Latino social service and cultural organization that has been active in the community for many years realizes that preserving the history of its community should be one of its responsibilities. It obtains funding to create a Latino community archives as one of its programs. It hires a part-time archivist who works first to process and make accessible the organization's own archival records — those that have enduring historical value. She then turns her attention to making the community aware of the archives and inviting families and other organizations to donate their materials. Within a few years, the archivist is a full-time staff member and the agency's archives is widely known as one of the best Hispanic community collections in the country.

- A public library serves a community with a significant Latino population, but few Latinos use the library, even though it has increased its Spanish language collection greatly in recent years. The library's local history room focuses mostly on 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century history of its political and economic leaders. The library sees that if it could form a partnership with the main Latino community organization in town, they could perhaps jointly begin to document Latino history and culture. The collaboration goes ahead after much preparation. Over a period of years, the Latino community comes to trust and value the library as a part of *its* community, Hispanic leaders serve on the library board, Latinos use the full range of the library's resources, the library has furthered its mission to serve the *whole* community — and the local history room now holds a growing Hispanic collection that is used regularly by both community members and outside scholars.
- A university medical school library comes to understand that the Hispanic community served by its teaching hospital is not reflected in the holdings of its library or archives. Its service to the community and to its medical faculty and students would be enhanced by creating a Latino health collection. The new policy is adopted, and eventually, its archives collects not only the records generated by the university's interactions with the Latino community; it also becomes a repository for the archival records of independent clinics and physicians in private practice who serve Latinos.

The possibilities for documentation projects in Latino history and culture are innumerable. Many organizations that are custodians of archival records will be able to find ways to both further their own collecting policies and missions and contribute to the historical record of Hispanic history and culture through documentation projects.

### ***Working together***

**The State Archives believes that preserving a more complete and balanced historical record of Latino history and culture is extremely important, and we invite you to join us in this effort.**

If you are interested in Latino/Hispanic communities and want their history to be preserved in the documentary record, then this guide is for you. As you will see, the challenge is enormous. No one organization or group can do it all, and it will take a long time, but everyone can do his or her part.

- **The State Archives** collects government records related to Latino populations and can help people in local government and the non-profit world through advice, technical assistance, and grant programs.
- **People and organizations who generate or hold Latino/Hispanic records** can pay attention to caring for them well. If they want their valuable papers, photographs, etc., to become part of the historical record, they can seek an appropriate, publicly accessible repository for them.
- **Repositories**, such as libraries, historical societies, museums, and other large organizations with archives, can integrate Hispanic history and culture into their collecting policies, seek out partnerships with records creators, both organizations and

individuals, who have important documentation, and preserve and make accessible the records they collect.

- **People who use records** can make their concerns known to repositories, records creators, funders, and government officials and encourage greater support for this effort.

Ultimately, it comes down to individual people — to you taking the initiative in whatever ways make sense to you in the context of your work and your life. We urge you to read through this guide and think about what it might mean for you.

**Then be sure to ask for help or clarification. Contact the Archival Services staff at the State Archives.** They will be happy to answer questions about the guide and help you think about possible documentation projects, grant programs, or other resources. (See the contact information at the end of the guide, page 28.)

# Defining Our Terms

## ***What do we mean by Latino/Hispanic history and culture?***

This guide aims to help preserve and make accessible information about the documentary history and culture of New York's Latino/Hispanic populations. It is statewide in scope. Latino/as have settled in nearly all parts of the state, often in communities or neighborhoods with shared place of origin. These populations include migrants, immigrants, and descendents of people from Mexico, Central America, South America, Puerto Rico, and the rest of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean who live in New York State. Also included are immigrants and descendents of people from Brazil and Spain.

Latino and Hispanic are broad terms that encompass a great diversity of culture, history, experience, and identity. In New York, both are generally used to denote the same populations, but they have different connotations. Individuals and groups may have strong preferences for one term or the other (in this guide, the terms are used interchangeably). Individual Latinos may identify strongly with their places of ancestral origin, from the level of village to nation or possession, they may feel part of a pan-Latino identity, or they may not have a strong sense of Latino identity. Mainstream institutions and governments tend to assume a general Latino/a-Hispanic identity for people with Hispanic surnames and ignore the diversity within this broad group.

For the purposes of this guide, all Latino/Hispanic people are included, but the primary emphasis is on self-identified Latino/Hispanic individuals and groups. Hispanics, like other population groups, participate in the full range of human activities. In each of the topics to document in New York \*, from agriculture to transportation, Hispanics will find part of their lives, part of their history. But not all documentation can be saved and made accessible, and not everything is equally important. The task of this guide is to help identify and prioritize for documentation the topics and subtopics that are central to the history of Latino/as in New York.

\*See the New York Documentation Topics Framework ([www.nyshrab.org/topics.htm](http://www.nyshrab.org/topics.htm)), a comprehensive, annotated list of eighteen topic areas to consider for documentation in New York history, prepared by the New York State Archives. A summary list of the topics is found in the Appendix,

## ***What is Documentation?***

For the purposes of this guide, documentation consists of valuable information about Latino history and culture in New York that may be found in a wide range of formats (paper, photographs and slides, motion picture film, audio- and videotape, computer disks and tape) typically collected by archival repositories. Many kinds of documentation may have important historical value, for example:

- Diaries, correspondence, photographs, slides, tapes and other sound or graphic records that document family or community life, events and activities
- Minutes, summaries, or transcripts of meetings, hearings, or conferences

- Correspondence, including email files, of people in responsible positions
- Reports, grant proposals, position papers, academic papers, and other unpublished documents that present what an organization does and why or that discuss issues pertaining to Latino populations
- Program announcements, broadsides, flyers, and other publicity materials related to events, programs, or services
- Legal briefs and other supporting documentation related to litigation
- Maps, photographs, slides, tapes and other sound or graphic records that document the people or activities of a group or organization

Three-dimensional artifacts also tell important parts of the story, and much of the information in this guide will be useful to those collecting such objects. The focus of this guide, however, is on archival documentation. Organizations that are committed to collecting material culture may want to consult with one of the following organizations or other museum professionals for guidance:

Museum Association of New York State

Lower Hudson Conference of Historical Agencies

Upstate History Alliance

Western New York Alliance of Historical Associations

(For contact information, see [www.nysmuseums.org](http://www.nysmuseums.org).)

# What to Document in Latino/Hispanic History

Latino people participate in all aspects of life and work. They interact with the society's full range of communities and groups, organizations, institutions, businesses, and governments as well as those created by or directly serving their communities. Hispanic communities have contributed to and been affected by the major historical trends, events, and issues that have shaped New York's history — its dynamic economic life, politics, and culture. There are many topics, issues, events, organizations and individuals that could be the subject of documentation efforts. But realistically, not everything that is important can be documented. The available resources — funding, trained staff, and space within archival repositories — are simply inadequate and are likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

Therefore, the central question this guide attempts to answer is: **If we are to create a balanced, equitable documentary record that fully and fairly represents Latino history and experience in New York, what are the topics, events, issues, and dimensions of life that are most critical to document?** This is the question that was posed to participants in six regional meetings and in numerous individual conversations and meetings during the preparation of this guide. The answers are reflected in the priorities for documentation described in this section.

## ***Deciding what to document in Latino/Hispanic history and culture***

This part of the guide includes three sections that can be used together to determine statewide priorities for documentation:

- **Criteria** To qualify as statewide priorities, documentation topics should meet one or more of the criteria.
- **Subjects & Themes** Documentation efforts should address at least one of the *subjects* listed below (migration and settlement, religion, etc.). Documentation projects may also want to consider the *themes* of language, race and ethnicity, and the roles of women as dimensions of the topics selected for documentation.
- **Existing Documentation** A few aspects of Latino history and culture are reasonably well documented and therefore would not be high priority for new documentation efforts.

## Documentation Priorities — Summary Table

The table below summarizes the criteria, subjects, and themes that can be used to identify priority topics. These elements are described in detail in the sections following the table.

Summary — Determining Priority Topics for Statewide Documentation of Latino/Hispanic History and Culture in New York		
Criteria for Statewide Significance	Priority Subjects/Themes	
Topic should meet one or more of these criteria.	Documentation projects should address one or more of these subjects and themes AND meet one or more of the Criteria for Statewide Significance.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Distinctive to New York, seminal, or precedent-setting</li> <li>- Significant impact in Latino communities statewide</li> <li>- Significant impact in several facets of Latino life and history</li> <li>- Illustrative of common experience throughout the community</li> <li>- Significant over a long time</li> <li>- Not already well documented</li> </ul>	<p><b>Subjects</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Arts and Culture</li> <li>- Business</li> <li>- Education</li> <li>- Family and Community Life</li> <li>- Health and Community Welfare</li> <li>- Migration and Settlement</li> <li>- Occupation and Labor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organizations and Leaders</li> <li>- Politics, Government and Law</li> <li>- Religion</li> <li>- Social Reform</li> <li>- Major Historical Events and Milestones</li> </ul> <p><b>Themes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Language</li> <li>- Race and Ethnicity</li> <li>- Roles of Women</li> </ul>

### Criteria for Statewide Priorities

To be considered a statewide priority for documentation, a topic should meet at least one and probably more of these criteria.

- **It represents a contribution by New York that is distinctive, seminal, or precedent-setting** in Hispanic/Latino history and experience overall.
- **Example:** *The development of Latin music and dance in New York City since the 1930s has been a major cultural force in the city's Latino communities. But it has also established New York as the center of a worldwide popular music phenomenon and an important international industry. Not every band needs to be documented, but those that are recognized as pioneers or who are considered great by the community should be. And collections that document the development of a particular style or the music of a particular community over time may be important to preserve.*
- **Example:** *The suits filed in Suffolk County that led to the mandatory creation of bilingual education there directly affected only the students in the county, but they inspired and influenced people in other parts of the state and around the country.*

- **It reflects the beginning of a trend or issue or an important milestone in its history.**
- *Examples: 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 Hispanic church, the first bilingual education program, and so on. Looking back, some of these firsts may be interesting markers but may not be considered historically very important. Others, for example, the integration of the police and fire departments in Buffalo and the establishment of bilingual education in Suffolk County, came as a result of controversy and struggle. Some led to the founding of an organization that has remained important in the community, or set a precedent followed by other communities in New York. Such events or milestones may be important to document.*
- **It has had a significant impact or influence on Latino communities statewide or on a large proportion of the target population, if geographically concentrated. (See Community Size and Duration below.)**
- *Examples: Migrant farm work by Latinos has been a significant part of Latino history over much of Upstate New York and Long Island for many years. The farmworkers themselves constitute an important community with unique challenges, they have formed and interacted with settled Latino communities throughout the state, and they have been an essential component of the agricultural economy. The War on Poverty programs of the 1960s and welfare reform in the 1990s were federal initiatives that had significant impact on Latino communities in New York.*
- **It has been significant over a considerable period of time. (See Community Size and Duration below.)**
- *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 an organization doing similar work that was founded five years ago or lasted only five years. For example, it will be more important to document a Latino theater company that has survived thirty years than a company founded at the same time that folded after a few years or one that is just getting established.*
- **It has engaged and had significant impact in several subject areas.**
- *Examples: A community-wide annual Latino parade is an important part of family and community life and the arts and culture; it engages businesses and may involve politics and social reform issues. The establishment of a new Latino community or the rapid expansion of an existing one due to migration or immigration affects nearly all subject areas.*
- **It is illustrative of common experience statewide.**
- *Examples: It is extremely important to document the social history of Hispanic communities. 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. At this time, there is so little record of Latino social history that most documentation of this kind would be considered high priority.*

- **It is not already well documented** (see Existing Documentation, page 24). Few topics in Latino history and culture are well documented in New York. However, since the gaps are so great, it doesn't make sense to put time and resources into documenting topics for which substantial records already exist. It is important before beginning a documentation project to check the State Archives' *Preliminary Guide to Latino Documentary Sources in New York State*, to see what materials already exist in archives. The guide is available on the State Archives web site (see page 28).

### **Community Size and Duration**

The Latino/Hispanic population of New York State is extremely diverse, encompassing immigrants or descendents of people from every country of Latin America and from distinctive regions or cultures within particular countries. The Puerto Rican community is the largest, has been here the longest, and is well represented throughout the state. The Cuban and Dominican communities are of long standing as well, though not as widely dispersed, and the Mexican population, though relatively new, is growing very rapidly, both in New York City and Upstate. Communities of varying sizes representing Central and South America abound, each with its unique history.

For the most part, the size of a community and the duration of its history in New York will be related to the community's impact on New York State history and the amount of documentation that exists. The following principles offer an approach to prioritizing documentation projects that address different cultural/ethnic groups within the Hispanic communities overall:

- For documentation projects dealing with a single cultural community (for example, Dominicans or Hondurans), the larger, older communities would have higher priority for documentation than smaller, newer ones.
- There may be sufficient similarity in history and experience among a group of communities of different ethnic background to warrant projects that document the group as a whole (an example might be Central American communities in New York City). In such a case, the collective size and historical significance of the group of communities might merit high priority for documentation.
- The priority of a documentation project that focuses on one or more of the subjects below would be raised if it addressed the topic in a group of communities. For example, a project to document occupation and labor for the Latino communities as a whole in Syracuse would be higher priority than a similar project focused on one community.

## **Themes**

During the course of meetings and conversations with members of Latino communities statewide, three themes emerged as important dimensions of many of the subject areas identified for documentation. The themes did not often surface as subjects for documentation themselves, but they were acknowledged as important facets of Latino history and experience that need to be reflected in the historical record.

## **Language**

The Spanish language is perhaps the central characteristic of Hispanic culture that is shared across nearly all Latino communities in New York and the nation. It can be a powerful bond reinforcing shared Latino identity and a tool for the preservation, expression, and creation of cultural traditions. Spanish speakers are scarce among the general population and within many organizations and institutions that interact with Hispanic communities. Therefore, language can be a tremendous barrier to success, and even survival, for immigrants who do not yet speak English well. Furthermore, in this country where bilingualism in general is rare, the persistence of a “foreign” language in a community is sometimes greeted with suspicion or hostility. (Spanish was a native language in much of this country before English was, so it is not truly a foreign language.) Language is thus a vital dimension of most subject areas considered for documentation in this guide.

Just as language is a pervasive issue in Latino experience, it is also a critical issue for documentation. Identifying, collecting, and making accessible a more complete and balanced historical record of Latino history and experience in New York is fundamentally a bilingual project that must result in a bilingual product. To date, the pool of people skilled in documentation who also know English and Spanish well is too small; this is a challenge that cannot be met overnight, but it needs to be addressed now.

## **Race and Ethnicity**

Race and ethnicity are complex, powerful, emotionally charged phenomena in American life and are woven into the history of New York’s Latino communities. They can serve as unifying forces within communities, hallmarks of cultural identity and expression, and they can be experienced as valued elements of our diverse society. They can also be triggers of suspicion, fear, hostility, discrimination, and violence. Consciousness and behavior related to race and ethnicity form part of the background – and sometimes the foreground – of many of the subjects in Latino history recommended for documentation.

## **The Roles of Women**

There will presumably come a time when the contributions of women to history will not require special mention or emphasis in a guide such as this. It will be taken for granted that their roles and individual contributions are essential and should be evaluated for their historical significance with no less weight than are those of men. For the time being, however, it is deemed important by many of the participants in dialogue surrounding this guide, both women and men, that special care be taken to ensure that women’s participation in Latino history and experience be equitably reflected in the documentary record.

## **Subjects**

To be considered priorities for documentation, topics should fall within one or more of these subjects AND meet criteria above for statewide impact and significance. **Possible subtopics recommended for documentation include—but are not limited to—those listed under each subject.**

The subjects listed below grew out of a series of regional meetings and conversations with numerous individuals in Latino communities throughout the state. While there was considerable agreement across the state on the important subjects to be documented, the emphases were sometimes different from one region to another. Because this is a statewide guide, it reflects primarily the topics on which there was wide statewide agreement. Regional planning processes are likely to result in documentation plans more accurately tailored to each region's history. (Notes from the regional meetings are available at the State Archives.)

The subjects described here are all considered extremely important to document. They are listed in alphabetical order.

### **Arts and Culture**

Included in this category are 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. Also cultural and artistic traditions retained from the place of origin and new forms acquired or created in New York.

- Latino art and music forms: traditional and New York based
- Important Latino theaters, dance companies, musical groups
- Latino Literature, in Spanish and English
- Latino interaction with mainstream arts and popular culture
- Museums and other cultural organizations
- Important artists in all disciplines

### **Business**

Latino owned and operated small and mid-sized businesses have been a central facet of Latino history and community life in New York Latino neighborhoods helping to define the character of the communities and meet their everyday needs.

- Latino chambers of commerce and other business associations
- Latino-owned businesses
  - Bodegas
  - Latino media: newspapers, magazines, radio, television

### **Education**

The topics listed here include both the struggles to establish bilingual education and Latino or Puerto Rican studies and their subsequent histories throughout New York State.

- Bilingual education
- Latino Studies in higher education

Latino students' experiences in elementary, secondary, and higher education  
Adult education, ESL

### **Family and Community Life**

This includes a broad range of subtopics including activities, lifestyles, and changing ways of life of individuals, families and groups; distinctive aspects of living within various Latino communities and neighborhoods; and groups and organizations formed according to group identity for support, advocacy, recreation, or education.

Domestic and family traditions and histories, genealogy  
Folk and traditional arts  
Food and cooking  
Community festivals, parades, and celebrations  
Hometown clubs and other social organizations  
Historical and cultural organizations, community centers  
Sports

### **Health and Community Welfare**

Activities, issues, and functions to be documented under this category tend to be of two types: (1) Community-based Hispanic organizations and programs that provide services within the community; or (2) Issues of access to services or opposition to policies and behaviors harmful to the community on the part of government or non-Latino businesses, organizations, and agencies. Included here are Latino activists and advocacy organizations that work for improved services, improved access to services, bilingual service providers, and the end of discrimination and other harmful policies and behaviors.

Public health  
Mental health  
Housing  
Social Services  
Environmental justice

### **Migration and Settlement**

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

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

### **Occupation and Labor**

The occupational opportunities and preferences of Hispanics have varied widely from community to community in New York, but in particular communities certain occupations have

been predominant for a time. For example, the Puerto Rican community in Syracuse was initially strong in hotels and restaurants, then construction, then factories, and so on. Some fields of occupation have been important for Latinos statewide; several are listed below. Discrimination and “tracking” based on race, language, or gender have been common; discrimination and struggles to oppose it are part of this subject for documentation.

- Characteristic occupational patterns within particular communities over time
- Agricultural work, migrant and settled; day workers
- Government/Civil Service — Correctional services, health services, etc.
- The military
- Education and professions
- Organized labor — Latino participation, leadership
- Law enforcement and corrections
- Job discrimination and unemployment

### **Organizations and Leaders**

The documentation of Latino organizations and important community leaders is a likely component of each of the other subjects in this list. But the documentation of organizations and leaders across the spectrum of subject areas was almost universally considered a high priority subject in itself by participants in the development of this guide. It is possible for a documentation project to be focused on documenting the organizations and/or leaders in a Latino community rather than on a particular subject area. Also considered important was the documentation of Latinos who have achieved prominence in public life (in government, sports, the arts, etc.), regardless of whether their achievements were related to the Latino community or its issues.

- Latino community organizations throughout the history of the community, including once-important organizations that no longer exist
- Community leaders
- Latinos prominent in public life

### **Politics, Government, and Law**

This subject includes political, governmental, and judicial activity at the federal, state, and local levels that affects Latino communities and individuals; creation and administration of laws, provision of government services, and protection of the rights of citizens; elected and appointed public officials, government agencies and programs.

- Civic leadership
- Hispanic political clubs and organizations
- Community voter registration, political organizing and campaigning
- Hispanic elected and appointed officials from New York at the federal, state, county, and local levels
- Black and Puerto Rican Caucus and the Puerto Rican Hispanic Task Force
- International relations — mutual influences of Latin American and US/New York State politics
- Impacts of federal, state, and local law and public policy on Latino communities

Criminal justice system — Law enforcement, the courts, the prison system

## **Religion**

Religious denominations and groupings of all religious faiths and spiritual movements found in Latino communities are included here, as are spiritual practices outside the context of organized religion.

- Churches of all denominations: Roman Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal
- African-derived religions such as Santeria
- Community religious festivals and celebrations
- Family and domestic religious practice
- Church-based agencies providing social services, such as Spanish apostolates

## **Social Reform**

Efforts to achieve or oppose social, economic, and political change, including grassroots efforts outside of mainstream organizations. Individuals, organizations, and activities that address issues such as civil rights, discrimination, education, and environmental justice that affect the community.

- Civil rights
- Environmental justice
- Community activism

## **Major historical events and milestones in Hispanic history**

Certain events of local, statewide, national, or international scope have either had important impacts on Latino/Hispanic history in New York or represent milestones in that history. Although documenting a national or international event is beyond the scope of this guide, there may be important New York State dimensions or ramifications that should be documented.

- Spanish American War 1898
- Puerto Ricans granted U.S. citizenship 1917
- Immigration acts of 1965 and 1986
- Events in Latin America leading to emigration: Cuban revolution (1959), Dominican rebellion and U.S. occupation (1965), wars in Central America, etc.
- Aspira Consent Decree (1973) which led to the Bilingual Education Act

## ***Existing Documentation***

The State Archives has conducted an online search of Hispanic documentation that resulted in the production of its *Preliminary Guide to Latino Documentary Sources in New York State*, which is available on the State Archives web site (see Appendix A: How This Guide Was Developed).

The extent of existing documentation varies widely among the subjects discussed in this guide. There are probably none that would be considered well documented overall. Some components or aspects of a particular subject, however, may be quite well documented and not require new efforts. For example, the Historical Records of the Puerto Rican Migration, a collection recently acquired by El Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, consists of records created by various agencies of the Puerto Rican government which operated in the U.S. from 1930-1989; it voluminously documents important aspects of the “migration and settlement patterns” subject.

There is a general pattern worth noting: While all Latino/Hispanic communities in New York are seriously underdocumented, the Puerto Rican community in New York City, the largest and oldest Latino community in the state, is by far the best documented to date. El Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños at Hunter College has been collecting Puerto Rican documentation in its exemplary archives since 1972; it is the only archives in New York State that is devoted primarily to Latino documentation. Many of the state’s Latino scholars are themselves Puerto Rican and have focused their scholarship on Puerto Rican studies. Fifty-four percent of the collections identified as Latino statewide in the State Archives survey are in college or university archives; another 18% are in local or state government repositories. Generally, non-Puerto Ricans statewide and Puerto Ricans outside of New York City are the most poorly represented in the historical record. Moreover, the activities of non-profit organizations, unincorporated groups, individuals, and businesses are usually poorly documented, because these creators of records usually lack adequate resources, time, and/or understanding of the importance of documentation, and because few repositories deliberately collect in this area. One purpose of this guide is to improve the level of documentation in these areas.

When considering a particular topic for documentation, one of the first things to do is search this *Preliminary Guide* to determine the extent to which the topic is already documented.

# How to Document Latino History & Culture

**Note on statewide, regional, and local documentation** This guide is written from the perspective of documenting topics considered to be of statewide significance. Most of this section, however, applies to documentation at the local and regional levels also. (See page 31.)

Documentation involves a partnership between those who generate historically valuable records and those who collect them and make them accessible for use. These functions may be carried out by different parts of a single organization (for example, a university that maintains its own archives) or by different organizations (for example, a Latino organization that donates to a county historical society the historically valuable records it no longer needs in its day-to-day work). Each party has responsibility for parts of the documentation process.

## ***Next Steps for Creators of Important Latino/Hispanic Records***

### **Managing Current Records**

A logical first step toward good documentation for an organization that generates records in the course of its work is to manage its current records efficiently. This principle applies to organizations of all types and sizes, from tiny non-profits and businesses to huge institutions and corporations. A relatively small investment in setting up a records management system pays off quickly in the benefits to the organization:

- An efficient and logical filing system saves time by making it easier to locate documents quickly.
- A records management program describes which kinds of files should be kept in the office for how long and when they can be scheduled for recycling, removal to a storage area, or transfer to a permanent, accessible archives. This means that:
- Precious office space is not taken up with storage of records that are never used.
- Less expensive, more densely packed storage space can be used for records that must be kept for legal or policy reasons but that are rarely needed.
- Records that have no long-term value and are no longer needed can be destroyed or recycled in a timely manner.
- Records that may be “archival,” meaning they have permanent historical value, can be stored separately, once they are no longer current, until they can be transferred to an archives.

### **Finding a repository for archival records**

Creating and maintaining a publicly accessible archives requires space, equipment, ongoing professional staff, and funding beyond the capabilities or missions of most businesses and organizations. However, many libraries, museums, colleges and universities have archival programs and may already collect or be willing to collect in the area of Latino history and culture.

**A word of reassurance** Two questions often come to mind when people contemplate transferring records to an archives:

- Do we have to reorganize all our old records and get them in perfect order before they go to the archives?
- Will we have access to them in the archives? Do we have any control over who else has access to them?

When you get ready to donate records to an archives, you will meet with the archivist, who will look at your records and discuss with you which kinds are likely to be of historical value. Archives generally keep records in the order in which they were kept by the donor, because the way you organized them reveals important information about your interests and methods of work. Once the records are in the archives, an archivist will describe them and produce a “finding aid” that will allow a researcher to get to the documents he or she is looking for. So generally speaking, you will not need to reorganize your records before donating them.

When you donate records to an archives, you will negotiate and sign an agreement, part of which can stipulate what kinds of access you and others will have to the collection. You will probably want unlimited access for your organization, but there may be parts of a collection that you would want to restrict others from using for a period of time to protect the privacy of living individuals or to prevent early dissemination of time-sensitive materials. You will also have the opportunity to negotiate ownership of the intellectual property, the informational content, of the materials.

**Developing partnerships** As you begin to think about and plan for the care and accessibility of your organization’s historically valuable records, it may make sense to talk both with potential repositories and with other organizations and businesses in the area that are in or interact with Latino communities. A repository, for example, might be more interested in beginning a collecting program in Latino communities if there were a group of organizations prepared to contribute to the collection.

## ***Next Steps for Custodians of Records Interested in Collecting Latino/Hispanic Records***

### **Organizational context — matching mission and project**

A repository contemplating collecting in Hispanic materials for the first time or increasing its commitment in this area must evaluate this proposed direction in the context of its organizational mission, its current collecting policy, the communities it serves, its existing programs, and its available resources — space, personnel, and finances. Do Hispanic history and culture fall within the repository’s mission and collecting policy? If they meet the mission test but are not within the collecting policy, should the policy be changed? Will a Latino collection complement or strengthen the repository’s current programs, or would it represent a new programming direction? Are some aspects of Latino history or life more relevant to the mission than others?

Such considerations, examined in conjunction with the priorities and other information found in this guide, will guide a repository in shaping a Latino documentation effort that strengthens its

own work, better serves its constituents, and helps fill the gaps in the state's historical record of Latino communities.

### **Where to look for Latino records**

**Organizations:** Nearly all documentation topics, whether defined geographically, thematically, or by event or issue, will involve working with the records created by organizations or government entities. In some cases, when a specific Hispanic organization has had a particularly significant impact through its full range of activities, it may make sense to document an organization as a whole. In other situations, only certain facets of an organization's work and records will be relevant to the documentation project. For example, a community-based social service organization in the heart of a Latino neighborhood might be important to document as a whole. A Roman Catholic diocese, on the other hand, that works with an Hispanic community as one of several ethnic or cultural communities in its area would have a sub-set of its records relevant to the Latino documentation project.

Very rarely would it make sense for an organization to send some of its records to one archives and the rest to another — it is important to keep together the records of an organization. In the case of the diocese, the Hispanic records would stay with the rest of its records, but they would be identified as Hispanic, preserved, and made accessible, which is the goal of the effort.

Organizations that might be worthy of documentation themselves or that may hold important Hispanic records are likely to be of the following kinds:

- Hispanic-oriented activities or programs of state or federal agencies in New York
- The history and New York-focused programs of major national Latino organizations founded and based in New York
- Statewide Hispanic organizations, including organizations with multiple chapters or affiliates in New York
- Local or regional organizations that have had statewide impact or significance
- Local government entities and programs related to Latino communities that are representative of similar entities found throughout the state
- Local or regional organizations that are representative of similar organizations found throughout the state (e.g., small Hispanic businesses or community organizations that come and go; individually they may not have a large impact, but taken together, they represent a significant contribution to Latino communities, and at least some should be included in the documentary record)

**Individuals** who have important collections, unique perspectives, or vital information that is not recorded elsewhere, or who have made particularly significant contributions to Latino communities, are likely to come up in the course of documentation projects. Some may be appropriate to list by name as priorities for documentation in regional or local documentation plans. Others will be important to document in the course of documenting particular subjects.

## ***Documentation and access projects***

Documentation and access projects may be undertaken by records creating organizations, archival repositories, or partnerships involving both entities. They may take several approaches to documentation:

- Identify organizations and individuals that have been important players in Hispanic communities and may have archival records; conduct a survey of the records.
- Match repositories with records holders and arrange for the transfer of records to the repository.
- Arrange and describe Latino collections, making them accessible in house and online. This may refer to newly acquired collections as part of a larger documentation project. It may also apply to collections already in the possession of an archives but not yet made accessible, or accessible but not identified as related to Latino communities. For example, a social service agency that serves several ethnic communities may have important records in an archives but may not have identified them by their cultural affiliation, so a researcher wouldn't know there were Hispanic records in the collection.
- Improving existing archival programs or establishing new ones. This might mean creating a Latino collection within a larger archives, establishing an archives for the first time within a Latino organization, or improving the capabilities or processes within an existing archives that collects Latino materials.

### **Let this be your guide to successful documentation**

Documentation projects should follow this statewide guide or a regional Latino documentation plan, if one exists. **The State Archives staff are available to help you think through each of the steps below, whether or not you intend to apply to the State Archives for funding. We strongly urge you to take advantage of this resource!**

- Identify the records or the kinds of records that you are considering for documentation. If your organization generates records, this would mean selecting the records likely to have historical value (See What Is Documentation? Page 13) If your organization collects records, this could mean conducting a survey of Latino records in your area.
- Compare the topics, events, and issues addressed by the records — or by the organizations or individuals generating the records — with the themes outlined in this guide. If there is a strong match:
- Evaluate the records and topics according to the Criteria for Statewide Priorities (page 16) to determine whether the collection and accessibility of the proposed records is likely to be a statewide priority.

## ***Sources of Assistance and Funding***

### **The New York State Archives**

**Records Management** The New York State Archives offers a range of resources and assistance to governments that would like to establish or improve records management programs, including publications, workshops, consulting, and grants from the Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund. (Note: the records management grants are available to

governments only.) These resources are described in detail on the State Archives web site ([www.archives.nysed.gov](http://www.archives.nysed.gov)), or see the contact information for the State Archives at the end of this guide.

**Documentation** The State Archives also offers a range of programs and services to non-profit organizations for projects that will result in making archival records secure and accessible to the public for research. These include publications, documentation workshops, consulting, and grants from the Documentary History and culture Program (DHP). The DHP awards grants up to \$25,000 for projects in the following areas:

- Projects to identify, survey, and plan for the systematic collection of records relating to under-documented subjects, institutions, or activities.
- Projects to arrange and describe historical records
- Projects to evaluate and plan for archival program development

Documenting Latino communities is one of the priority subject areas for funding in the 2000-2003 funding cycles. These resources are described in detail on the State Archives web site ([www.archives.nysed.gov](http://www.archives.nysed.gov)), or see the contact information for the State Archives at the end of this guide, page 29.

### **Other sources**

For large statewide documentation projects, two federal government sources to consider are the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The State Archives publishes a resource guide to funding for archives.

### **Using this guide as a fund raising tool**

This guide makes a case for the importance of documenting Hispanic-Latino history, and it presents a researched approach to determining priorities for documentation that is based on extensive input from people very knowledgeable and experienced in the field statewide. It is designed to stimulate and educate funders, as well as repositories and records creators, as to the importance of documentation in this critical area. The guide may help convince funding sources to apply some of their resources to the documentation of Latino communities, and to particular projects that meet the criteria for statewide priority set forth above.

## **Conclusion**

This guide identifies some of the most critical priorities that must be addressed to ensure a more complete and balanced documentation of Latino communities in New York, and it offers a method for determining whether potential topics should be considered statewide priorities for documentation. Some of the responsibilities for accomplishing this plan fall to the New York State Archives. Many, however, are the responsibility of others. These include statewide and regional archives, historical societies, museums, and libraries whose missions and service areas currently encompass Hispanic populations and organizations engaged in Latino communities. They also include organizations that create records themselves in the process of their work in Latino communities.

We encourage you to become involved in this effort to redress a serious gap in New York's historical record. The need is great, the benefits are substantial, and the issues are compelling.

We welcome your comments, suggestions, or proposals for how to accomplish the goals in this plan. For further information on how you can assist in this effort, please contact:

The New York State Historical Records Advisory Board

Or

The New York State Archives

Suite 9D46 Cultural Education Center

Albany, New York 12230

Email SHRAB: [shrab@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:shrab@mail.nysed.gov)

Email Archives: [dhs@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:dhs@mail.nysed.gov)

Telephone: 518.474.6926

# Appendix

## ***A: Regional and Local Documentation Planning***

This guide is statewide in scope, and the criteria it establishes for high priority documentation are based on statewide significance (see *Deciding what to document...*, page 15 and *Criteria for Statewide Priorities*, page 16). Furthermore, this is not a statewide “plan” that would attempt to say exactly what topics to document in what order. Rather, it is a tool to enable people to make informed decisions about what is important to document and how to go about it, based on the statewide significance of the topic.

The limitations imposed by the criteria of a statewide guide draw attention to the critical importance of Hispanic documentation planning at the regional level. There are numerous topics that may not merit inclusion in the statewide guide but are of great importance regionally or locally and belong in the historical record of Latinos in New York State.

The regional meetings that provided much of the data for the statewide guide revealed distinctive interests and concerns for documentation shaped by regional geography, history, issues, and organizations. It is the intent and hope of the State Archives that the statewide guide and its methodology will be used in each region of the state to generate more explicit and detailed regional documentation plans. The regional planning process would result in priorities and topics selected for documentation that reflect the specific needs and interests of the region. Therefore, this guide does not establish regional priorities.

### **Adapting this statewide guide for regional or local documentation planning**

The approach we have used in developing this statewide guide is designed to work also for regional or local planning. A major research library or cultural institution that serves a large region could use this as a guide both to *method* and to *content* in developing a regional Latino history and culture documentation plan. Similarly, a county historical society or museum, for example, could adapt this guide’s approach to documenting Latino communities in its county.

- **Method** (See the summary table in Appendix B: How this guide was developed, page 34) The heart of the method is the involvement in the planning process of a wide range of people active in the Hispanic communities in the region. It should not be necessary to go through steps 1 and 2 of the method completely (defining the topic and its boundaries and determining the documentary universe), because those have been done in this guide (see *Content* below); however, it may be necessary to review and perhaps add to the this guide’s list of themes based on the history of a particular region. It will be important to prioritize topics for documentation (step 3), assess existing documentation in relation to the priorities (step 4), identify and prioritize actions to be taken (step 5), and prepare and distribute the plan (step 6). The criteria used in this guide for determining statewide priorities (page 16) can be used in two ways to guide prioritization at the regional or local level:

1. Local or regional topics that meet the criteria for statewide documentation should become local or regional priorities as well, for they will be contributing to filling statewide documentation gaps;
  2. Potential topics for documentation can also be evaluated using the criteria as applied to the region or locality. For example, has the topic “had major impact or influence” *region wide or locally?*
- **Content** This statewide guide provides a framework for thinking about the range of topics in Latino life and history in New York. The list of *Subjects* and *Themes* presented here should be used for regional/local documentation planning in conjunction with the *Criteria*. (See What To Document in Latino/Hispanic History, page 15.)

**The Archival Services staff at the New York State Archives can help people who are contemplating a regional or local Latino history and culture documentation project to think through the project and its relationship to the statewide guide. They can also provide guidance in seeking grant funding for documentation through the Documentary Heritage Program.** (See Sources of Funding and Assistance, page 28, and the contact information on page 29.)

## ***B: How the guide was developed — Documentation planning method***

At the heart of the process was the understanding that different organizations and groups— governments, businesses, non-profit and community organizations, ethnic groups, and individuals— and people in different regions of the state may have very different perspectives on their history and culture and different ways of thinking about and documenting their activities. No single group of archivists, scholars, or other experts could be expected to fairly represent the diversity of New York’s Hispanic populations in establishing statewide priorities for documentation.

Therefore, the State Archives worked with people from many regions and many sectors of the community—the people who create, care for, use, and are the subjects of historical records—to identify the issues, topics, events, organizations, and people that are most important to document in New York.

The method used to create the plan included the following steps:

- Conducting background research to identify critical developments, trends, events, functions, legislation, individuals, and organizations in New York’s history of Latino communities. The results of the research are summarized in the sixty-page report, “Latino Communities in New York State: An Historical Outline.”
- Defining topics and subtopics for potential documentation emphasis through dialogue with subject experts and individuals active in different facets of life and work within New York’s Latino communities.
- Identifying existing documentation to determine what historical records already exist for New York’s Latino communities in archives, libraries, and other repositories. A summary of the documentation assessment is provided in the "Preliminary Guide to Latino Documentary Sources in New York State."
- Consulting with the field for advice on identifying the major topics, issues, events and trends in Latino history and experience, establishing priorities for documentation, and locating important collections that might be in danger of being lost or destroyed. The process included numerous meetings and telephone conversations with individuals and a series of six regional meetings of eight to twelve people each, with representation from state and local government, non-profit organizations and activists, business, education, social services, religion, the arts and journalism, and repositories such as libraries and historical societies.
- Determining priority documentation needs by comparing existing documentation with the topic areas considered most important by people in the field and identifying the critical gaps in the historical record.

## Documentation Planning Methodology — Table

The following table summarizes the method used to develop this plan. Although the steps outlined below follow a logical sequence, they do not take place in strict chronological order. Several run concurrently, and the results of “earlier” steps are often revised on the basis of information gathered in “later” ones. This methodology is intended to be applicable to documentation planning in any topic area and at a statewide, regional, or local level.

<b>Documentation Planning Methodology</b>
<p><b>Step 1. Define documentation topic and determine its parameters.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Draft definition of the documentation topic and its parameters — the boundaries of the topic.</li><li>- Consult with subject experts, researchers, and records creators to develop and validate definition.</li></ul>
<p><b>Step 2. Conduct background research to determine documentary universe.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Identify significant developments, trends, events, functions, legislation, individuals, and organizations within defined parameters.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Prepare historical overview of topic from secondary sources</li><li>- Conduct preliminary online search of existing documentation</li></ul></li><li>- Consult with subject experts, researchers, and records creators for additional information and validation and on how to organize and subdivide the topic. (Use individual meetings, focus groups, email and phone as appropriate.)</li><li>- Develop a list of topics and subtopics that need to be documented.</li></ul>
<p><b>Step 3. Prioritize topics/subtopics.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Establish a project advisory group to provide formal advice on project progress.</li><li>- Define criteria and method for prioritizing topics and subtopics.</li><li>- Define documentation levels from minimal to extensive collecting</li><li>- Prioritize topics/subtopics according to criteria. Identify documentation levels for the topics/subtopics.</li><li>- Consult with subject experts, researchers, and records creators to refine and validate priorities.</li></ul>
<p><b>Step 4. Assess existing documentation in relation to priorities.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Compare existing documentation with priority topics and subtopics to identify documentation needs</li><li>- Define and identify documentation gaps and the levels of documentation needed to address them.</li><li>- Publish initial findings and solicit additions and corrections from readers</li></ul>
<p><b>Step 5. Identify and prioritize actions needed to address documentation needs.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Identify the most important steps to be taken, who should be involved, and how to begin implementation.</li><li>- Identify records creators and repositories as potential partners in action.</li><li>- Plan short- and long-term actions to address gaps in the documentary record.</li><li>- Take immediate action to save selected important and endangered records.</li></ul>
<p><b>Step 6. Prepare and distribute documentation plan.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Draft plan identifying priority areas for documentation, extent of documentation, key individuals/groups to be documented, potential partners, and actions needed to achieve documentation goals.</li><li>- Review plan with key contacts, including records creators, repositories, and users, to validate conclusions.</li><li>- Distribute and publicize the plan widely, particularly among constituent groups.</li></ul>

## ***C: Documentation Topics Framework — Summary***

### **New York Documentation Topics Framework Main Topic Headings**

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

**Agriculture**

**Arts, architecture, and culture**

**Business, commerce, industry, and manufacturing**

**Communications**

**Economic development and planning**

**Education**

**Environmental affairs and natural resources**

**Health**

**Labor and Occupations**

**Military**

**Politics, government and law**

**Populations and social activity**

**Public Safety**

**Recreation and leisure**

**Religion**

**Science and technology**

**Social reform and welfare**

**Transportation**

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