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ARCHIVAL REVIEW BOARD REPORT  
2016

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New York City Municipal Archives

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The Municipal Archives (MA) at the Department of Records and Information Services (DORIS) acquires, preserves, and provides access to City government records. Established in 1977, the department oversees more than 220,000 cubic feet of historical records and responds to approximately 59,000 reference requests annually.

The Archival collections begin with the New Amsterdam and Old Town records (circa 1645) and include Mayoral records, City Agency records such as the Almshouse collection dating from 1759, more than 2 million photographs, and the World Trade Center September 11<sup>th</sup> collection. The Archives serves world-wide researchers in academic, non-profit, corporate, and government sectors, as well as individuals documenting family history.

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# ACQUISITIONS

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- 18 Collections spanning 533 cubic ft. of records were acquired by the Archives. They include collections from Department of Probation and Commissioners records from the Office of Emergency Management, Department of Design and Construction, and the Department of Sanitation.
- Updated policies and procedures for transferring records and documenting the transfer and legal custody of collections was established.
- The Archives established an active Re-appraisal and Deaccession protocol in order to fulfil a basic tenet of archival practice for collections management. Following national standards and guidelines, the protocols will help to improve access to collections, assess and prioritize backlogs, and ensure compliance with our collecting policies.
- A detailed manual outlining the principles of Appraisals, Accessions, and Deaccessions was drafted and includes definitions, best– practices, and recommended workflows specific to our agency.

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# PRESERVATION

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- The Municipal Archives improved storage room conditions at 31 Chambers and at Bush Terminal by following procedures for assessment and evaluation of space conditions and requirements.
- The Conservation Unit began drafting updated policies and procedures for the laboratory.
- Initial steps were taken to establish an integrated pest management program within the Conservation Unit. Disaster recovery kits were deployed to each storage room at 31 Chambers.
- Two conservators restored and/or processed 37 books and over 820 maps as part of a library preservation project.



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# PROCESSING

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Each year, the Municipal Archives (MA) processes collections using a variety of factors to determine the priority order. These include researcher demand for the records, their preservation requirements, and the historical importance of the material. In 2016, we shifted our focus from traditional processing projects to preparing collections for online access. Nonetheless, we created access to over 5,000 cubic ft. of collections including the records of Mayor Bloomberg and the NYPD Surveillance Unit files.

The continuum below reflects five processing levels used by the Municipal Archives to gain intellectual and physical control of the collections.

Minimum Processing ----- Extensive Processing

<u>Processing Level</u>	<b>Collection Level</b>	<b>Series / Subseries Level</b>	<b>Folder Level (Expedited)</b>	<b>Folder Level (Traditional)</b>	<b>Item Level</b>
<u>Outcomes</u> (minimum product deliverables )	Collection Level Encoded Archival Description, brief box listing	Brief finding aid. Arrangement and scope and content notes with series/ subseries descriptions or box listings	Succinct finding aid with folder listings (abbreviated) or simple inventories. Repurpose existing descriptions	Finding aid includes folder lists, scope and content notes, historical notes. Folder titles are refined and standardized.	Detailed finding aid includes item lists or folder lists with explanatory notes.
<u>Rates</u> (number of processing hours required per/ cubic ft. )	Poor Condition: 1-3 Average Condition: 1-2 Excellent Condition: 1	Poor Condition: 4-6 Average Condition: 3-5 Excellent Condition: 2-3	Poor condition: 5-8 Average Condition: 6-9 Excellent Condition: 4-6	Poor condition: 9-14 Average Condition: 7-11 Excellent Condition: 5-8	Poor Condition: 12-17 Average Condition: 11-15 Excellent Condition: 8—12

# 2016 Processing Projects

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## Collection Level Processing

- ◇ New East River (Williamsburg) Bridge, Office of the Commissioner and Engineer, 4 cubic ft.
- ◇ Office of the Mayor, Michael R. Bloomberg Records, 2001-2012, Paper records only, 5,289 cubic ft.

## Folder Level (Expedited)

- ◇ Office of the Mayor, James J. Walker, 1926-1932  
48 cubic ft.
- ◇ New York Police Department, Intelligence Services Division, Handschu Records, 32 cubic ft. out of 520 cubic ft.

## Item Level Processing

- ◇ Records of the WPA Federal Writers' Project, New York City Unit, 1935-1943, 4 cubic ft.
- ◇ Board of Supervisors, NY County, County Substitute and Relief Committee, Soldier's Families Relief Applications and Accounts, 15 cubic ft.

Total Cubic Ft.: 5,392

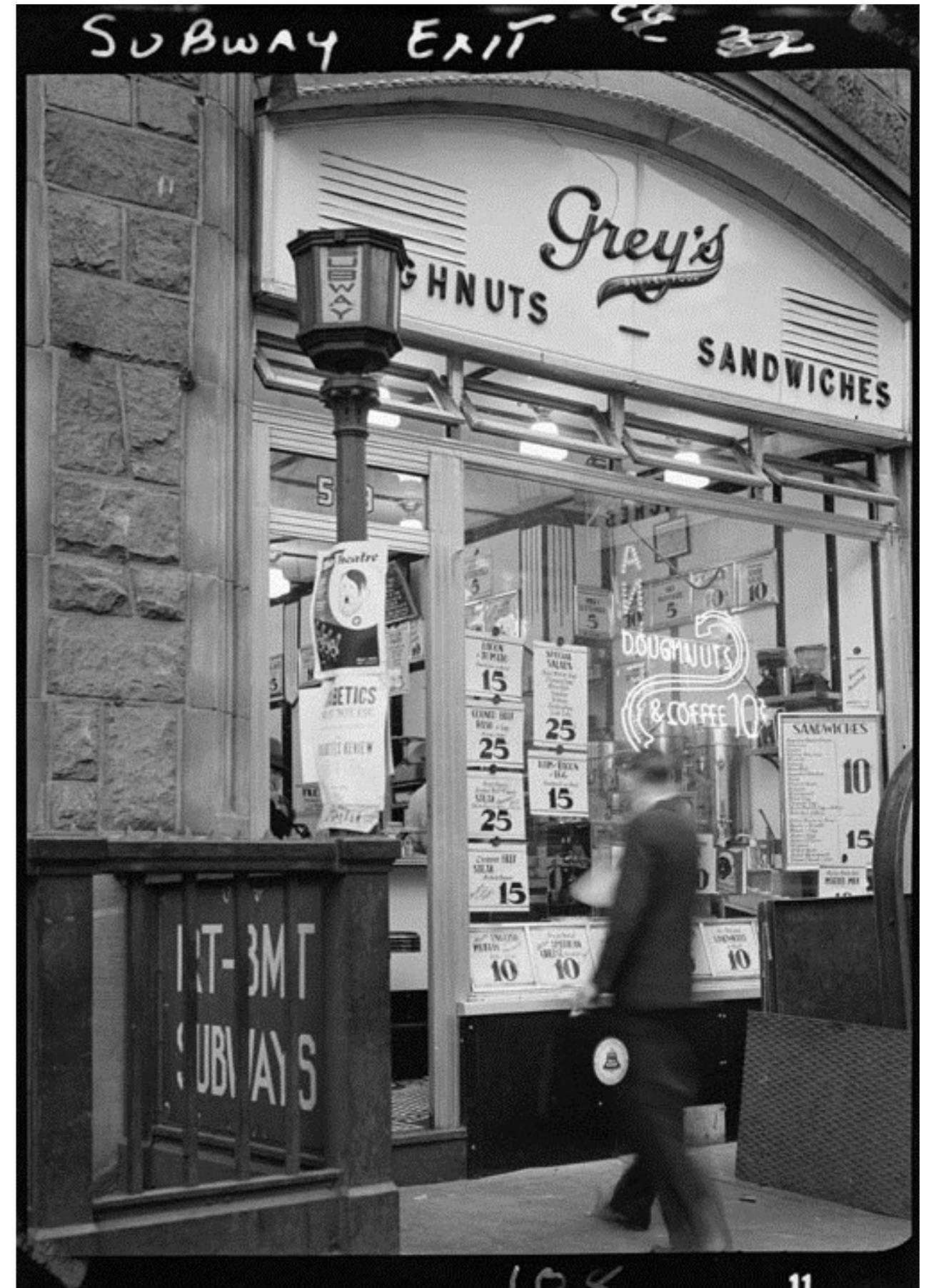


Construction of wooden caisson for New East River Bridge tower (Williamsburg Bridge), January 21, 1897.

# WPA FEDERAL WRITERS PROJECT



Washington Square Open Air Art Show, 1935-1941, WPA Federal Writers Project



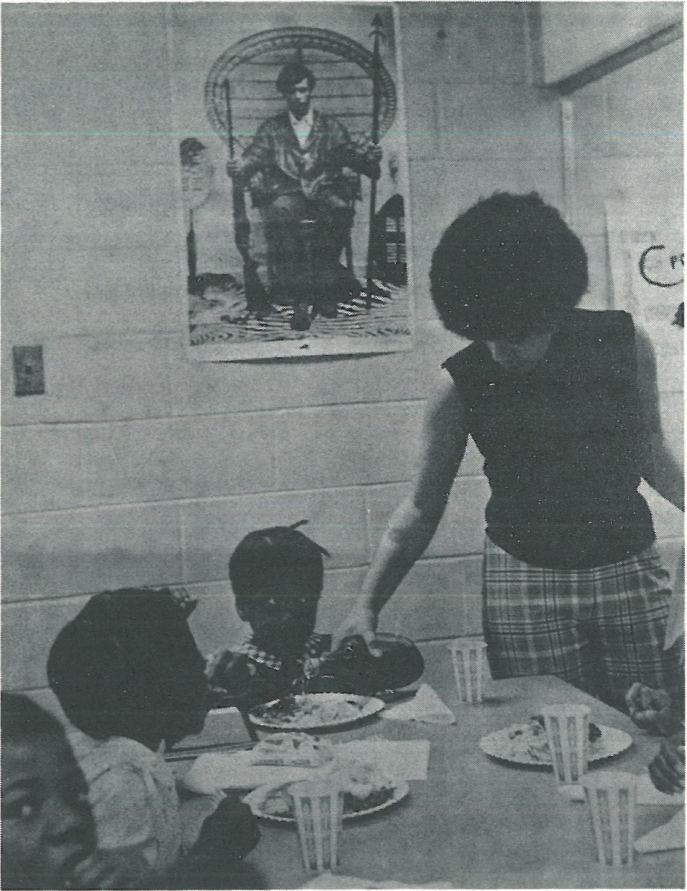
Subway Exit, 1935-1941, WPA Federal Writers Project



New York Police Department, Intelligence Services Division,  
Handschu Collection



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# ACCESS & OUTREACH

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- The Legacy Finding Aid project continues to be our main focus. This project began by reviewing over 3,000 inventories, finding aids, and incomplete collection descriptions in various databases, MS Word documents, spreadsheets, and both handwritten and typed paper inventories. In 2016, archivists updated descriptions to follow national industry standards for 152 series spanning 89 collections.
- A historical timeline covering 300+ City Government agencies and departments dating to the Dutch colonial period was created to document the initial and successor agencies names and titles, and the date spans of specific departments and divisions. This resource will ensure connections between collections, and help researchers conduct relevant, effective searches.
- The Archives supported content and production of four exhibits including, *Little Syria* (A collaboration with the Arab American National Museum); *Open House New York* (A collaboration with the Manhattan Borough President's Office); Photoville, a premier New York photography event at Brooklyn Bridge Park, in which the MA featured *Pretty Girl Charged with Clever Swindle: Women and Crime in Early 20th century New York City*, and a collaboration with the Department of Transportation's Shared Space Program featuring posters of noteworthy downtown landmarks and events from our collections.
- Plans to establish a joint Library & Archives Reading Room to improve security, preservation of materials, and increase access to collections began in the fall of 2016.
- The Municipal Archives also researched the history of 31 Chambers St. and began conducting building tours for the public.

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# DIGITAL PROJECTS

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- The Municipal Archives created a committee to conduct research and development for a digital preservation program that will support the ingest, preservation, and access to born digital and digitized assets.
- The City approved funding for the digitization of the Dept. of Finance Tax Photograph Collection spanning 720,000 images. Metadata creation for the collection began in May, 2016 and will continue into 2017 along with digitization.



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## **Archival Review Board**

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