

# NEH Application Cover Sheet

## Humanities Collections and Reference Resources

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**Field of Expertise:** History - American

### INSTITUTION

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New York City Department of Records  
New York, NY UNITED STATES

### APPLICATION INFORMATION

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**Title:** *New York District Attorney Case Files, 1916-1925, Preservation and Indexing Project*

**Grant Period:** From 7/2012 to 12/2013

**Field of Project:** History - American

**Description of Project:** The Municipal Archives requests Endowment support for a project to preserve and index approximately 51,500 New York District Attorney case files dating from July 1916 through 1925. The case file documents are currently housed in highly acidic envelope "jackets" that are extremely brittle and crumble when handled. Access to the information in the files is further hindered by the lack of a searchable index. The case files are a significant resource for a range of scholarly works on the history of the nation's largest city during a critical time period. The NYDA case file jackets will be photocopied; the case file documents will be re-housed in appropriate archival materials and stored in a climate-controlled environment. Project staff will also produce a name-and-offense-based database index to the series. Project activities will take place in-house over an eighteen-month time period between July 1, 2012, and December 31, 2013.

### BUDGET

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<b>Outright Request</b>	\$81,000.00	<b>Cost Sharing</b>	\$118,289.00
<b>Matching Request</b>	\$0.00	<b>Total Budget</b>	\$199,289.00
<b>Total NEH</b>	\$81,000.00		

### GRANT ADMINISTRATOR

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# **NEW YORK DISTRICT ATTORNEY CASE FILES, 1916-1925**

## **PRESERVATION AND INDEXING PROJECT**

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE**

The Municipal Archives requests Endowment support for a project to preserve and index approximately 51,500 New York District Attorney case files dating from July 1916 through 1925. The case files are currently housed in highly-acidic envelope “jackets” that are extremely brittle and crumble when handled. Access to the information in the files is further hindered by the lack of a searchable index.

The NYDA case files that are the subject of this proposal are a key series within the Municipal Archives’ collection of records pertaining to the administration of criminal justice, one of the most extensive resources on the subject in the English-speaking world. Their significance is demonstrated by the range of scholarly works that have been produced using this material and other related series. The NYDA case files provide scholars with unique information about daily life in the nation’s largest city during the inter-war years.

The NYDA case-file jackets will be photocopied in order to preserve the important information that had been recorded on them. The original jackets will be discarded (samples will be maintained as artifacts). The case-file documents will be re-housed in appropriate archival materials and stored in a climate-controlled environment. Project staff will also produce a name-and-offense-based database index to the series. The index will be made available to researchers via the Department of Records’ website. The proposed processing and indexing activities will be performed in the Municipal Archives conservation laboratory.

The project timetable is eighteen months, from July 1, 2012, to December 31, 2013. The project manager will be Archives Director Leonora Gidlund. Conservation laboratory supervisor Ellen Chin will supervise a conservation assistant (to-be-hired) and a research assistant from the Municipal Archives staff in carrying out the proposed work plan.

The total amount requested from the NEH is \$81,000. The Department will make a significant in-kind contribution of \$118,289; more than 59% of the project total of \$199,289.

**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF RECORDS  
MUNICIPAL ARCHIVES**

**NEW YORK DISTRICT ATTORNEY CASE FILES, 1916-1925  
PRESERVATION AND INDEXING PROJECT**

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### 3. NARRATIVE

*"The DA cases are the best source for the writing of social and cultural history that I have ever seen. No other American city has a set of sources that comes close to being as good."*<sup>1</sup>

*Shane White, Professor of History, The University of Sydney*

#### ○ Significance

The Municipal Archives' collections of records pertaining to the administration of criminal justice constitute one of the most extensive research resources on the subject in North America. They currently total more than 20,000 cubic feet, and date from 1684 through 1984. The Archives is committed to preserving and making these records available for study. Beginning in 1990, with generous support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Archives has preserved and improved access to a significant portion of this valuable resource, including most of the pre-1900 material.

The proposed project is a continuation of this on-going effort. It will address the unique preservation problem of the New York District Attorney (NYDA) closed case files dating from July 1916 through 1925. Prior to 1916, the District Attorney's file clerks routinely "tri-folded" all the documents pertaining to a case; tied them together with a ribbon tape, and stored them as a small packet in special metal drawers. This practice appears to have dated back to at least the late-eighteenth century (and the subsequent humidification and flattening activities have kept the Archives' paper conservators busy for the last twenty years).

Beginning in July 1916, the file clerks adopted a new procedure. Instead of folding the case-file documents, they placed them in individual paper case-file envelopes, or "jackets". They recorded important information about the case on the jacket. The good news is that the documents within the paper jackets are flat and in relatively good condition. The bad news is that the jackets are exceedingly acidic and brittle. They crumble at the slightest touch with a consequent loss of important information. Historian Shane White, who has reviewed thousands of cases, summed it up most succinctly: "Using these files was a nightmare."<sup>2</sup>

#### Importance of the project

The NYDA closed case files are a key series in the Municipal Archives collection of records related to the administration of criminal justice. The argument for the importance of the proposed preservation and indexing activities is best demonstrated by the value of the records to scholars who have already used them for a variety of projects.

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<sup>1</sup> Shane White, Challis Professor of History, History Department, University of Sydney, Australia, Letter of Support, July 11, 2011 (see Appendix 1. for complete text).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., White, Letter of Support, July 11, 2011

Historians Shane White, Stephen Garton, Stephen Robertson and Graham White thoroughly mined the data in the closed case files for their recent scholarly publication, *“Playing the Numbers: Gambling in Harlem between the Wars”*.<sup>3</sup> They examined every case file for the years 1916, 1917, 1920, 1925, 1928 and 1930. The NYDA records provided unique information that helped them to illuminate the lives of not just the black artists and the black middle class, but the lives of ordinary African-Americans during the period when the arrival of migrants from the south and the West Indies transformed Harlem into the greatest black city in the world. The pages of statements from the victims of crime, and witnesses to crime, found within the files enabled the authors to hear black language and music and to paint a picture of family life.<sup>4</sup>

In order to more fully exploit the tremendous quantity of data the authors amassed during their research in the NYDA case files, they created an interactive website, “Digital Harlem”. This innovative website has won awards from the American Historical Association and the American Library Association, and has made an important contribution to not only the historiography of African-American culture, but also new scholarship about twentieth-century America.

One of the team from Sydney, historian Stephen Robertson, had explored the NYDA files for his earlier work, *“Crimes Against Children: Sexual Violence and Legal Culture in New York City, 1880-1960”*.<sup>5</sup> In a letter of support for the proposed project, Professor Robertson remarked that the “. . . truly unique scale and scope” of this series provided information not available in other records. “They revealed the practices . . . of private social agencies in investigating cases and shaping the law and its implementation, and the influence of juries and grand juries in nullifying and limited effort to prosecute cases involving adolescent girls.”<sup>6</sup>

The value of similar NYDA case files from an earlier time period has been amply demonstrated by numerous scholars investigating a variety of topics in American history. Much of this scholarship became possible only after the Municipal Archives produced a searchable database index to the case files. Carolyn B. Ramsey, Associate Professor of Law, University of Colorado at Boulder used the index to pre-1894 NYDA felony indictments to identify and examine every homicide case file for two important articles: *The Discretionary Power of “Public” Prosecutors in Historical Perspective* (American Criminal Law Review, vol. 39, 2002), the first legal history of public prosecution in New York City, and *Intimate Homicide: Gender and Crime Control, 1880-1920* (University of Colorado Law Review, vol. 77, 2006),

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<sup>3</sup> White, Garton, Robertson and White, *“Playing the Numbers: Gambling in Harlem Between the Wars”* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1910).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., White, Letter of Support, July 11, 2011

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Robertson, *“Crimes Against Children: Sexual Violence and Legal Culture in New York City, 1880-1960”* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Robertson, Associate Professor of History, The University of Sydney, Australia, Letter of Support, July 14, 2011.

which won the Jules Milstein Faculty Writing Award at the University of Colorado in 2007. The latter paper, comparing public responses to intimate-partner homicide in New York and Colorado during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, forms the basis for her current book-in-progress, *Houses of Pain: A Legal History of Intimate-Partner Violence*.

Lisa Keller's *Triumph of Order: Democracy of Space in New York and London* (Columbia University Press, 2009), is another recent scholarly work that made use of the NYDA records. This book, along with others by authors such as Helen Horowitz, Eric Monkkonen, Iver Bernstein, George Chauncey, Jr., Daniel Czitrom, Paul Gilje, Max Page, Christine Stansell, Shane White, and Sean Wilentz, all of whom used the Archives' district attorney records, have dramatically altered the treatment of New York in U.S. history classes. They have, in the words of Kenneth T. Jackson, "... helped spur a flowering of insights and innovation regarding New York City's past."<sup>7</sup>

Some years ago, historian Peter G. Buckley, Associate Professor of History at The Cooper Union, noted that "The great political and literary figures in New York have an assured place in history but the average run of folk only appear to become part of the historical record when they are touched [by] the long arm of the law in some fashion."<sup>8</sup> This statement expresses another one of the essential research values of the NYDA records. There simply is no other written evidence of the great majority of the city's citizens. These files provide a remarkably intimate, at times even dramatic, picture of life in the nation's largest city, albeit in a criminal context.

#### Nature, size, intellectual content

The intellectual content of the NYDA records provides traditional scholars and students, as well as researchers from many disciplines, a unique opportunity to examine both the larger historical trends as well as the personal stories of the inter-war time period. The records to be preserved and indexed consist of the case files created by the New York County (Manhattan) district attorney's office for felony trials in the Court of General Sessions, from July 1916 through 1925. They total 572 cubic feet.

The felony trial court's origins date back to fourteenth-century England when the traditional "justices of the peace" were required to hear more serious offenses in meetings held four specific times a year, which came to be called general or quarter sessions. The adoption of this basically English institution established such rights as trial by jury and the use of the grand jury as part of New York's legal system at least as early as 1691. The basic forms and procedures remained relatively unchanged over the next three centuries.

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<sup>7</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, Jacques Barzun Professor of History, Columbia University, as quoted by Glenn Collins in "In 3 Million Pounds of History, View of Day-to-Day New York," The New York Times, July 2, 2001, page 1.

<sup>8</sup> Peter G. Buckley, Associate Professor of History, The Cooper Union, letter to Municipal Archives director, May 17, 1994.

Beginning in the nineteenth century, and extending until 1962, an individual accused of any crime, whether misdemeanor or felony, would have been brought by the police to the nearest police or magistrate's court. For misdemeanors, the justice of that court was empowered to question the defendant and to render a judgment, i.e. fine, discharge, or incarceration.

When a defendant was accused of a felony, the lower court justice referred the case to the district attorney who presented the evidence to a grand jury and sought a formal indictment. The district attorney was also empowered to bring a case directly to the grand jury. If the grand jury voted to indict, the defendant would be held for trial in the Court of General Sessions.

The NYDA case files selected for preservation and indexing consist of the "files" or papers, produced over the course of the felony indictment process during the period July 1916 through 1925. Each file pertains to a particular defendant who had been accused of a felony.

The case file jacket serves as a cover sheet for the succeeding items in the file. The information on the jacket varies somewhat over the period 1916 to 1925, but most include the name of the defendant, complaint number, dates of complaint and indictment and the offense. It also provides information about the disposition of the case including the court "part" number, and indication whether (and when) the defendant plead guilty, forfeited bail, had been discharged, or if the indictment had been dismissed and/or the date of conviction. It also records the name of the presiding judge and the assistant attorney responsible for the case.

The documents within the case jacket include the formal indictment (usually a printed form with the details of the offense added), statements by the arresting police officer; witness statements, notes and memorandums prepared by the district attorney, as well as documents produced in the lower criminal court.

The lower court documents typically include the defendant's plea statement. The form consists of a series of questions that the clerk would ask of the defendant: "What is your name? How old are you? Where were you born? Where do you live? What is your occupation?" And finally, "Have you anything to say, and if so, what relative to the charge here preferred against you?" The answer is usually "I am not guilty." The court clerk records the answers and the defendant signs the document. Other documents generated during the arraignment process in the lower court such as the original "complaint" filed by a police officer, the victim of the crime, or an officer of an organization such as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Other items that can be found in the files include trial transcripts, grand jury hearing transcripts, coroner's inquests, and items of evidence such as photographs, marriage certificates, business cards, and bankbooks. These documents provide the rich descriptive information that researchers often find the most rewarding.

Sample documents from a 1923 case, the people vs. Harry Weinberger (and several other defendants) are appended to the application. This notorious trial of theatre-owner Weinberger, accused of staging an "immoral" play on Broadway, elicited both letters of condemnation and support (including one from novelist Fannie Hurst), all dutifully filed by the DA's clerks. The badly deteriorated case file jacket is a good example of the problem this application is designed to address. (See Appendix 2, Sample Documents.)

The types of cases found in this series include indictments for dozens of offenses ranging from abandoning a child to voting illegally and every other possible felony: bigamy, fraud, libel, homicide, rape, forgery, arson, manslaughter, poisoning, rioting, embezzlement, kidnaping, and perjury, to name a few. The more routine larceny, assault, and robbery are very well represented.

What may not be evident from this description of the records is the level of detail concerning daily life illustrated by the written account of the circumstances of a crime. The description also does not serve to convey the emotions and passions that are revealed in the records. In describing their sources, authors White, Stephenson, Garton and White noted that the papers illuminate the lives of ordinary people: “Rather than hardened criminals, most of those who appear in these records are ordinary Harlemites who had been caught once breaking the law, usually acting out of desperation or poverty. The files also shed light on the lives of witnesses and others only incidentally involved in the alleged crime.”<sup>9</sup>

The large quantity of these records suggests that criminal activity was a significant and unfortunate fact of life in New York City at that time. However, the records that are the written legacy of that world now provide a windfall for scholars and other researchers today as they seek to explain the past. By preserving these records we hope to ensure their survival for future historians as well.

#### *Relationship to similar collections within and external to the institution*

The NYDA closed-case-files series are a key component of a larger collection of records held by the Municipal Archives pertaining to the administration of criminal justice. They relate to the following major series within the overall collection (unless otherwise noted, the records pertain to New York County/Manhattan):

- Minutes of the Court of General Sessions, 1684-1920
- Felony (a.k.a. District Attorney) indictments, 1790-1895
- Dismissed felony indictments, 1844-1900
- Police and Magistrate Court docket books (all Boroughs), 1790-1949
- District Attorney's newspaper clipping scrapbooks, 1881-1937
- District Attorney's official correspondence (letter press volumes), 1881-1937

The NYDA case-file records are unique. Only one other related series is known to exist, the felony trial transcripts that cover the time period available on microfilm in the library of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice (CUNY). However, it should be noted that there are relatively few trial transcripts extant; they were produced only if the defendant paid for it, or if the case was appealed.

Other major American cities do not maintain felony indictment records in the quantities available at Municipal Archives. Historian Timothy Gilfoyle has written that “. . . it is not an exaggeration to say that the manuscript records of the district attorney and police courts of New

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., White, Letter of Support, July 11, 2011.



York are the most extensive and best preserved criminal records of any municipality in the United States, and possibly the English-speaking world.”<sup>10</sup>

*Rationale for focusing on this particular source and selection criteria*

As previously indicated, the NYDA closed-case files from July 1916 through 1925 have been made a priority due to the exceedingly fragile condition of the case-file jackets. Without the proposed copying and re-housing measures, the information on the jackets will be irretrievably lost and case-file documents within the jackets will continue to deteriorate from acid migration. Patron access to the material is severely compromised in its current condition. In the words of Professor White: “Using the files from 1916 to 1925 at the moment is very, very difficult—and the chances are very good that anyone using this material will permanently damage it.”<sup>11</sup>

*Actual and anticipated use; new audiences*

As noted in the discussion of the collection’s research value, the NYDA closed cases have been drawn upon extensively for numerous scholarly works. In addition, the case files have value as an educational tool. They have proved particularly fruitful for dissertations, articles, and other research products. Recent examples include:

- Karen Brennan, School of Law, Queens University, Belfast, Ireland, article, “*Infanticide in New York City, 1910-1950*”;
- Leigh-Anne Francis, Mount Holyoke College, dissertation, “*Women Prisoners, Auburn, New York, 1893-1916*”;
- Sydney McKinney, term paper, “*African-American Girls in Court, 1890 -1920*”;
- Jennifer D. Jones, Princeton, dissertation, “*Same Sex Relationships Among African Americans, 1900-1945*”;
- Deborah Heiligman, New York, N.Y., biography, “*Mary Sullivan, New York City’s First Female Police Officer*”.

Thanks to widespread availability of digitized newspapers, such as *The New York Times*, the NYDA case files have also become a valuable research resource for new audiences, such as history-related television documentarians, and researchers pursuing family-history projects. With the newspaper indexes easily searchable by name, patrons can now access case files of family members that previously would have been exceedingly difficult to identify. Armed with the name of a defendant and a date of the criminal transgression (usually from a newspaper article), these patrons are rewarded with unique and detailed information about their subject.

In the same way that scholars appreciate the case files for the ancillary information they provide about the subject of criminal prosecution, for family-history researchers, it is not necessarily the criminal offenses that are of interest, but rather the other details about the

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<sup>10</sup>Timothy J. Gilfoyle, Assistant Professor of History, Loyola University Chicago, e-mail message, June 30, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. White, Letter of Support, July 11, 2011.

defendants, their families, residences, occupations, possessions—information typically found in the files—that is so valuable and not available from any other source. The experience of Dr. Ruth Bridgens, an English academic, is typical. As part of a family history project she contacted the Municipal Archives inquiring whether the collection contained any information about the murder trial of one of her ancestors, John Popoff. Municipal Archives staff easily located the file (which included a trial transcript), and sent a copy to Dr. Bridgens, to her immense delight. In thanking the Archives staff for their assistance, Dr. Bridgens wrote of her findings, “. . . so those are the mysteries I have been trying to solve, ordinary family secrets!”<sup>12</sup>

### ○ **History, Scope and Duration**

The NYDA closed-case files from 1916 through 1925 have not previously received financial support. However, they do comprise part of a larger series within the Municipal large body of holdings of records related to the administration of criminal justice that have received grant funding. Beginning in 1990, with significant and on-going support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Archives embarked on a program to ensure long-term preservation and to provide greater access for selected series in the collection. The following is a brief description of the work already accomplished.

1) *PS-20301-90*. Completed in December 1992, over the course of this project the Municipal Archives microfilmed 1,115,841 images on 1,490 rolls of 35mm silver-halide microfilm. The Archives preserved the Minutes of the Court of General Sessions, 1664-1920, the Police Court and Magistrate's Court Docket Books, 1799-1930, and the New York County District Attorney's Official Correspondence (carbon copies), 1881-1937.

2) *PS-20602-93*. Beginning in April 1993 and completed in October 1995, the Municipal Archives microfilmed the New York County Court of General Sessions/District Attorney indictment papers, 1822-1879. Project staff produced 571,795 images on 444 rolls of 35mm silver-halide microfilm (the indictment papers from 1790-1822 had been previously microfilmed by the Municipal Archives).

3) *PS-21067-95*. The Archives preserved three series of police court documents: calendar of prisoners, 1829-1839, recognizances, 1817-1844, and cases dismissed, 1808-1856, totaling 338,992 images on 256 rolls of 35mm silver-halide microfilm. In addition, the felony indictments from 1879-1893 were processed and indexed.

4) *PA-50767-04*. The Archives preserved New York County grand jury dismissed indictments, 1844-1899, on 271 rolls of silver-halide 35mm microfilm, and produced a database index of 53,487 cases. The preservation activities began in 2004 and were completed in 2006.

5) *PW-50579-10*. This project continues the work began under *PS-21067-95*, re-formatting the materials that had been processed and indexed. After one year in a twenty-four-month timetable, Archives staff have microfilmed 257,624 documents on 263 rolls of silver-

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<sup>12</sup> Ruth Bridgens, Chilternham, Wilshire, UK, e-mail message, December 28, 2008.

halide microfilm. The workplan calls for digitization of the microfilm to provide enhanced access to the intellectual content of the collection.

The Archives continues to accession related collections from the criminal courts and district attorneys. In 2007, the Archives transferred 2,641 cubic feet comprising the New York County District Attorney's closed-case files from 1973 through 1978. More recently, in early 2009, the district attorney unexpectedly released to the Archives their homicide bureau docket books, 1930-1984. Information in this series is arranged by name of victim—a very useful tool for researchers.

### ○ **Methodology and Standards**

Copying the information on the NYDA case-file jackets and re-housing the documents inside the jacket has been chosen as a practical and economical means of stabilizing the material and insuring its long-term survival. The proposed indexing activities will greatly expand scholarly access to the material.

#### *Preserving the case-file-jacket information*

The Municipal Archives has chosen a simple and straight-forward methodology to preserve the information on the deteriorating case-file jackets. Project staff will carefully remove case-file documents from the brittle jackets. The jackets will be photocopied onto legal-size acid/lignin-free bond paper and then discarded. The jackets will be photocopied at a 20% reduction in size in order to capture all the information from the jackets (which measure 9 ½" x 15") on the slightly smaller legal-size paper (8 ½" x 14") paper. Staff will take care during this process to avoid further loss of information from the jackets. They will take appropriate precautions when handling case-file jackets that show signs of water damage. A selection of original jackets will be encapsulated and maintained as sample artifacts, suitable for future exhibition or other uses.

Project staff will review the case-file documents removed from the jackets for other potential preservation problems and treat them accordingly. For example, exceptionally fragile items such as newsprint, or telegrams, will be photocopied onto acid/lignin-free paper. Oversize items will be separated and stored in appropriate materials. Photographs and other non-paper media will also be separated and housed accordingly. It should be noted that the purpose of the project is to stabilize and maintain the bulk of materials in a stable environment and only those in the most imminent danger will receive any significant conservation treatment treatments.

#### *Re-housing the case files*

The photocopied jackets and the corresponding case-file documents will be placed in archival acid/lignin-free folders. The original arrangement scheme, by complaint number, will be maintained. The folders will be labeled appropriately and placed into acid/lignin-free one-half-cubic-foot-size archival storage containers. The containers will be placed on shelves in a secure storage area with appropriate climate controls.

### Indexing the case files

In order to expand and improve access to the NYDA case files, project staff will produce a name-and-offense-based index to the series. Staff will enter the name of the defendant (and alias, if applicable), offense, date of indictment, complaint number, and box and folder number into an Access database.

### Intellectual property and privacy issues

Chapter 72 of the New York City Charter grants to the Department of Records and Information Services the authority to “preserve and receive all city records of historical, research, cultural or other important value.” The Charter also directs that the Department shall “establish and maintain an archives depository for the storage, conservation, processing and servicing of records.” Based on this authority, the Municipal Archives has accessioned district attorney records in order to ensure permanent preservation and public access.

The Municipal Archives assumes all responsibility for the disposition of records upon formal accession, including processing priorities, access, and reformatting, as well as the authority to grant permission to quote from, and/or reproduce materials in the collection. The Municipal Archives assumes this responsibility with respect to the NYDA records that are the subject of this proposal.

### Present physical condition

Municipal Archives conservation laboratory supervisor Ellen Chin conducted a survey of NYDA case files from several containers throughout the period July 1916 through 1925. The following description summarizes her findings: the NYDA case files are housed in acidic, brittle envelopes (jackets); pH levels range from 3.8 to 4.0; having a fold endurance of zero. The documents within the envelopes are early-twentieth-century rag paper, or mass-produced, hot-pressed short-fibered paper. The papers are usually off-white or blue, in a wide range of sizes, generally no larger than legal-size. Printed forms are frequently filled in using ink (black or blue) or a combination of ink, graphite, and type; statements are usually typed. Red stamp receipts are also seen on occasion. Documents show signs of staining due to acid-migration from the jackets. On the whole, however, the documents in the case-file envelopes are in overall good condition. The one exception are the case files from 1925 which have apparently suffered water damage at some time in the past as evidenced by water spots, inactive mold discoloration, mild fusing of pages, and rusted fasteners.

In conclusion, Ms. Chin determined that continued handling of NYDA case files in their original brittle acidic jackets will lead to physical damage, and loss of information. To ensure the long-term preservation of the material and to allow for access, she recommends removing the case-file documents from the jackets, copying the jackets to acid-free paper, and rehousing the material in appropriate containers.

*Present level of intellectual control*

The NYDA case files are arranged numerically according to their unique “complaint” numbers. The complaint number had been assigned when the DA issued the indictment. The complaint numbering system began in 1896 with case number “1” and continued through no. 234227 in 1942. After 1942, the cases are numbered consecutively starting with “1” each year. The case files that are the subject of this proposal number range from #111001 (July 1916) to #162500 in 1925 (51,500 cases, total). The finding guide to the collection consists of a box-level inventory listing the complaint number range within each container.

In order to locate a case file, a researcher must determine the complaint number using the NYDA’s “Record of Cases,” a.k.a. the DA’s docket books. Maintained on an annual basis, the docket book series also dates back to 1896. The cases are listed in the docket books alphabetically, according to the first three letters of the defendant’s surname, and thereunder chronologically. The Record of Cases provides a brief history of each felony prosecution, in summary format, from date of indictment through conviction. The Record of Cases has been microfilmed.

Although the Record of Cases has proved an essential and useful tool to locate specific cases, they do not provide the level of access required for most scholarly research. When a researcher has knowledge of the name of the defendant and a date of indictment (most often from a newspaper account), the case can be located fairly quickly. But more frequently, this information is not known. Many scholarly researchers are looking for a type of offense, (e.g. homicide, arson, etc.), not necessarily a specific case. Researchers who have attempted to scan the docket books searching for a particular type of prosecution have found it to be nearly impossible due to the volume of cases and the format of the docket books. Furthermore, access to the docket books requires a visit to the Municipal Archives facility (or a request for the microfilm via ILL).

*Manner in which material will be organized and method of discovery*

The original arrangement scheme, according to complaint number, will be maintained. The proposed indexing activities will greatly facilitate access to the NYDA case files. The database will enable researchers to quickly search for and identify relevant case files.

*Storage and environmental conditions and provisions for use*

The NYDA case files from July 1916 through 1925 have been stored in a warehouse facility in Brooklyn since the Municipal Archives accessioned them in the 1970s. The Brooklyn warehouse is secure but the space does not have environmental controls.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The City agency responsible for leasing (the Brooklyn warehouse is a leased facility) recognizes that archival materials have particular environmental requirements and is currently negotiating to move the Municipal Archives off-site storage into a new space with climate control.

Once processed, the case files will be stored and made available for use at the Archives headquarters facility on Chambers Street in Manhattan. The storage rooms in the Chambers Street building are secure, protected from dust and pollutants, and ventilated by a central air-conditioning system that operates continuously. Hygrothermographs are placed in each storage room to monitor temperature and humidity levels. Analysis of temperature readings over the last year shows that they are reasonably consistent, ranging from 64 to 72 degrees Fahrenheit. Humidity levels are fairly constant on a daily and weekly basis, but fluctuate on a seasonal basis. The building engineers are on-site and monitor the system 24 hours-a-day. They are very responsive to requests for modifications, given the limitations of the equipment.

○ **Sustainability of project outcomes and digital content**

As described in the Methodology section, the NYDA case files that are the subject of this proposal will be maintained in perpetuity in the secure climate-controlled Municipal Archives facility on Chambers Street. The Municipal Archives is also committed to the long-term preservation of its digital assets including the database index that will be produced over the course of the proposed project. Agency protocol requires that workstation hard-drives are backed-up to servers on a daily or weekly basis; the servers are backed-up to an off-site location on a weekly basis.

○ **Dissemination**

The Municipal Archives website [www.nyc.gov/records](http://www.nyc.gov/records) will serve as the primary conduit for serving the research community. Thanks to the ever-growing popularity of its collections, the Municipal Archives website currently receives over 50,000 visitors each month. The agency website is undergoing reconstruction to accommodate access to interactive systems such as the searchable database that will be produced over the course of this project. The site will contain complete information about how to search and use the NYDA collection. Access to the website is free-of-charge to the public.

To further disseminate information about the NYDA collection, notices will be submitted to appropriate newsletters of such scholarly associations as the New York Academy of History, a new group of urban historians recently formed by Columbia University Professor Kenneth Jackson. The interest of the general public in the collection will also be recognized by publicity efforts through the media, by public demonstrations by Archives staff, and by presentations to groups who visit the Archives facility.

The records that are the subject of this project are public records. They are available for use by all researchers and no special permission is required to quote from them in scholarly publications or humanities programs. Users of the records are requested to cite the source and to credit the Municipal Archives.

## ○ **Work Plan**

The proposed work plan is to process and index the NYDA case files in the Municipal Archives' paper conservation laboratory.

### Task 1: Copying the acidic jackets

Project staff will carefully remove each case file jacket and its contents from the storage container. The case file documents will be separated from the jacket enclosure. The jacket will be photocopied on acid/lignin-free legal-size paper. The original jacket will be discarded (samples will be maintained as artifacts). Project staff will photocopy other fragile material such as newspaper clippings when encountered within the case-file jackets. Oversize items, photographs, and other non-paper items will be separated and re-housed appropriately.

### Task 2: Re-housing the case files

The case documents will be filed in acid/lignin-free folders according to their original filing scheme by complaint number. The folders will be stored in acid-free containers. Each case will be separated by the copied case-file jacket. The containers will be stored securely in a space with environmental controls.

### Task 3: Indexing

As the final step in processing the NYDA case files, information about each case will be entered into an Access database. The database will have seven fields as follows: surname of defendant, first name, offense (crime), date of indictment, folder number, box number, and location.

### Schedule of Work

Project Timetable: July 1, 2012 – December 31, 2013 (18 months)

### Prior to Grant Period (May to July 2012)

Project staff anticipate that it may be necessary to recruit the conservation assistant position and will do so prior to commencement of the grant period. The hiring process is unpredictable and time-consuming; every effort will be made to engage the appropriate personnel prior to the grant period in order to keep the project on schedule. Project manager Leonora Gidlund and conservation laboratory supervisor Ellen Chin will recruit, interview and hire the appropriate personnel.

Ms. Chin will purchase any needed supplies. She will arrange for transfer of case file containers from the off-site facility to the Archives' conservation laboratory. She will create the Access database structure.

Commencing July 1, 2012

Ms. Chin will provide any necessary training to the conservation assistant. She will establish procedures and provide guidance as the assistant begins the processing and re-housing activities. Based on sample processing, project staff can be expected to maintain productivity of approximately 132 case files per day. The conservation assistant, and a Municipal Archives assistant archivist will enter case file information into the Access database. With an estimated total of 51,500 cases, these project activities will be completed in eighteen months.

Quarterly Productivity Benchmarks

<u>Quarter</u>	<u>Cases re-housed (total)</u>
Sept. 30, 2012	8,583
Dec. 31, 2012	17,166
March 31, 2013	25,750
June 30, 2013	34,333
Sept. 30, 2013	42,916
Dec. 31, 2013	51,500

Commencing December 2013

In the last month of the project, the Project manager will prepare and submit the final report to the Endowment. Information about the project will also be disseminated to inform a wide audience about the NYDA case files.

○ **Staff**

1. Project Manager, Archives Director, Leonora Gidlund, 3% time, 18 months. [in-kind contribution]

Mrs. Gidlund has been associated with the Municipal Archives for over twenty-five years and has been director since January 2005. Previously, she served as Deputy Director beginning in 1990. Mrs. Gidlund has managed numerous grant-funded projects. She will provide overall supervision and guidance; specific duties include staff recruitment, monitoring project progress, liaison with Department of Records administrative and executive staff, and preparation and submission of NEH performance reports.

2. Conservation Laboratory Supervisor, Ellen Chin, 15% time, 18 months. [in-kind contribution]

Ms. Chin has served as conservation laboratory supervisor since 1992. She has extensive experience with the range of historical materials in the Archives and has supervised several grant-funded and collaborative projects. Her primary responsibility will be to supervise, train, and provide guidance to the conservation assistant. She will directly complete any complex treatments that are found to be necessary.



3. Conservation Assistant (to-be-hired), 100% time, 18 months.

In accordance with the plan of work, a conservation assistant will be hired to carry out the preservation and indexing activities described in the workplan. Under direct and continuous supervision of Ms. Chin, the conservation assistant will remove case file documents from the deteriorating jackets, photocopy the jackets, and place the materials in appropriate archival storage containers. The conservation assistant will make minor conservation repairs to case-file documents as needed. The conservation assistant will also input case-file information into the Access index database.

4. Research Assistant (Municipal Archives staff), 75% time, 15 months. [in-kind contribution]

A research assistant, assigned from Municipal Archives staff, will assist the conservation assistant with data input. The research assistant will read the case file jackets and enter defendant, date, offense and complaint number information into an Access database.

## 4. History of Grants

The NYDA closed case files from 1916 through 1925 have not previously received financial support.

However, they do comprise part of a larger series within the Municipal large body of holdings of records related to the administration of criminal justice that have received grant funding. Beginning in 1990, with significant and on-going support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Archives embarked on a program to ensure long-term preservation and to provide greater access for selected series in the collection. The following is a brief description of the work already accomplished.

1) *PS-20301-90*. Completed in December 1992, over the course of this project the Municipal Archives microfilmed 1,115,841 images on 1,490 rolls of 35mm silver-halide microfilm. The Archives preserved the Minutes of the Court of General Sessions, 1664-1920, the Police Court and Magistrate's Court Docket Books, 1799-1930, and the New York County District Attorney's Official Correspondence (carbon copies), 1881-1937.

2) *PS-20602-93*. Beginning in April 1993 and completed in October 1995, the Municipal Archives microfilmed the New York County Court of General Sessions/District Attorney indictment papers, 1822-1879. Project staff produced 571,795 images on 444 rolls of 35mm silver-halide microfilm (the indictment papers from 1790-1822 had been previously microfilmed by the Municipal Archives).

3) *PS-21067-95*. The Archives preserved three series of police court documents: calendar of prisoners, 1829-1839, recognizances, 1817-1844, and cases dismissed, 1808-1856, totaling 338,992 images on 256 rolls of 35mm silver-halide microfilm. In addition, the felony indictments from 1879-1893 were processed and indexed.

4) *PA-50767-04*. The Archives preserved New York County grand jury dismissed indictments, 1844-1899, on 271 rolls of silver-halide 35mm microfilm, and produced a database index of 53,487 cases. The preservation activities began in 2004 and were completed in 2006.

5) *PW-50579-10*. This project continues the work began under *PS-21067-95*, re-formatting the materials that had been processed and indexed. After one year in a twenty-four-month timetable, Municipal Archives staff have microfilmed 257,624 documents on 263 rolls of silver-halide microfilm. The workplan calls for digitization of the microfilm to provide enhanced access to the intellectual content of the collection.

## 5. List of Participants

The proposed NYC Department of Records/Municipal Archives project does not have participants, consultants, or advisers from outside the Department. Letters of Support for the proposed project have been received from the following scholars. Copies of their letters are appended (appendix 1).

1. Shane White, Challis Professor of History, Australian Professional Fellow, Department of History, The University of Sydney, Australia
2. Stephen Robertson, Associate Professor of History, Coordinator, American Studies Program, The University of Sydney, Australia
3. LaShawn Harris, Provost Visiting Assistant Professor of History, Department of History, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan

# NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

Sample Budget Form (rev. 6/2011)

Applicant Institution: NYC Dept. of  
Records/Archives  
Project Director: Leonora Gidlund

[Instructions \(4-page PDF\)](#)

	Computational Details/Notes	(notes)	Year 1 7/1/2012 - 6/30/2013	(notes)	Year 2 7/1/2013 - 12/31/2013	(notes)	Year 3	Project Total
<b>1. Salaries &amp; Wages</b>								
Project Director Leonora Gidlund	Annual Salary (b) (6)	3%	(b) (6)	2%	(b) (6)			(b) (6)
Cons. Unit Supervisor, E. Chin	Annual Salary (b) (6)	15%	(b) (6)	5%	(b) (6)			(b) (6)
Conservation Assistant	Annual Salary \$40,000	100%	\$40,000	50%	\$20,000			\$60,000
Research Assistant	Annual Salary \$44,427	75%	\$33,320	13%	\$16,660			\$49,980
<b>2. Fringe Benefits</b>								
Project Director Leonora Gidlund	35% of funded portion of salary		(b) (6)		(b) (6)			(b) (6)
Cons. Unit Supervisor, E. Chin	35% of funded portion of salary		(b) (6)		(b) (6)			(b) (6)
Conservation Assistant	35% of funded portion of salary		\$14,000		\$7,000			\$21,000
Research Assistant	35% of funded portion of salary		\$11,662		\$5,831			\$17,493
<b>3. Consultant Fees</b>								
n/a								\$0
<b>4. Travel</b>								
n/a								\$0

	Computational Details/Notes	(notes)	Year 1	(notes)	Year 2	(notes)	Year 3	Project Total
<b>5. Supplies &amp; Materials</b>								
Legal-size acid/lignin-free doc. boxes	\$7.45 ea.	763	\$5,684	381	\$2,838			<b>\$8,522</b>
Legal-size acid/lignin-free folders/100	\$36.85	115	\$4,238	57	\$2,100			<b>\$6,338</b>
Permalife acid-free legal-size paper, reams	\$25.95	67	\$1,739	33	\$856			<b>\$2,595</b>
<b>6. Services</b>								
n/a								<b>\$0</b>
<b>7. Other Costs</b>								
n/a								<b>\$0</b>
<b>8. Total Direct Costs</b>	<b>Per Year</b>		<b>\$127,883</b>		<b>\$63,906</b>		<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$191,789</b>
<b>9. Total Indirect Costs</b>	<b>Per Year</b>		<b>\$5,000</b>		<b>\$2,500</b>			<b>\$7,500</b>
Max. Charge \$5,000 annual								
<b>10. Total Project Costs (Direct and Indirect costs for entire project)</b>								<b>\$199,289</b>
<b>11 Project Funding</b>								
a. Requested from NEH	Outright:							<b>\$81,000</b>
	Matching Funds:							<b>\$0</b>

	Computational Details/Notes	(notes)	Year 1	(notes)	Year 2	(notes)	Year 3	Project Total
	Total Requested from NEH:							<b>\$81,000</b>
b. Cost Sharing	Applicant's Contributions:							<b>\$118,289</b>
	Third Party Contributions:							<b>\$0</b>
	Project Income:							<b>\$0</b>
	Other Federal Agencies:							<b>\$0</b>
	Total Cost Share:							<b>\$118,289</b>
<b>12. Total Project Funding</b>								<b>\$199,289</b>

# Appendix 1

## **Letters of Support:**

1. Shane White, Challis Professor of History, Australian Professional Fellow, Department of History, The University of Sydney, Australia
2. Stephen Robertson, Associate Professor of History, Coordinator, American Studies Program, The University of Sydney, Australia
3. LaShawn Harris, Provost Visiting Assistant Professor of History, Department of History, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SYDNEY

**Professor Shane White**

Challis Professor of History  
Australian Professorial Fellow  
Department of History

11 July 2011

Leonora A. Gidlund  
Director, NYC Municipal Archives  
31 Chambers Street, Room 101  
New York, NY 10007  
United States of America

**Dear Leonora,**

I am writing this letter in order to support your application for NEH funding for the "New York District Attorney Case File Preservation Project, 1916-1925." You may use the letter in whatever way you deem to be appropriate.

Let me begin by outlining, briefly, how important are the holdings of the Municipal Archives for the writing of New York, indeed American, history. This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of my first trip to the Municipal Archives. Most years since then, I have been back to the archives at least once. There is a reason for this. The DA case files are the best source for the writing of social and cultural history that I have ever seen. No other American city has a set of sources that come close to being as good. They are voluminous and contain the voices of ordinary New Yorkers—some native-born, others Italian American, German American, African American, and from every group you can think of—talking about life in New York City. And what is really important to realize is that these New Yorkers doing the talking are not "just criminals." For a start many of the "crimes" are barely "criminal"—being caught in possession of a numbers slip in the 1920s for example—but, more importantly, the files contain pages and pages of statements from the victims of crime and witnesses to crime. If you read these files for any length of time, it is impossible not to pick up a sense of the texture of New York life, particularly street life, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

I write African American history. I have authored or co-authored five books and all of them use the District Attorney's files. Their titles—*Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770-1810* (Georgia 1991), *Stylin': African American Expressive Culture From Its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit* (Cornell 1998), *Stories of Black New York* (Harvard 2002), *The Sounds of Slavery* (Beacon 2005), *Playing the Numbers* (Harvard 2010)—give some idea of the range of topics that your sources can be used to illuminate. As well, I must have written or co-written more than thirty articles (I have never counted them). Continually, the DA files turn up material that you will never find anywhere else. Currently I am writing three articles about black business life in the 1830s and 1840s. In one perjury case from the 1840s I discovered that for five years in the 1830s a black man owned a block of land on 42<sup>nd</sup> St between Seventh Avenue and Broadway. Less than a decade after slavery ended a black man owned and built on the southern end of what would later become Times

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Square. Most Americans today would probably find this inconceivable. It is finding surprises like this, or another group I am writing about The Colored American Anti-Masonic Grocery Association, that keeps me coming back to your institution every year.

As well as books and articles, I, and my collaborators, have constructed a website—Digital Harlem—that relies heavily on the material in the Municipal Archives. This website has won awards from the American Historical Association and the American Library Association for its innovative use of the web to produce history. And I should add that all of the books listed above, and several of the articles, have won prizes from the Organization of American Historians, the AHA, etc etc—your sources have facilitated the writing of prize-winning history.

We are also very familiar with the files from around World War One and just after, the subject of your current NEH application. For our last book—Shane White, Stephen Garton, Stephen Robertson, Graham White, *Playing the Numbers: Gambling in Harlem Between the Wars* (Harvard University Press 2010)—we read the District Attorney's Case Files for 1916, 1917, 1920, 1925, 1926, 1928 and 1930. These files are as useful and full of great material as any of the others in the collection, and the actual paper in the files will last for a long time after we are all dead. However, the envelopes are in terrible condition. Using these files was a nightmare. And the envelopes are a vital part of the file, often being the only place where the resolution of the case is set down. I would also add that some of the boxes in these years are water-damaged and have an alarming looking fungus, or something, growing on them. Using the files from 1916 to 1925 at the moment is very, very difficult—and the chances are very good that anyone using this material will permanently damage it.

In short then, the District Attorney's files are a wonderful source that more and more historians are using (it is interesting watching the increased use over the years). The files for 1916 to 1925 are in some danger at the moment and I endorse fully and without reservation the Municipal Archives's desire both to preserve them and make them more readily accessible for scholars. If you have any questions about this letter, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Yours sincerely

Professor Shane White

**Associate Professor Stephen Robertson**

Department of History  
Coordinator, American Studies Program

14 July 2011

Leonora Gidlund,  
Director,  
NYC Municipal Archives

Dear Leonora

I am very happy to lend my support to the New York District Attorney Case File Preservation Project. I gathered a sample of over 2000 records from the District Attorney's Case Files as the key evidence for my book, *Crimes against Children: Sexual Violence and Legal Culture in New York City, 1880-1960*. The truly unique scale and scope of this set of legal records made it possible to trace and analyze the prosecution of a range of different sex crimes over the long term. They revealed the practices not visible in other records, including the role of private social agencies in investigating cases and shaping the law and its implementation, and the influence of juries and grand juries in nullifying and limiting efforts to prosecute cases involving adolescent girls. The case files also offer an extraordinary wealth of information on the daily lives of ordinary immigrant and African American New Yorkers, who appear fleetingly, if at all, in other historical records.

The deteriorating state of the envelopes which contain individual case files, many of which crumble when you open them, or, in the case of a significant portion of those from 1925, suffer water damage and mould, makes the collection difficult to use and puts it at risk of being lost. It is crucial that we preserve these records; they still have so much to tell us about the lives and legal practices of the past.

Sincerely



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UNIVERSITY

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301 Morrill Hall  
East Lansing, MI 48824-1036  
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July 16, 2011

Lenora Gidlund, Director  
New York City Municipal Archives  
31 Chambers Street, Suite 305  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Ms. Gidlund

This is LaShawn Harris, Visiting Assistant Professor of History in the Department of History at Michigan State University. I enthusiastically write this letter in support of the New York Municipal Archives' "New York District Attorney Case File Preservation and Indexing Project, 1916-1925" for its application for a National Endowment for the Humanities grant. I can attest to the New York District Attorney Case File records' importance as I recently utilized the records for my current book project.

Unique in its scope, the project proposes to preserve and index portions of the District Attorney Case Files, one of the archives' most valuable collections. It specifically plans to copy the case file jackets, which are severely fragile, and create a name and offense-based database index to the files. Preserving and indexing this collection will be useful for academic scholars and researchers. Such an endeavor will make the collection more accessible to researchers, and easier for scholars to locate primary documentation. Moreover, preserving and indexing this important collection will better facilitate the research process by offering scholars access to delicate historical documents.

LaShawn Harris, Ph.D.  
Provost Visiting Assistant Professor of History  
Department of History  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, MI 48823  
harri859@msu.edu

## Appendix 3

### **Key Staff Resumes**

Leonora A. Gidlund, Archives Director and Project Manager

Ellen Chin, Supervisor, Municipal Archives Conservation Laboratory

Leonora A. Gidlund

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

## WORK EXPERIENCE

- 2005-Present**      **MUNICIPAL ARCHIVES, CITY OF NEW YORK**  
**DEPARTMENT OF RECORDS AND INFORMATION SERVICES.**  
**Director**
- Oversee all Division operations: Conservation, Micrographics, Moving Image, Photo/Imaging, Reference and the Bush Terminal Facility.  
Responsible for providing access to more than 150,000 cubic feet of materials from over 100 city agencies.
- 1992-2004**      **MUNICIPAL ARCHIVES, CITY OF NEW YORK**  
**Deputy Director**
- Assists Director with all day-to-day activities. Responsible for divisional functions in the absence of Director.  
Chief of Operations for archival procedure and Bush Terminal Facility.  
Represents Agency at meetings and conferences.
- 1986-1992**      **MUNICIPAL ARCHIVES, CITY OF NEW YORK.**  
**Assistant Director**
- Chief of Operations for appraisal, accessioning, and processing of historical city records, supervisor of the Field Services Team, and supervisor of Special Projects for governmental and privately funded programs.  
Processing/Appraisal Unit Supervisor from 1985-1986
- 1982-1984**      **GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY, ATLANTA, GEORGIA.**  
**Assistant Archivist, Special Collections**
- Appraised, processed and prepared finding aids for manuscript records in the Southern Labor History and the Popular Music Collection. Reference Archivist.
- EDUCATION**      **M.L.S., Pratt Institute, with distinction**  
**M.A., History, Georgia State University**  
**B.A., History, City University of N.Y., summa cum laude**  
**Certified Archivist, Society of American Archivists.**
- PUBLICATIONS:**
- 2002**      **We Will Not Forget Where We Were The Day of the World Trade Center Attack.**  
**Archival Outlook, Society of American Archivists Newsletter, Jan/Feb 2002,**
- 1996**      **Southern Suffrage and Beyond: Eleonore Raoul and the Atlanta League of Women Voters, 1920-1935." Atlanta History, Fall-Winter 1996-97, Volume XL.**
- 1992**      **The New York Vietnam Veterans Memorial Commission Records, 1963-1990, Department of Records and Information Services, November 1992.**
- 1992**      **New York Archives Week 1992 Looks to Both Past and Future, METRO, Archives and Historical Records Program Newsletter, No. 5 Spring 1992.**
- 1991**      **New York City Celebrates Archives Week 1991," METRO, Archives and Historical Records, Vol. 4 Winter 1991.**
- 1989**      **"Legendary Potter's Field Registers Accessioned," NOTES, Department of Records and Information Services, Spring 1989.**

## **PRESENTATIONS/LECTURES/EXHIBITS**

Specific subject presentations at the Society of American Archivists (SAA) Annual Meetings, The Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (MARAC) Spring and Fall Meetings, Long Island Archives Conference (LIAC) Spring Meeting, Long Island Studies Institute, Archivists Round Table of Metropolitan New York (ART), Georgia Association of Historians Annual Meeting, and at numerous training seminars, 1982 to the present.

### **Exhibits include:**

**"20 Years of Empowering Women, 1975-1995,"** an anniversary celebration for the Women's Advisors of New York City, a program of the New York City Commission on the Status of Women; **"Celebrating Twenty-five Years of Off-Track Betting, 1970-1995,"** **"New York City Commission on Human Rights 40th Anniversary \*1955-1995\* 'protecting and promoting human rights,'" "Welcome Home: The First Anniversary,"** 1986 and **"Welcome Home: The Tenth Anniversary,"** 1995, exhibitions which displayed materials from the New York Vietnam Veterans Memorial Commission, and **"Queens--the Early Years,"** a photography exhibit at the Queens Festival, 1987.

## **OFFICES HELD:**

Chair, New York State Caucus, Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (MARAC), 1994-1996, 1997-1998  
 Treasurer, MARAC Spring Meeting, 1994  
 Chair, Department of Records and Information Services, "DORIS DAY," 1993  
 President, Archivists Round Table of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (ART), 1991-1992  
 Vice President, ART, 1989-1991  
 Chair, New York Archives Week, 1992  
 Co-Chair, New York Archives Week, 1996  
 Coordinating Committee Member, New York Archives Week, 1989-to present  
 Director, Long Island Archives Conference (LIAC), 1989-1998  
 President, Phi Alpha Theta, Georgia State University, 1982

## **AWARDS AND HONOR SOCIETIES:**

**Fund for the City of New York, Sloan Public Service Award, 2006**  
**Women's Advisor of the Year, Award 1995**  
 Omicron Delta Kappa  
 Phi Alpha Theta  
 Tau Phi Sigma

ELLEN CHIN

(b) (6)

EDUCATION: University of Wisconsin – Madison  
1982-1983 Archival Administration  
1978-1979 Masters in Library Science  
1976-1978 East Asian Language and Literature  
Madison Area Technical College, 1983, General Chemistry  
Ithaca College, 1968-1972, B.A-Psychology

ADVANCED TRAINING: 7/95-9/95 International Centre for the Study of the Preservation  
and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM)  
Paper Conservation Course; Horn and Vienna, Austria

BOOKBINDING CLASSES: 2/81-6/81 Madison, Wisconsin – Alfredo Dela Rosa  
9/80-1/81 New Haven, Connecticut – Constance Mortensen  
1/79-5/79 Madison, Wisconsin – James Dast

WORK EXPERIENCE:  
Jan 05 – Present: Chief Conservator, New York City Municipal Archives  
Responsibilities: Direct the operations of the Conservation Unit;  
assign work and supervise staff. Develop preservation grant  
proposals. Manage preservation contracts between the Municipal  
Archives and other city agencies. Conduct conservation assessment  
and develop preservation strategies. Monitor storage environments.  
Assume responsibility for all divisional functions in the absence of  
the director.

Nov 84-Dec 2004: Conservator, New York City Municipal Archives  
Duties: Various and diverse conservation treatments. Humidify,  
flatten, dry clean, wash and de-acidify, encapsulate documents and  
architectural drawings; minor repair of paper, line documents with  
Japanese paper; re-sew and rebind books; make protective  
enclosures for fragile books and documents; remove photographs  
from mounts, clean photographs and glass plate negatives, repair  
glass plates, test nitrate films; treatment of acetate disc recordings;  
exhibit preparation.

May 79-Oct 84: Historic Conservation Technician at the New York State Archives,  
Albany, N.Y; Conservation Technician (half-time) at the State  
Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin. Various  
part- time jobs as student conservation and archives aide. Six  
month Conservation internship at Yale University Libraries.

REFERENCES:

Peter Mustardo  
The Better Image

(b) (6)

# Appendix 4

## **Job Description** **(for staff to be hired)**

Conservation Assistant, to-be-hired, 100% time, 18 months.

Description:

The conservation assistant will be responsible for processing the NYDA closed case files according to the proposed project methodology. The assistant will remove case file documents from the deteriorating jacket enclosures; copy the jackets and re-house the documents in appropriate materials. The assistant will separate non-paper items from the files, and copy other fragile materials such as newsprint and telegrams. The assistant will perform data entry activities to produce the index to the series. The conservation assistant will work under the direct and continuing supervision of the conservation laboratory supervisor, Ellen Chin.

Qualifications:

The conservation assistant will be required to:

- provide evidence of appropriate education
- perform careful physical handling of original materials
- demonstrate an ability to maintain the productivity target



## Appendix 5

### **Institution Background**

## ***INSTITUTION BACKGROUND***

### **NYC Department of Records**

#### **Municipal Archives Division**

##### **A. *Special Awards and Recognition***

On July 2, 2001, *The New York Times* profiled the Municipal Archives in a front-page story entitled “In 3 Million Pounds of History, View of Day-to-Day New York.” In the article, journalist Glenn Collins traced the precarious history of the Archives over the last thirty-five years: “Of all the remarkable things about New York City’s Municipal Archives, the most extraordinary, by far, is its very survival.” Collins described how the Archives had successfully made its collections available to scholars in recent years, and in so doing “... the city’s history has been rewritten.” Collins also quoted Dr. Kenneth Jackson, then president of the New-York Historical Society who observed that the new availability “... has helped spur a flowering of insights and innovation regarding New York City’s past.”

On October 9, 2002, the Archivists Round Table of Metropolitan New York (ART) presented the New York City Municipal Archives with their “Award for Archival Achievement.” ART conferred this honor upon the Municipal Archives “in recognition of its long record of accomplishments, its outstanding contributions toward a broader understanding of New York City’s history, and [it’s] ... commitment to professional archival standards.”

Municipal Archives Director Leonora Gidlund received the Sloan Public Service Award from the Fund for the City of New York on March 15, 2006. One of six recipients selected from over 250,000 eligible employees, Ms. Gidlund was cited for her devotion to preserving the City’s history in over twenty-five years of service at the Municipal Archives. Mayor Michael Bloomberg opened the ceremony with his congratulations and Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg presented the award to Ms. Gidlund. On the same day, *The New York Times* highlighted Ms. Gidlund in a Metro Section article profiling the award winners.

More recently, on April 21, 2010, the New York Landmarks Conservancy presented their Public Leadership Award to Assistant Commissioner Kenneth Cobb (and former Municipal Archives Director), for his years of service to the preservation community.

##### **B. *Holdings***

Founded in 1950, the Municipal Archives is a division of the New York City Department of Records and Information Services. The functions of the Archives are to accession, catalog, conserve and make available those records of the government of the City of New York deemed worthy of permanent preservation. The Archives holdings total approximately 150,000 cubic feet and comprise manuscript material, still and moving images, ledger volumes, maps, blueprints, and sound recordings. Some of the major collections include Almshouse ledgers, 1758-1953, Real Estate Tax Assessment ledgers, 1789-1975, Brooklyn Bridge architectural plans, 1867-1938, Building Department docket books and application folders, 1866-1975,

records of the legislative branch, 1647-1977, Criminal Court docket books and indictment records, 1683-1949, District Attorney closed case files, 1790-1984, Mayors' correspondence, 1849-2001, Parks Department architectural plans, 1850-1933, and General Files, 1934-1966, pre-consolidation County/Town ledgers, 1663-1898, and NYC Unit WPA Federal Writers' Project manuscripts, 1936-1943. Still images total over one million. The collection includes moving images and sound recording from the municipal broadcasting station WNYC.

### ***C. Staff***

Assistant Commissioner Kenneth Cobb provides overall management of the Municipal Archives. He has been associated with the institution for thirty-two years. The Director is Leonora Gidlund. After having served as Deputy Director since 1990, Mrs. Gidlund became Director in January 2005.

There are five functional units:

- Archivist David Ment supervises the Processing/Appraisal Unit. He is assisted by paraprofessionals, and special grant-funded project staff, as needed.
- Ellen Chin supervises the paper conservation laboratory. She is assisted by contract conservators employed as needed for special projects.
- Moshen El-Fishawi supervises the preservation microfilm laboratory. There are three camera operators and one quality specialist in the unit.
- Mrs. Gidlund supervises the Reference Room. There are five paraprofessionals in the unit.
- Michael Lorenzini is curator of the photography collection and supervisor of the darkroom and digital studio. He supervises several per diem photographers who produce new photographic materials as needed.
- Adotey Akuesson is the Department's MIS supervisor.

### ***D. Reference Services***

The Municipal Archives Reference Room is open to the public from Monday to Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Friday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Appointments are recommended, but not necessary. Photocopies and paper prints from microfilm are available (self-service) for a nominal fee. The Municipal Archives is an enthusiastic participant in the inter-library loan program.

### ***E. Preservation Program***

The Municipal Archives is committed to long-term preservation of the materials in its care. The institution maintains a well-equipped paper conservation laboratory and a complete in-house preservation microfilm laboratory. Nearly half of the full-time staff are devoted to preservation activities.

The Archives began operating an in-house preservation microfilm laboratory in 1987. The laboratory is equipped with four 35mm Kodak MRD-II planetary cameras, four Minolta DR1600 16mm cameras, a Prostar film processor, and Extex silver and diazo duplicating machines. The laboratory processes, inspects, and duplicates film in-house. Materials are selected for preservation filming based on demand for the information contained in the record and its physical condition. Fragile materials which are in heavy demand have priority for microfilming. The laboratory camera operators are currently producing about 30,000 images per month.

### ***F. Photography Unit***

The Municipal Archives Photography Unit produces new prints, transparencies, and negatives from vintage photographic materials for both in-house use and for patrons. Fees range from \$35.00 for an 8"x10" print on resin-coated paper to \$125.00 for a 16"x20" print on fiber paper. Prints are supplied for personal use. The Archives licenses images for books, articles, documentaries, and other uses, for modest fees. Patron requests for prints from the collection rose dramatically beginning in July 2000 when the *New York Times* printed a feature story on the "tax" photograph collection. Requests ballooned again in December 2009, when the *Times* published an illustrated "then and now" article using the 1939/40 and mid-1980s "tax" photograph collection. In fiscal year 2011, the photography unit produced over 4,000 prints for patrons.

The Unit's responsibilities also include the digital studio. Equipped with a variety of scanners and printers, unit staff can produce scans from all formats of photographic materials and provide outputs as required.

### ***H. Special Projects***

The Archives has successfully competed for grant funds from federal and state sources to support its programs and operations. On July 1, 2010, the Archives began a project to preserve late nineteenth-century felony indictment records with generous assistance from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Recent awards from the New York State Archives Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund (LGRMIF) have enabled the Archives to preserve and improve access to the NYC Board of Education collection. In the past two funding cycles, the LGRMIF program has funded digitization and cataloging of historical photographs from the Board of Education collection. With funding from the New York State Library, the Archives has re-housed several hundred thousand prints and negatives from the 1980s "tax photograph" collection, preserved oversize architectural drawings from the Central Park and Brooklyn Bridge collections, and conserved and microfilmed eighteenth-century estate inventories.