Collection Development Policy

Mission Statement

New York Heritage Digital Collections, created and maintained by the Empire State Library Network, promotes access to the wealth of historical resources held by cultural heritage institutions—so that inquiring minds can learn more about the people, places and events that contributed to the making of New York State.

Content Scope

New York Heritage Digital Collections features curated selections of digital cultural heritage materials from libraries, library systems, historical societies, museums, archives, and other cultural institutions in the state of New York. Proposed collections should be of regional, statewide, or wider historical interest. Content that is only of internal interest to an organization may not be accepted. Digital collections should support the educational, recreational, and information needs of the people of New York. Additionally:

- Materials should be produced by or relating to New York State organizations, communities, or individuals.
- Contributors to New York Heritage should consider their potential users and how the materials might be used. Content that contributes to a larger historical narrative should be prioritized.
- Formats may include but are not limited to photographs, postcards, maps, letters, diaries, articles, books, artifacts, artwork, audio, film, and video.
- Materials may be derived from physical objects or be born digital
- Digital objects adhere to New York Heritage Digital Collections copyright policies, as put forth by individual library councils.
- Digital objects are made available for use online without authentication, paywall, or other restrictions.

- Metadata conforms to New York Heritage Digital Collections guidelines and requirements.
- We encourage contributions of materials depicting populations and topics that are underrepresented in archival collections
- Content contributions must fit the mission of New York Heritage, as well as complement existing collections or fill gaps in our repository's coverage.

The following categories are outside of the program's scope:

- Data-only records, such as birth, death or other genealogy indexes, other resources that do not resolve to full digital objects, or metadata-only objects.
- Finding aids and full editions of newspapers—ESLN offers dedicated repositories, [Empire Archival Discovery Cooperative](#) and [NYS Historic Newspapers](#), which are better suited for those materials.
- Institutional repository content, such as student dissertations, theses, or research data.
- Items already digitally available in other large-scale collections. If other copies of the materials are available online, New York Heritage Digital Collections reserves the right to not add it.

Additional content may also be out of scope. New York Heritage Digital Collections reserves the right to review and determine whether content is acceptable for inclusion based on regional council provisions, i.e. membership. Reach out to your [regional Library Council representative](#) for more guidance.

Metadata

Digital objects in New York Heritage Digital Collections must be described using a minimum set of required fields; recommended fields are strongly encouraged for access and understanding.

At a minimum, each item contributed must include five metadata fields:

- Title
- Collection ID
- Digital Collection
- Rights
- File Name

Additional metadata fields strongly recommend as best practice when possible:

- Description
- Creator
- Subject
- Date of Original

- Hidden Date
- Physical Format
- Physical Description
- Type
- Format of Digital
- Identifier
- Holding Institution

- Contact Information
- Publisher of Digital
- Date of Digital
- Library Council
- Citation Information
- Technical Data

The New York Heritage Digital Collections Metadata Dictionary and Usage Guide provides detailed guidelines and examples for each required and recommended metadata field. We encourage contributors to work with your council liaison to determine ideal metadata strategy for your materials and use the most inclusive metadata practices available (Refer to Inclusive Metadata Framework when released [2020]).

Transcripts are important for accessibility, keyword searching, and the overall user experience. Please make an effort to process typed documents with Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software. Handwritten or non-machine readable text can be manually entered into the Transcript field. For audio-visual works, transcripts may be generated by uploading to YouTube, or other third-party software.

Sample Metadata Records

Postcard: Greetings from Syracuse, N.Y.
Oral history interview: Helen Sheppard Oral History Interview
Yearbook: L.H.S. The Spirit 1921

Copyright

It is very important that contributors to New York Heritage have the authority or permission to upload their materials to our repository. Determining the copyright status for materials can be a difficult process, and the results are often less than definitive. There are many misconceptions about how copyright law works—to clarify a few of them:

- Physical ownership does not necessarily mean your institution owns the copyright.
- Digitizing a work (producing an equivalent copy) does not give your institution the ability to copyright the reproduction.
- If the copyright owner is unreachable (deceased, out of business, unknown, etc.), the materials may still be protected under copyright.

- Copyright terms can vary considerably, depending on whether the materials were published, by whom, the physical format, and other factors.

Contributors to New York Heritage are required to do their due diligence to determine the copyright status of the materials they are contributing. In order to upload materials, the materials must be in the public domain, or contributors must have permission to make the materials publically available. Contributors choosing to publish materials to New York Heritage under Fair Use should maintain written documentation that details the basis for their argument. Contributors to New York Heritage assume liability for the materials they make available. Only share materials for which your institution is confident they have permission.

Resources:
[Copyright Term and the Public Domain in the United States](#) (Cornell University)
[Fair Use](#) (Stanford University)

File Formats

Materials uploaded to New York Heritage must be digital objects—either digitized reproductions of physical objects, or born-digital works that can be represented visually or auditorily. Metadata-only records, such as [null items](#), are not permitted.

CONTENTdm permits the upload of a wide variety of formats, including:
- JPEG GIF or TIFF for images
- PDF for documents
- WAV or MP3 for audio files
- AVI or MPEG for video files

Uploading high quality source files will improve the user experience. However, larger files may take longer to load for users and occupy more of our limited storage. Your library council liaison will help you to determine the optimum size and format for your materials.

When uploading an audio-visual work, it may be appropriate to include an "Alternate Viewing Location" link to a more dependable platform like YouTube, Soundcloud, or the Internet Archive. This will improve the experience for users who are on low bandwidth connections or otherwise have trouble playing media in CONTENTdm.