

Archives, Reference and Research Advisory Board
January 13, 2021
Minutes

Present:

Board Members: Jason Bauman, Brian Carlin, Pamela Cruz, Sarah Gonzalez, Glenda Grace, Lillian Jean Baptiste, Richard Moylan, Rebecca Pou, Robert Snyder, Eric Washington.

DORIS Staff: Pauline Toole, Kenneth Cobb, LaTonya Jones, Sylvia Kollar.

I. Review/Adoption of Minutes from June 2020 meeting

The minutes from the September 24, 2020 board meeting were moved and accepted.

II. New Members

Board members and DORIS staff introduced themselves. Commissioner Toole noted that there are six new members.

III. Reports on DORIS Activities

Municipal Archives

Sylvia Kollar reported on Municipal Archives activities during the past year:

- Accessioned more than 1,500 cubic ft. of hard-copy materials and 2.5 TB of digital records.
- Continued processing NYPD Intelligence Unit records and Department of Buildings lower Manhattan building plans.

- Digitized more than 450,000 marriage licenses, 41 volumes of the Board of Estimate; and digitized microfilmed Manhattan death certificates and selected mayoral subject files and correspondence.
- Responded to more than 1,800 requests for reference service received via email and provided research assistant for more than 3,000 onsite visitors.

Ms. Kollar also described three grant-funded projects that took place during the year:

- The National Endowment for the Humanities supported an assessment of the HVAC system and storage environment at 31 Chambers Street in preparation for a second grant that will implement the needed upgrades.
- The New York State Library funded conservation treatment for 218 oversized architectural drawings of the Brooklyn Bridge and Central Park.
- The New York State Archives' Local Government Records Management Fund supported digitation of more than 150 hours of deteriorating WNYC motion picture film.

Ms. Kollar announced that Gabriel Gervais, Reference Associate with DORIS for more than 40 years, received the Mayor's Annual Customer Service Award.

Outreach and Communications

LaTonya Jones reported on public programming during the past year:

- Conducted four in-person events at 31 Chambers Street and eight virtual events in connection with the WomensActivism.NYC project.
- NYC Services awarded funding to create a volunteer program. The volunteer outreach coordinator began work in September 2020 and has developed plans to recruit and train volunteers, and to support the agency's community and educational outreach efforts.
- The agency's WomensActivism.NYC project has gathered nearly 8,500 stories, with more than half contributed by staff in 2020. The project

conducted two story contests, the Gift A Story campaign. In 2021, the project will continue with primarily digital outreach.

IV. AARAB Annual Report

Pamela Cruz provided an update on the annual report. The reporting period will consolidate FY 2019 and 2020. A new draft will be reviewed by the committee and circulated to the board for approval prior to the next quarterly meeting.

V. Committee Structure

Board members discussed a possible committee structure and goals for 2021.

Glenda Grace asked what the Archives needs because the committee structure and goals should reflect those “asks”.

Eric Washington noted that the archival holdings are invaluable.

Rob Snyder commented that public programming has been impressive and suggested a panel focusing on neighborhoods. Eric agreed that a neighborhood focus would be great and suggested that cemeteries should be included as a reflection of the surrounding neighborhood history.

Brian Carlin acknowledged that remote programming is very difficult and noted how difficult it was for teachers to physically travel to locations for field trips, even before the pandemic. He added that the Department of Education (DOE) connects to online resources that teachers can use and would welcome adding content from the Municipal Archives.

Jason Bauman suggested a more focused engagement instead of a more general public awareness focus and that it would be helpful to share the perspective of others who have used the collections.

Pamela Cruz mentioned the K-12 Archive Institute that the Archivist Roundtable sponsors. DORIS has developed toolkits already. The ARRAB could work to match the DORIS content with DOE needs.

Rob Snyder cited prior workshops that helped teachers incorporate primary source documents into their teaching practice. The content reflected the needs of teachers.

Brian responded that these sessions were very popular.

Based on the discussion, the Board agreed to set up three committees as follows:

Education: Brian, Pamela Rob

Social Media: Glenda, Jason, Sarah and Rebecca

Neighborhoods: Eric, Richard, Rob