



ART Statement on the New York City Charter Revision

September 21, 2018

The
**Archivists
Round Table**
of Metropolitan
New York,
Inc.

P.O. Box 151
New York
NY
10274-0154

Dear 2019 Charter Revision Commission,

The Archivists Round Table of Metropolitan New York (ART), a diverse group of more than 400 archivists, librarians, and records managers in the New York metropolitan area, respectfully submits the following written statement for comment on the upcoming New York City (NYC) Charter Revision.

As information professionals, we are interested in the issue of the "Oversight and Accountability of Agencies – including how commissioners are appointed and approved and the independence of various city agencies,"¹ specifically as it relates to the New York City Department of Records and Information Services (DORIS), the New York City agency tasked with the management of records created by New York City agencies throughout their lifecycle, from active records of business to historical documents that can be accessed by researchers.

Chapter 72 of the current NYC Charter illustrates the duties of DORIS and the DORIS Commissioner. Section 3003 defines the powers and duties of the Commissioner of DORIS, and states that the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner must have the needed training and experience required to effectively perform the power and duties described in the NYC Charter. According to the current charter, the DORIS Commissioner:

1. shall be the chief archivist of the city and shall advise the mayor, borough presidents and council on those matters concerning the preservation of the city's historical documentation;
2. shall act as the chief reference and research librarian for the mayor, borough presidents and council and shall ensure that all significant research material pertaining to the operations of the city as well as other municipalities shall be preserved and readily available for use;
3. shall act as the chief public records officer for the mayor, borough presidents and council and shall, except as otherwise provided by law, establish standards for the proper records management in any agency or government instrumentality funded in whole or in part from local tax levy monies...²

As archivists, librarians, records managers, and related information professionals, we are required to hold graduate-level degrees in either Library Science, Archival Studies, Records

¹ Gale A. Brewer memoranda to the City of New York, September 11, 2018, Office of the President, Borough of Manhattan, The City of New York.

² *New York City Charter*, New York, New York: American Legal Publishing Corporation, 2018, [http://library.amlegal.com/nxt/gateway.dll/New%20York/charter/newyorkcitycharter?f=templates\\$fn=default.htm\\$3.0\\$vid=amlegal:newyork_ny](http://library.amlegal.com/nxt/gateway.dll/New%20York/charter/newyorkcitycharter?f=templates$fn=default.htm$3.0$vid=amlegal:newyork_ny) (accessed September 19, 2018).



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Management, or equivalent disciplines (i.e. an MLIS and/or MA in Archives and Records Management) and we strongly believe that the Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner of DORIS need to have this level of education to be able to effectively carry out their duties. We urge that specific education requirements be updated in the NYC Charter to include language that mandates the Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner of DORIS hold graduate-level degrees in either Library Science, Archival Studies, Records Management, or equivalent disciplines. The Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner should also be professional archivists, librarians, or records managers holding the education and experience defined in the City Charter, and *not political appointees*.

Further, Chapter 72, Section 3004 specifically states that, "The department shall operate a municipal archives, the head of which shall be a *professional archivist*," that "The department shall operate a municipal reference and research center, the head of which shall be a *professional librarian*," and that "The department shall operate a municipal records management division, the head of which shall be a *professional records manager*" (emphasis ours)³. These requirements also need to be updated to include language that specifically mandates the division heads of DORIS hold graduate-level degrees in either Library Science, Archival Studies, Records Management, or equivalent disciplines (i.e. an MLIS and/or MA in Archives and Records Management).

Public records evidence the activities of our collective democracy, and provide documentary evidence of government, in service of its constituents. The custodians of this material culture must have the professional expertise to adequately prioritize and preserve our collective past. ART understands the Commission will consider a range of topics, including "Oversight and Accountability of Agencies – including how commissioners are appointed and approved and the independence of various city agencies." We believe our concerns about DORIS appointees fall into this category, and hope this matter can be fully discussed at future hearings.

Sincerely,

ART Board of Directors

³ *New York City Charter*, New York, New York: American Legal Publishing Corporation, 2018, [http://library.amlegal.com/nxt/gateway.dll/New%20York/charter/newyorkcitycharter?f=templates\\$fn=default.htm\\$3.0\\$vid=amlegal:newyork_ny](http://library.amlegal.com/nxt/gateway.dll/New%20York/charter/newyorkcitycharter?f=templates$fn=default.htm$3.0$vid=amlegal:newyork_ny) (accessed September 19, 2018).