



**TO:** Cultural Education Committee

**FROM:** Elizabeth R. Berlin *Elizabeth R. Berlin*

**SUBJECT:** Increasing online access to archival materials

**DATE:** October 19, 2015

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**SUMMARY**

### **Issue for Discussion**

Digitization enables the State Archives and other archival and manuscript repositories to provide direct access to materials online improving and expanding access for researchers.

### **Reason(s) for Consideration**

For Information: Arts and Cultural Affairs Law section 57.05(1) mandates the State Archives to make available for research the records it preserves.

### **Background Information**

Since 1995, the State Archives has had an active program of digitization, which creates electronic versions of records that are made available for researchers online. The archives has created digital versions of photographs, maps, drawings and documents dating from the colonial Dutch period to present day. The process of digitization follows strict national standards that ensure that the online version is a complete and accurate copy of the original. These online materials also contain descriptive information and access terms that make it easier to locate the materials and place them into their historical context. The State Archives partnered with Ancestry.com to digitize and index several hundred thousand documents that contain genealogical information. These materials are available to New York State residents for free through the State Archives web site and are heavily used.

Staff will review the online resources of the State Archives and highlight several significant research activities that have been made possible through online access to the collections of the Archives.