



Name of Property: Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

City, State: New York, NY

Significant Dates: 1926-1991

NHL Criteria & Exceptions: 1, 2, and 3; Exception 8

Theme:

- I. Peopling Places
 - 4. Community and Neighborhood
- II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements
 - 1. Clubs and Organizations
 - 2. Reform Movements
- III. Expressing Cultural Values
 - 1. Educational and Intellectual Currents
- IV. Shaping the Political Landscape

4. Political Ideas, Cultures, and Theories

Previous Recognition: National Register of Historic Places NR # 78001881; 09/21/1978

National Historic Context: XXVII. Education

G. Adjunct Educational Institutions

1. Museums, Archives, and Botanical Gardens

2. Libraries

XXXIX. Intellectual Currents

C. Ideologies and Interpretation of the Branches of Knowledge (History, Philosophy of History, Political Philosophy, etc.)

XXXI. Social and Humanitarian Movements

M. Civil Rights Movements

NHL Significance:

- The Schomburg Center is nationally significant under NHL Criterion 3 as the best location to represent the idea of the African Diaspora, a revolutionizing model for studying the history and culture of people of African descent that used a global, transnational perspective. The idea and the person who promoted it, Arthur (Arturo) Alfonso Schomburg (1874– 1938), reflect the multicultural experience of America and the ideals that all Americans should have intellectual freedom and social equality.
- The Schomburg Center is also nationally significant under NHL Criterion 2 as the only remaining property associated with Arthur Schomburg, an Afro-Latino immigrant and self-taught bibliophile who promoted the idea of the African Diaspora.
- Finally, the Schomburg Center is nationally significant under Criterion 1 for its important role during the era of Jim Crow as a model for integrated libraries; during the Harlem Renaissance as the “place to go” for artists, authors, actors and activists; and during the “long Civil Rights Movement” as a spearhead for research on African Diaspora history and culture. The Schomburg Center amassed one of the greatest collections for Africana scholarship and its sources have expanded the study of African history and culture around the world and enriched the broader narrative of American history and Western Civilization.
- The full complex (completed in 1991) realized Schomburg’s vision for a dedicated space for his collection, thus continuing functions and an intellectual mission established during the Harlem Renaissance. Therefore, the entire complex is included in this nomination and is eligible for NHL consideration under Exception 8.

Integrity:

- The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture is a unique complex that combines buildings from different periods and design vocabulary, yet reflects a continuity of use for nearly 90 years, retaining a balance of research, reading, and community spaces.
- The neoclassical façade and modern African-inspired addition tell the story of the development of the Schomburg from a humble branch library to a world-renowned research facility.
- Finally, the complex is the only remaining property associated with the nationally-significant Arthur Schomburg and the full complex conveys the intellectual and cultural feeling evoked by Schomburg's collecting and intellectual pursuits.

Owner of Property:

Public-Local: New York Public Library

Size of Property: less than one acre

Origins of Nomination:

This nomination was initiated by the National Park Service as part of the American Latino History Initiative.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- This nomination fills programmatic gaps identified in the 2008 African American NHL Assessment, which called for the development of future themes and nomination efforts for sites commemorating African American institutional and intellectual history.
- It also is the only site associated with Arthur (Arturo) Schomburg, who was included in the introduction to the American Latino Theme Study.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.

Landmarks Committee Comments:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation: Designation. Dr. Young moved, Dr. Chen seconded; unanimous approval.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of 4/26/16):

Sarah Carroll, NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission, New York, New York
The Honorable Charles E. Schumer, United States Senator, Washington, DC