

Learning Places Fall 2017

Library / Archive REPORT

Brooklyn Public Library Visit

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This is my first archival visit. The image shows the area from where the documents are removed to digitize them

INTRODUCTION

Describe the scope of the activity, geographic, and logistical details about the site visit. Include information about your expectations of the place and whether your expectations lived up to reality.

I work for the New York Public Library. So I did hear about the Brooklyn Public Library and its pomp during my orientation there. Keeping in mind that information I expected Brooklyn Public to be really grand and on arriving at the place I realized my expectation has been fulfilled.

As I mentioned I was not too surprised to see such a luscious library, but what stunned me a little was the place around it. As usual I did a small tour before meeting the class in front of the library. And during this pre tour I saw the little refreshing fountain of the prospect park, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden,

Brooklyn Museum. And I felt a realm of calmness amidst the city.

SITE OBSERVATIONS

What is the Genius Loci, or spirit, of this place?

I would say the Genius Loci of this place are tranquility, wisdom, treasure. As soon as I crossed the bronze decorations of the grand door I felt like I entered a whole different world. I couldn't believe a place of such calmness could exist in Brooklyn just 4 stops away from our college which is in such a busy area.



This is a sketch of the grand door with bronze decorations

What kind of archive or library is this? What kinds of materials / sources does this place collect?

We visited the Central Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library which is located at Flatbush Avenue and Eastern Parkway on Grand Army Plaza near the Prospect Heights, Crown Heights, Flatbush, and Park Slope neighborhoods, Brooklyn Public Library's Central Library contains over a million cataloged books,

magazines, and multimedia materials. It is said that their collection holds more than 4 million physical items and 700,000 digital materials.

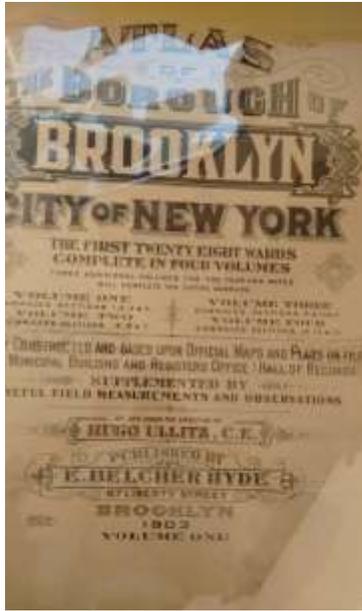
In the library the main area we were in was the Brooklyn Collection. It holds over a million individual items including Brooklyn Dodgers memorabilia, a collection for the *Brooklyn Eagle* which Walt Whitman edited, manuscripts, maps, photographs, and other ephemeral items. The Brooklyn Collection is the one that has all the manuscripts and archives for the BPL.

Who might use this collection and for what purpose?

Researchers and budding authors like Joseph Alexiou, Students like us will find their material of interest in this library which can be used in research projects. Not only researchers but also people like homeowners, insurance companies, and developers can research on the history of a particular place in Brooklyn before investing.



Before going into this section, I had no idea I will find out so much about just one area of the Borough: The Gowanus, our case study for the course.



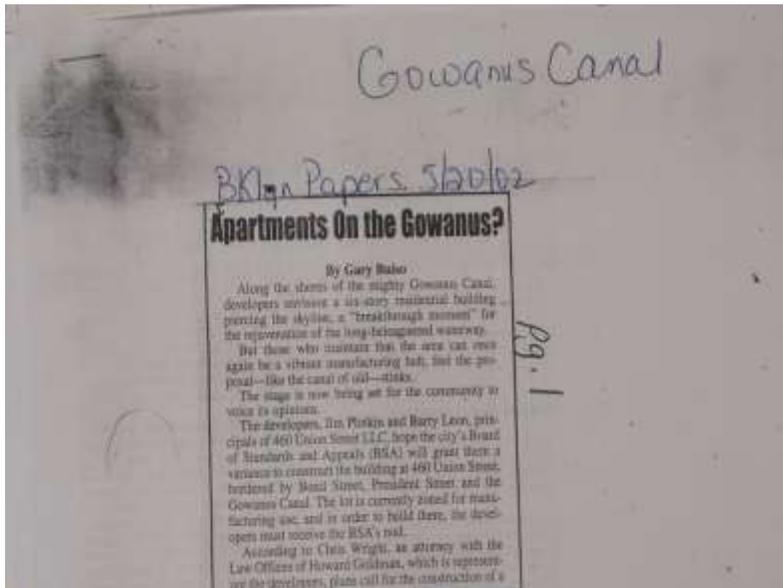
Are there any special rules for using or accessing material?

Brooklyn Public Library holds very old collection, meaning a lot of their old atlases, the very fragile. So the readers do need to be very careful while handling them. There are points beyond which pens are not allowed in the library [I saw the signs; however, our library tour guide

For example, these atlases (shown in the images above) are very fragile, and we had to be really careful while taking these pictures

SOURCE ANALYSIS

CITATION for ARCHIVAL SOURCE #1



Buiso, G. (2002, May 20). Apartments On the Gowanus. *The Brooklyn Papers*.

1. What is this source and what is its purpose?

It is a newspaper article from the Brooklyn Papers which I found in one of the article folder at the Brooklyn Collection of the Brooklyn Public Library.

I assume the purpose of the article is to share the information of a new development plan in the area with the community. If the readers are conscious enough this can also act as a heads-up of a possible gentrification.

2. Who created it and who was it created for?

It was written by Mr. Gary Buiso for *The Brooklyn Papers*

3. What does this source tell us about the place we are studying? What themes or subtopics does it relate to?

The case study for this class is the Gowanus. In this article we find information about new buildings being built in the area which was really polluted at the time. This article dates back too 2002 which is much earlier to the place being declared a superfund site or any actions being taken to clean up the canal.

4. How might it be integrated into a research project? What question could it be used to help answer?

My subject of interest in the case study revolves around community relationships, gentrification and developments and their marketing. So reading an article like this will give an idea of the early twenty-first century developments.

Some questions regarding the first signs of modern development could be addressed through this article.

CITATION for ARCHIVAL SOURCE #2



Gallahue, P. (2002, October 7). Developer: 9th Street Building is not a hotel. *The Brooklyn Papers*

1. What is this source and what is its purpose?

It is a newspaper article from the Brooklyn Papers which I found in one of the article folder at the Brooklyn Collection of the Brooklyn Public Library.

This article shows the plan changes in the developments. Instead of making the 9th Street building a hotel, they planned it to become a six-story, eight unit condominiums.

2. Who created it and who was it created for?

Patrick Gallahue created the article for it to be published in *The Brooklyn Papers*

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GENERAL NOTES:

- The archive at the Brooklyn Public Library is funded by donation.
- After going out of business *The Brooklyn Eagle* donated a huge quantity of their documents to the Brooklyn Public Library.
- The Brooklyn Public Library has a huge collection of maps and atlases.
- These atlases were very much used by the then insurance company to determine the materials of the buildings, the planning and the fire risk of those buildings.
- The Brooklyn Public Library also has a huge collection of newspaper clippings from which most of my information regarding the Gowanus are taken.

QUESTIONS for Further RESEARCH

1. Now that we have visited the Gowanus a few times and talked about the pollution and its removal, how extensive you think the pollution from the new developments will be?
2. Besides cheaper rent what do you think could be a possible reason for new people moving to the Gowanus?
3. Does gentrification pose a danger to the existing residents of the Gowanus?