

Learning Places Fall 2017

Library / Archive REPORT

New York Public Library



Image shows the entrance of the New York Public Library's main branch

Rumana Hassin Syed

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INTRODUCTION

We visited the New York Public Library as the second library visit for our LIBARCH 2205ID class. We visited the main branch of the library, the Steven A. Schwarzman building. Since I work in the IT department of the New York Public Library, I knew that the building would be pompous. We were told about the grandeur of the building during the orientation. Therefore, I was very excited to visit it. If not for this class, I probably would not have had the mindset to go there, as it would be too intimidating for me to go and actually look up materials. I was more eager to just go into the library and get the nerdy feel and the expectation of mine was sufficiently fulfilled. Besides this, my expectation to learn about gentrification and community was fulfilled to a certain extent.

SITE OBSERVATIONS



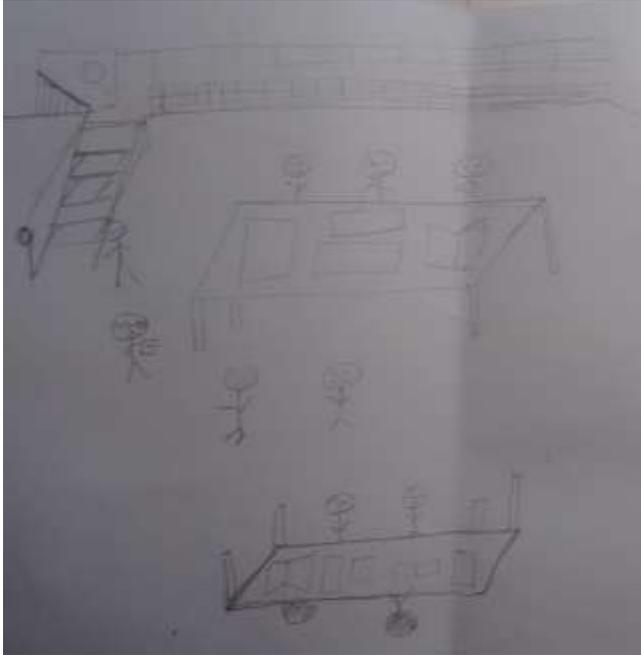
The images above show the main entrance of the library in two different eras.

The first image shows the early days of the library while the latter shows the day we went for the trip.

[The first image was taken from an image attached on the walls of the library]



The sketch shows the entrance of the map room where the class decided to meet.



This sketch was made to give an idea of the place where the class got a chance to look into the materials that might be helpful for our final project



Although, this time I did not get a chance to do a pre-tour, I did a tour after the class dismissed. The above two pictures are to show the amazing architecture I witnessed during the post lecture tour.

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

I think the people were the Genius Loci of the place. The library is near Bryant Park on the Fifth Avenue and 41 Street and is full of the hustle and bustle of tourists, office-goers among others; as soon as one goes inside the library one can still hear the noise from the outside and still a little bit of sounds inside the library again due to the great number of workers and visitors there, but as one goes in even more, the sounds starts fading out. The Beaux-Arts architecture of the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building also known as the SAS building of the New York Public Library and the all those people, either working there or just visiting there and taking photos not only add to the beauty of the city but also shows the greatness of our beloved city.

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

We visited the archival section of the New York Public Library. Archives are the records created by people and organizations as they lived and worked. Collections can range in size from a single letter or diary to thousands of boxes of institutional records. They can contain drafts of literary works, financial records, meeting minutes, reports, memorabilia, as well as sound recordings, videos, film, databases, and software (information taken from <http://archives.nypl.org/>).

The library hosts a variety of materials such as maps, books, magazines and others. Not only the library has one of the largest collections of physical maps and books, they also have a huge digital and digitized collection accessible from <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/>.

Who might use this collection and for what purpose?

The materials available in the library might be useful for a variety of people ranging from individual researchers, students like us, tourists, for academic purposes, government officials, historians, authors like Joseph Alexiou.

Are there any special rules for using or accessing material?

The best way to get access to the maps and materials will be email the librarian and schedule an appointment beforehand, so that he or she can pull out the required materials in advance. This will save a considerable amount of time. Besides this, since the library has very old and fragile materials, one should be extremely careful when handling these materials. Although photography is allowed, flash is prohibited.

SOURCE ANALYSIS

CITATION for ARCHIVAL SOURCE #1 (consult this [website](#) for help with citations)



Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library. "Map of Brooklyn, House Number and Subway Guide."The New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1922.
<http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/f411ca30-d2a6-012f-2d96-58d385a7b928>

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

The source is the Hagstrom map of Brooklyn. This was GPS or Google maps of the old times. It was used to get directions, find a street or house number. Not only this but it was also a good source to compare with the old maps to see how the area has changed.

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

The Hagstrom Map Company created this. It was created to help the public to navigate around the place and also use it for more details of the past and the then details of the city. and provides an overview which gives details of Brooklyn.

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

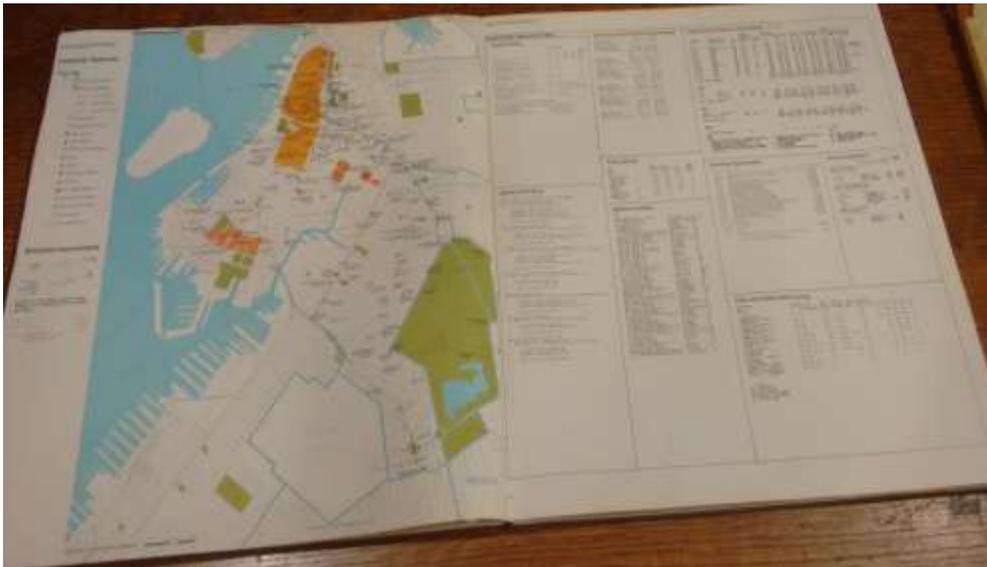
The source gives a fairly decent amount of data about the Gowanus, especially in terms of the streets near it during the 1920's.

One of the related themes the source covers is Gentrification and changes.

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

Comparing this map to today's map will certainly give us an idea on the changes the area around the Gowanus went through. Since this map deals with roads, probably we will get an insight of Robert Moses theory from it. Being in the Gentrification and Community Relations group, I think this source will play an important role for us to do the compare and contrast. .

CITATION for ARCHIVAL SOURCE #2 (consult this [website](#) for help with citations)



Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library. (1969). Plan for New York City. 1969. A proposal. 3 Brooklyn. New York City planning commission. Retrieved from <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/c42cb93f-8db0-ca65-e040-e00a18064e5c>

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

The New York City Planning Commission coined the map to implement the idea of urban renewal and involve the communities. If we zoom in the image above we will see the different community resources in the key.

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

It was created by the New York City Planning Commissions. The map was created for the community people to give them the idea of the urban renewal of the neighborhoods.

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

The source tells us about the city planning and early urban renewal. It also points out the subway facilities, the libraries among other provisions. This might be helpful in inferring the current and the probable facilities that might be alluring for the newcomers of the Gowanus. Some of the themes the map relates to is community relations and public spaces.

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

Since I am working in the Community Relations group, I think this will be a good source to start with. As we talk to the people of the Gowanus, we might be able to soundly infer the usefulness of the amenities mentioned in the source. From the map we also understand that one of the reasons behind its design is to improve the neighborhood. Improvement in the neighborhood is also closely related to our topic of community relations. Thus, this source can be easily integrated to our research.

GENERAL NOTES:

- It is wise to schedule an appointment before using the map room.
- The materials are to be used very cautiously.
- Most of the materials showed during the class were very old and not very relevant to the marketing of the new condominiums in the Gowanus which was one of our group's concern.

- The insurance maps were updated through several years and the way they preserved the updated version was to glue in the modification on top of the older map.
- Different colors in the map present different materials, pink is wood; yellow is concrete.
- There was a rediscovery map, it shows gentrification of Brooklyn.



The rediscovery map of Brooklyn

QUESTIONS for Further RESEARCH

1. Although New Public Library is huge, do you think all your specific questions related to your project was answered clearly? If not, how can one get more information?
2. Will community relations be given enough importance at the time of rezoning the Gowanus? If not, how can it be done so?
3. How has gentrification affected the community at the Gowanus in recent times?

4. How can you plan urban renewal but still keep the spirit of the previous community?

5. Has gentrification played the role of the villain even in the case of the Gowanus just like other parts of Brooklyn?