

Learning Places Summer 2016

SITE REPORT #2

New York Public Library



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06.21.2016

INTRODUCTION

This is the site report of New York Public Library by my observation as we visited with the class including its neighborhood to enrich my knowledge in terms of architecture as well as new discovery.

5th avenue in Midtown Manhattan is one of the fashionable and popular neighborhood in New York City. On June 15th in the early afternoon, under very nice weather we started our first tour of New York Public Library with sketching the architecture on 5th avenue side, main entrance.

As well as we all were, there were many people sitting down in the terrace for reading, eating lunch, chatting with their friends and drawing with some materials provided for an art workshop.



New York Public Library is located between 40th street and 42nd street on 5th avenue. Both 5th avenue and 42nd street are busy street, and on the sidewalk we often see many people walking fast with their phones as typical New York style. However, this terrace, which is elevated a few feet above from the street level, has different moments which I would say is very relaxing, calm, peaceful and cheerful.



This is one of the buildings which stops the grids of streets in Manhattan, and the spot from which we can see the elevated Park avenue that leads to Grand Central Terminal which was also built in the time periods. I saw many tourists taking picture of this architecture and also people waiting for someone.



New York Public Library main branch, The Stephen A. Schwarzman Building is one of the National Historic Landmarks. It was opened in 1911, and designed by the architects John Carrere and Thomas Hastings. Both architects were selected in the competition which 88 people applied, and they were the youngest and least experience. With their ambition for a world class library in order to make better and smarter city, they succeeded in building a beautiful Beaux-Arts style library which used the largest marble stone structure at that time in the United States.

This library has enormous and marvelous collection of books and multiple medias about fine arts, humanity and social science. They have exhibitions, events and classes which all are open to public.

As we were entering inside, already the ornaments on the wall and ceiling started attracted



us.

The marble stones welcomed us at the entrance of the building which are cut into several sizes such as about 2' by 2', 2' by 4', 1.5' by 2', and unique geometry shape lamp above us. What I liked at that moment was the contrast between the pediment above the door and the window behind it. First of all the color difference gives us the focal point, but also they look like a layer to each other.

There was candle lights and some different type of lights inside the building. The Roman arch was applied to the windows and the main structure on the main hall, Astor Hall. Its ceiling was very high. It was almost 30 feet, and somehow I felt some stress from it. As shown in the picture in the middle, there were staircase behind the columns on both side of the hall as symmetrically.

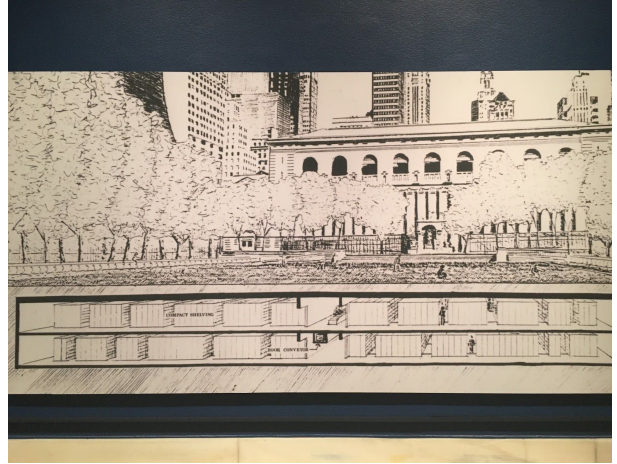


Above this Astor Hall, I saw the same half circle openings as the ones Grand Central Terminal's main concourse has. Also each these half circles are supported by simple columns.

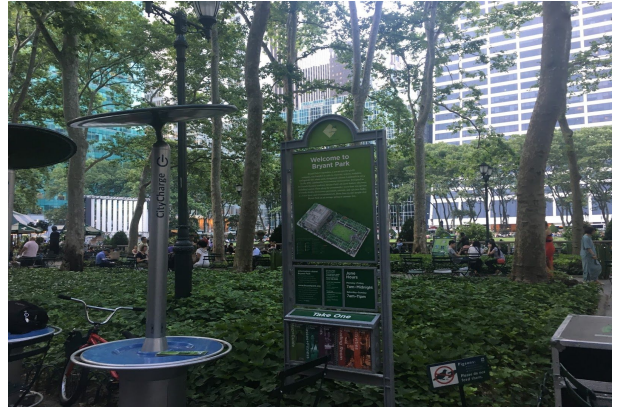


On the second floor, there are a lot of boards and photographs describing the library's history including significant people who worked for this library.

Back to the first floor, there is a room named Dewitt Room, which many people usually work and read books. The room was a little bit darker than I expected, but almost the same brightness as the hall way. About the lighting, as shown in the picture on the left, this was the first lighting that I saw in this building that each light bulbs are not covered by anything.



On the Third Floor, there were some photos and drawings that explained how they started the construction of underground collections storage. Under the Bryant Park, there is a huge two stories high storage right underneath the lawn. This storage allows this library to have such amount of collections, but it also takes time to receive books from there.



The orange studs and concrete structural columns were shown on the left picture, and the right picture shows the current Bryant Park.

Discovery

There were two or three reading rooms that were closed when we visited due to renovation or preparation for private party, but with the audio tour machine, I spent more than one hour on looking around in the library. I have been here before for several times, but each times I just went to the biggest reading room which was the one closed, and I had never explored other rooms until this site visit. As well as the storage underneath the Bryant Park, there were some rooms that I had no idea of they were existed such as researcher rooms (I was not allowed to enter or take a picture). Therefore, this site visit reminded me how important and exciting it is to explore and discover things at places where I have been before. In library, I usually expects many of book shelves to see right after I enter into, but I noticed that I did not see any of them within the distance my hands can reach, every book shelves that I saw was over the counter. Also I did not touch any books while I was staying there. This was very interesting to me. It might be the reason because of their ways to protect books and where they storage, but to me and I believe in general, it is a little bit strange fact. Afterwards, I started wondering if this building were a museum, how it could function. As I already saw some of their collections exhibited on the hallway, I could easily imagine that this could function very well as a



museum. Next thing that came to my mind was surprisingly a museum: Natural History Museum. I felt that they have many of similarities as architecture, especially the hallway and staircases.

KEY WORDS

5th Avenue

Terrace

Grand Central Terminal

Beaux-Arts

John Carrere

Thomas Hastings

Marble stones

Light bulbs

Collections / Storage

Bryant Park

Citation

The New York Public Library. (n.d.). Retrieved June 21, 2016, from <http://www.nypl.org/>

New York Public Library Main Branch. (n.d.). Retrieved June 21, 2016, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_Public_Library_Main_Branch