

Learning Places Summer 2017

Library / Archive REPORT

BPL & Interference Archive Visits

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06.16.2017

INTRODUCTION

The Archive visits were both very interesting to me and were my first experience ever visiting an archive. According to the Oxford Dictionary, an archive is a place in which public records or other important historic documents are kept. There are of course many different types of archives. The archives we visited were an Interference Archive in the neighborhood of Gowanus which was run by volunteers. These volunteers store and collect information that is very historic. This information consists of any data collected that shows the political statements and movements that were made in the neighborhood by the people of that community. The Brooklyn Public Library Archive was the second archive we visited. This archive stored many maps that we were able to get our hands on. They showed the geography and regions of areas and we were able to compare that information to the area we know today. Many of the items that were stored in the library were material that there is only one existing copy of. Therefore, they are very delicate and have to be handled with care. If they are damaged or destroyed, they will no longer be in existence. The purpose of these archive visits were to allow us, the students, an opportunity to see the various research methods that can be used to gather information for our group projects. No matter what topic you chose to research, both archives had information that would help each group get information on their topic.

SITE DOCUMENTATION



This is an image provided by our professor. It is an image of the outside area of the Brooklyn Public Library showing the main entrance to the library located in the center of Grand Army Plaza in Brooklyn. According to the Brooklyn Library website, the Brooklyn Public Library was established in the year 1896 and is the fifth largest library in the nation while currently having 700,000 card holders as of 2017. In this Library we were able to visit the archive on the second floor as well as a morgue in the basement of the library. All items in the library archive are very sensitive to the point where the librarians encourage that we refrained from having any foods or beverages and from using anything but a pencil once we were inside of the room. The items in this room were items that there are currently no other copies of, so good care must be taken of these items so they can last. They did however have certain items like some of the maps that they had recently taken to get scanned. Although it won't be the original document, having a back up scanned copy still serves a good purpose just in case.



This is an image I took of the Interference Archive also located in Brooklyn. We visited two rooms in this Archive which were actually really small, especially comparing to the library space in the Brooklyn Public library. In the first room there were posters on the sides of the walls which were political statements being made about discrimination to the LGBT community and the Hispanic and Black communities. The second room, which is the picture showing above, there were more posters. Apart from posters there were buttons, flyers, books, pamphlets, banners, and more items that were used to translate a message to people. A specific banner that stood out the most to me was a banner that read “instead of saying “I’m damaged, I’m broken, I have trust issues” say “I’m healing, I’m rediscovering myself, I’m starting over””. This quote is relatable to a lot of people. To the people of Gowanus who felt that they had been betrayed by their own landlords because they began to raise their rent and now they were basically being forced out of their own communities that they might have even grown up in. Or the people who lived in buildings that were completely forgotten about by the government and not being well kept. I feel that going through such a hard time like that, someone wanted to send them a message that everything would be okay just keep your head up and keep pushing forward for positivity. In the midst of all the mess that was going on, i would have also liked to see some words of encouragement from my fellow neighbors.

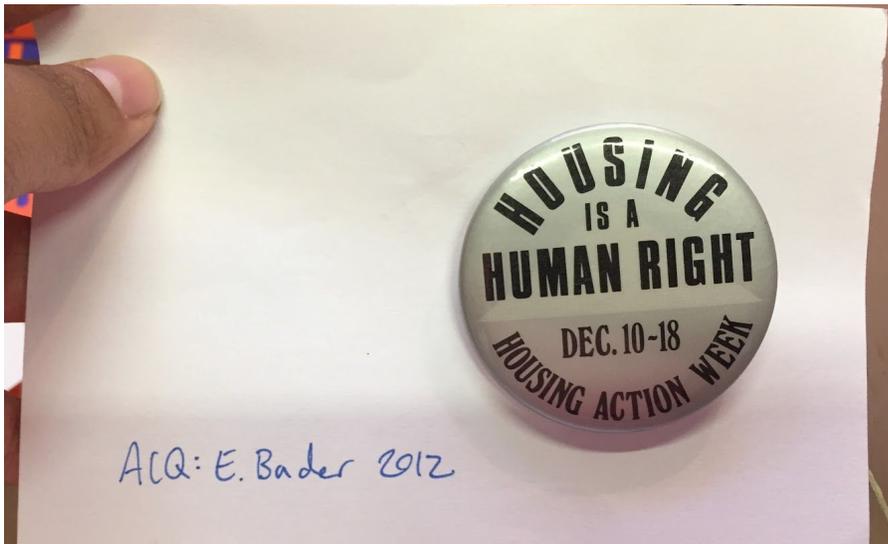
SITE DOCUMENTATION



Unknown. (1833). MAP of The City. Retrieved from Brooklyn Public Library Archive

This is an image of one of the maps we were able to get our hands on at the library archive. It's not one of the more sensitive items that we had to wear gloves on to touch but it's still delicate and had to be handled with care. While observing this map we were able to see that there was some information regarding the actual time the

map was created on the map itself. This map is titled "MAP of The City" and was established on January 5th, 1833. This map showed us parts of Brooklyn and we were able to see what the Gowanus neighborhood looked like in the 1800's. This map specifically showed us that the area near the Gowanus was mainly not building property. The canal itself was wider and there weren't many residential buildings in the area. Some of the larger maps we viewed were more detailed and specific with keys demonstrating what each item on the map meant. They showed the residential versus commercial buildings. They also got detailed enough where they compared the material that the buildings were built with. I was surprised to see how many of the buildings were made out of wood that were near the waterfront. Wood buildings were subject to cost more because it would be harder to maintain if they ever caught on fire because the fire would quickly travel to other buildings made out of wooden materials. The maps in this archives would be very useful when comparing the Gowanus neighborhood back then to what it looks like now. The specific focus is housing and it would be beneficial to know how many housing complexes were built as time went by.



Bader. E, (2012). [Housing is a human right]. Interference Archive (Housing/Buttons Box).

This image was taken in the interference archive. On the table inside the archive there were two boxes. One specific box had a variety of buttons that were made in protest by the people being put out of their homes. This button reads "Housing is A Human Right, Housing Action Week, Dec. 10-18" it is believed to be created by one E. Bader in 2012. This button symbolizes that housing should be available for all and it should accommodate all. Having higher prices on certain apartments because landlords are trying to get rid of certain tenants is something that should be prohibited. People should also be able to trust that their landlords and building owners will not attempt to betray them by having them put out of their own neighborhoods. This relates to the topic of housing in the Gowanus because it showed that no matter what the people went through, they were able to still keep their heads up and come together for a good purpose. They did not remain silent, they stood of for each other and came together as a community should be even though there were others who tried to tear the community apart.

GENERAL NOTES:

- The Brooklyn Public Library has the actual eagle from the Brooklyn Eagle Newsletter.
- Brooklyn Eagle donated a lot of their documents to the Brooklyn Public Library once they were no longer going to be in existence.
- There is a variety of Archives that store all different types of information depending on your needs.
- The maps stored in the Brooklyn Library have information for about about 12,000 different cities in the nation.

KEYWORDS/VOCABULARY & DEFINITIONS

Archive: A place in which public records or other important historic documents are kept

Depository: A place or receptacle in which things are deposited or placed for safe keeping; a storehouse, a repository.

Squatting: Occupying land as a squatter or squatters.

Letterhead: A printed heading on a stationary, especially one giving the name and address of a business.

Eminent Domain: Laws put in place that allows for the removal of residents from their own homes/property.

Propaganda: The spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an

institution, or group of people.

Ephemera: Something that does not last long, only goes on for a short period of time.

Morgue: A collection of reference works and files of reference materials in a newspaper or news periodical office.

QUESTIONS for Further RESEARCH

1. What can be done to ensure that archives receive more support from their government and communities?
2. What system is used to ensure that the information in the archives is not biased to a certain group and kept neutral only providing facts?
3. What are the pros and cons of having historical maps stored for a long period of time without having a second copy of it?

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