

Learning Places Summer 2017

# Library / Archive REPORT

INTERFERENCE ARCHIVE & BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY

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## INTRODUCTION

On the first site visit our class visited Interference Archive that is located in Gowanus neighborhood, to be specific it is on 8th St between 2nd and 3rd Ave. First we had presentation about archives, what is their purpose and what are the types of archives? As for Interference archive it is a volunteer-run, non-profit organization that collects historical materials pertaining political and social movement. The purpose of the interference archive is to learn the relationship between culture and social movements and to preserve famous historical facts and material culture that are often marginalized ([www.interferencearchive.org](http://www.interferencearchive.org)). Later we were introduced to materials, in the archive, that were collected and organized by material type. There were publications, books, photographs, T-shirts, flyers, posters, etc. In other words the materials that were created for political and social movements by the participants. This cultural ephemera is used in order to save history and important historic facts for people in the future, so they always can come back to history, explore, and research any political or social topics that they are interested in ([www.interferencearchive.org](http://www.interferencearchive.org)). Main supporters of the archive are sustaining donors - people that donate money every month to archive, and the community that believes in the interference archive. Also, donations from any visitor and people interested in political and social movements are always welcome.

Our second site visit with class was visiting Central location of Brooklyn Public Library, which is called Brooklyn Public Library Grand Army Plaza. It is located at Flatbush Avenue and Eastern Parkway on Grand Army Plaza. Additionally, this library hosts readings, lectures, and other events for people with any age. Librarian Jane met and greeted us at the entrance of the library and took us to Reserve Room first. By the way, that room has no pens policy. Class was introduced to atlases, letterheads and sanborn maps. Latter ones were very interesting to me since

I have never heard about them before. Sanborn maps were created in the US to assess fire damage potential in urbanized cities. We explored Gowanus neighborhood and Brooklyn in general, on sanborn maps. Also, we learned how these maps were created and developed. One of the maps was since 1880s. It was exciting to learn that hundreds years ago everything was built from brick, on the sanborn map marked in pink color, and wood - marked in yellow. At the very end of the tour we visited library's morgue, which is a newspaper archive.

## SITE DOCUMENTATION (photos\*)



This photograph is taken at Interference Archive. It demonstrates an open stack books, which means books that are collected on the shelves. Also, it was impressive to see linen napkins embroidered with different agendas. In my opinion, these napkins have a very personal touch.



This is photograph taken at Interference Archive. It shows how materials were collected and stored in the boxes, and organized by material type. Thus, any person interested in gentrification for instance, can have an easy access to information with that particular topic. And there are two little jars for donations that are welcomed from anybody.



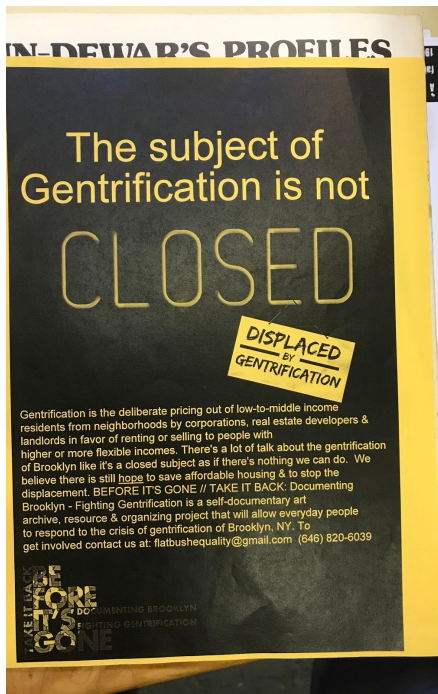
This photograph is taken at Brooklyn Public Library Grand Army Plaza. The name of the room is Howard Golden Reserve Room. It has no pens policy and materials borrowed from this room can not be taken home, they can only be used in the library. The purpose of this room is to collect and preserve important historic information such as sanborn maps and so forth.





This photograph is taken at Brooklyn Public Library Grand Army Plaza. To be specific, this room is called morgue, which is a newspaper archive. On the picture we can see little boxes with handles, inside of this boxes are codes. With the help of these codes a person can find newspaper with a particular topic.

## SITE DOCUMENTATION (Sources\*)



### CITATION for ARCHIVAL SOURCE #1

This photograph demonstrates that people were fighting against gentrification in Brooklyn NY. The title of the flyer is “The subject of Gentrification is not CLOSED”. This flyer was created in order to explain what gentrification is?

And to provide necessary contact information with an email and phone number so people could join this movement. Subsequent goal is to oppose gentrification and to save affordable housing in Brooklyn. This flyer focuses on the theme of gentrification. Gentrification is a displacement of low-income families by renovating and improving a house or district so that it conforms to middle-class taste. Therefore, the residents that used to live in Flatbush and can no longer afford the rent call people in the same position to fight for their housing. In other words, residents of Flatbush and East Flatbush created a project and spread flyers in order to invite every volunteer and collaborator who currently live in Brooklyn to respond to the crisis of gentrification of Brooklyn NY.

Citation:

Unknown, (n.d.) “The Subject of Gentrification is not CLOSED” Interference Archive (Box 11, Folder Gentrification), Brooklyn, NY.



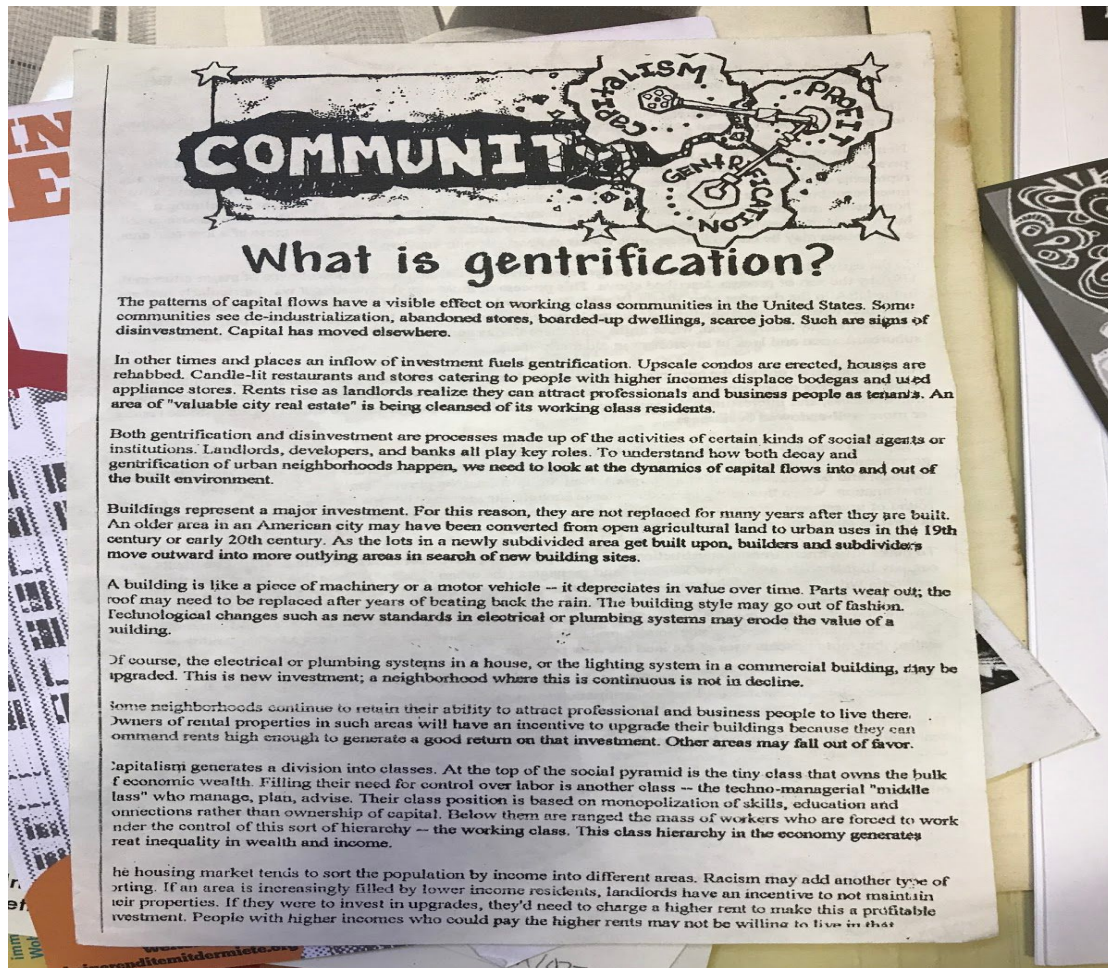
#### **CITATION for ARCHIVAL SOURCE #2**

This photograph illustrates Carroll Street Bridge over Gowanus Canal in 195?. I noticed that surrounding areas were very industrial at that time. Also, there are docked boats on the left hand side of Gowanus Canal. At 1900s boats were heavily used and were one of the major ways to transport any products and people. There are warehouses and industrial plants on both sides of the canal. Also, there are parked cars and trucks on the right hand side of the canal and water tower on top of the 3 storey building on the right side as well. I find it important to mention again, in the left bottom corner there are several tugboats indicating past activity in the Brooklyn ports. Presumably, these boats helped to dock large ships to nearby ports. On top of the photograph, on the left hand side of the canal there is an oil terminal. Spills are very common in oil industry, perhaps, some spills had occurred at that time and that is how Gowanus Canal was contaminated in 1900s. Thus, this photograph demonstrates an oil industry that was well developed in 1900s and states one of the Gowanus Canal pollutions at that time.

Citation:

Unknown, (195?) "Carroll Street Bridge" Reserve Room, Brooklyn Public Library, Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn, NY





This photograph demonstrates explanation of gentrification process. The title of the flyer is "Community. What is gentrification?" It was created by PRO-COMMUNITY in 2013 in order to spread awareness among people about gentrification and the ways to oppose it and to stop it. The flyer touches on two themes: gentrification and capitalism. In regards to gentrification it states that upscale condos and houses have been built in order to cater to middle class and working class residents are being displaced. Additionally, the rent prices are going up, so low-income families can not afford them anymore. However, these high rent prices attract residents with higher income. Also, the flyer provides a statement that capitalism generates



division into classes. At the top of social pyramid - small class that owns major economic wealth, then goes middle class that plans and manages, and lastly in the bottom of pyramid is a poor working class, which is often gentrified by middle class. The purpose of this flyer is to explain the meaning of gentrification and capitalism and how these two processes work in current society. And the back side of the flyer states how it is possible to oppose gentrification, what are the methods? Thus, the working class communities have an opportunity to protect themselves by joining the movement. Some of the best methods of opposition are: anti-eviction and rent control ordinances done by activists. It is important to highlight meaningful words at the bottom of the back side of the flyer: PRO-COMMUNITY ANTI-CAPITALIST. This message indicates that activists of this movement are against of capitalism and are protecting their communities.

Citation:

PRO-COMMUNITY, (2013) "Community. What is gentrification?" Interference Archive, (Box 15, Folder "Gentrification"), Brooklyn, NY

**CITATION for ARCHIVAL SOURCE #4**



This photograph illustrates two recreational boats on the water of Gowanus. Perhaps, these boats were not used for a while, because they seem very worn-out and not maintained properly. Further back, there are pedestrians crossing the bridge and well maintained low rise buildings. And on the left hand side there are plenty of trees and former warehouses in shabby conditions, which is implications of Gowanus area transformation from industrial to residential area. This photograph has relations to urban renewal theme. The signs of this theme are old warehouses that are in terrible conditions and not in need anymore. Therefore, it seems that they will be demolished soon and new luxury high-rise buildings with expensive condos will be build.

Citation:

Golden, G. (2011). "Life on the Gowanus". *Brooklyn Collection*. Brooklyn Public Library, NY.  
Retrieved from  
[https://brooklyn.bibliocommons.com/item/show/11781951062?active\\_tab=bib\\_info](https://brooklyn.bibliocommons.com/item/show/11781951062?active_tab=bib_info)

#### GENERAL NOTES:

- Archives exist with the goal of collecting and preserving historical records, materials. Therefore, people are able to learn about history from primary sources and have access to ephemera, historical facts.
- Archives accumulate first hand and secondary source documents that have been collected during certain period of time or particular organization's lifetime.
- Brooklyn Public Library Grand Army Plaza stores sanborn maps. One of the maps was from 1880s. Sanborn maps are vital source for historical research, sociological studies, and planning.
- Sanborn maps contain detailed information about the buildings of the US cities and towns.

## KEYWORDS/VOCABULARY & DEFINITIONS

1. **Letterhead** – A printed heading on a sheet of letter paper containing the name, address etc., of an organization or individual. (Oxford English Dictionary)
2. **Sanborn map** – were originally created for assessing fire insurance liability in urbanized areas in the US.
3. **Eminent domain** – Ultimate or supreme lordship; the superiority of sovereign power over all the property in the state, in accordance with which it is entitled to appropriate by constitutional methods any part required for the public advantage, compensation being given to the owner. (OED)
4. **Microfilm** – Film containing microphotographs of the pages of a book, periodical, etc. (OED)
5. **Microfiche** – A flat piece of film, usually the size of a standard index card, containing microphotographs of the pages of a book, periodical, catalogue, etc. (OED)
6. **Deposit** – Something laid up in a place, or committed to the charge of a person, for safe keeping.(OED)
7. **Ephemera** – (plural) Paper items (such as posters, broadsides, and tickets) that were originally meant to be discarded after use but have since become collectibles. (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)



8. **Morgue** – A collection of reference works and files of reference material in a newspaper or news periodical office (M-WD)
9. **Card Catalog** – A catalog (as of books) in which the entries are arranged systematically on cards (M-WD)
10. **Containerization** – To pack into, or transport by means of, containers (OED)
11. **Squat** – To occupy as a squatter; squat in an abandoned building (M-WD)
12. **Provenance** – (1) origin, source (2) the history of ownership of a valued object or work of art or literature (M-WD)
13. **Emulators** – Hardware or software that permits programs written for one computer to be run on another computer (M-WD)
14. **Urban Renewal** – The redevelopment of areas within a town or city, typically involving the clearance of slums (OED)
15. **Inner City** – The central area of a city, especially regarded as having particular problems of overcrowding, poverty, etc. (OED)
16. **Suburbanization** – The action of making something (esp. rural area) suburban. (OED)
17. **Segregation** – The separation or isolation of a portion of a community or a body of persons

from the rest. (OED)

18. **Marginalization** – To relegate to an unimportant position within a society. (M-WD)

19. **Polarization** – Division into two opposites (M-WD)

## QUESTIONS for Further RESEARCH

1. How efficient donation system for archives is? What are the other effective options to support archives ?
2. Do archives get in troubles politic wise ? How dangerous can that be? If that is the case, what are the ways to protect them?
3. How sanborn maps were created? What are the efficient ways to store and maintain them in present and for the future?
4. How far back in the past materials and documents are collected and stored in Brooklyn Public Library ? And what is the most efficient way to preserve them for future generations?

## Works Cited

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