

The Seward Park Branch and Educational Services: 1909-1959

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, libraries have consistently been tied to an educational philosophy in some way or another. Historical pieces which examine educational services provided by public libraries in the first half of the twentieth century are in abundance. Such surveys make heavy use of rhetoric found in national library literature as well as annual reports issued by public library systems to cite trends in educational services provided by public libraries. Yet, analyses of the way in which individual branch libraries performed educational services during this period are not forthcoming. To this end, this study performs a mixed content analysis of branch records and use statistics to determine the way in which a single branch (Seward Park) of a major library system (The New York Public Library) was able to fulfill an educative purpose for adults and children in its first fifty years of operation (1909-1959). Educational services were schematized into 14 distinct categories. Findings reveal that the branch's particular relationship with its educational purpose was often determined by neighborhood trends, material conditions, and ideological posturing.

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Chapter I: The Problem

Introduction

The proceedings of the thirty-first annual conference of the American Library Association in 1909 contain a speech delivered by Dr. Charles W. Colby, professor of history at McGill University. His speech sought to address the relationship between the library and its educative purpose. Colby painted a picture of the public library as nothing if not an optimistic expression of the supreme abilities of mankind through their hunger for knowledge. That said, Colby recognized that the twentieth century was a time when the relationship to knowledge as-such was increasingly complicated; that, if “all the world’s knowledge” could have been grasped only a generation prior to his own, this was no longer the case in a heterogeneous era of sub-disciplines and expertise (p. 181). Not only this, but the library’s relationship to its educative purpose was complicated by its increasing acceptance of service to the “general reader”. Colby remarks that,

[...] one must not think of the serious minded only. The bulk of mankind are not intellectual; neither are they stupid. Every teacher feels that in his class ten per cent at the top will do well in spite of him, and that fifteen per cent at the bottom could not be brought to know anything by all the eloquence of Abelard. It is the intermediate seventy-five per cent that causes the conscientious pedagogue to lose sleep. So with the library. (p. 182)

That same year in November, The Seward Park Library would open its doors to the people of the Lower East Side. A year later, this famously crowded neighborhood would reach peak congestion at 542,061 inhabitants. As the Lower East Side was the major locus of

immigration to America in the first half of the twentieth century, many of these inhabitants did not speak English, nor were they accustomed to the American way of life. Many came from rural towns where city life was not only strange, but undesirable (Rischin, 1962, p. 93). Indeed, one may say that the immigrants coming to the Lower East Side still had much to learn about life in the big city. In an environment of stifling anonymity among the thongs of languages and peoples, for many of these immigrants the public library was often the first introduction of the newly arrived to some idea of what “America” was. In a 1974 article published in the *Jewish Frontier*, Mary Anne Dorbis Henkin remembers:

I had been in America but a few days and was sitting on the stoop, taking in the hectic, changing scene before us, when I spied a little girl before me reading a book. In sign language I asked for a look and she, with appropriate gestures and with a mixture of Yiddish and English offered to take me there. In our hand-me-down shoes several sizes too big for our feet, we trudged to the library, eyed with awe its dignified facade, and shuffled in as quickly as we could into the interior. I shall never forget the friendly, sympathetic, half-pitying smile of the librarian, as she asked us what we wanted. Our interpreter explained and recited our brief history. Another librarian came over [who] spoke Yiddish. We turned eagerly to her. Could we get a book, too? [...] We learned there were books for children in other languages, too. We looked at her. No fairy god-mother had such wonderful gifts. (p. 31)

All across America public branch libraries were opening their doors to their publics, seeking to provide access to educational materials and services which would enrich the lives of

those within their neighborhood. Scenes like the one above could not have been uncommon. From 1890-1910, in lock-step with the reform era values which were the foundation of the early library's educational purpose, public libraries and library systems would blossom all over the United States. Not only this; their educational purpose would grow in ambition with the development of reference services and services for children, laying the foundations for the library as we know it today (Williams, 1988, p.29).

In its first fifty years of operation (1909-1959) the educational ideals of service at the Seward Park branch as well as many American public libraries would undergo a series of changes as librarians would shed their more passive role as book lenders, seeking to expand the horizon of educational services, striving to serve Dr. Colby's "seventy-five per cent".

Background of Problem

There is a considerable collection of literature to be found that examines general national trends in educational services of the American public library in the early twentieth century. Additionally, there are a few interesting case studies that examine the way in which particular library systems responded to national currents and philosophies of educational service or adopted national initiatives. Much of the content of these analyses is drawn from literature of the library profession whose pieces were often written to inform audiences seeking a broad perspective on patterns of educational service to the public. Yet, no prominent study exists that deeply evaluates a single branch's relationship to its educative purpose as it navigated challenges unique to its own neighborhood.

Statement of Problem Situation

The following project stands on the shoulders of the aforementioned histories (a number of which are represented in the second chapter) which sought to understand larger trends within educational services to patrons during this period. That said, many of these studies draw information from rhetorical pieces and annual reports which appeared in major library journals. As pointed out in Eric Novotny's (2003) case study of the Chicago Public Library system's relationship to Americanization and services to immigrants, oftentimes the rhetoric issued by public library systems and their actual practices do not match up; the "profession's response" contained within library literature cannot stand in place of a serious engagement with the issues surrounding educational services by library staff themselves (p. 349). To this end, this project seeks to gain an understanding of how a public library branch (Seward Park) of a major library system (The New York Public Library) was able to fulfill an educative purpose for children and adults in its first fifty years of operation.

The fifty years to be examined in this study (1909-1959) are not just a round figure. The Seward Park branch is located in the Lower East Side, an area which would undergo a tremendous amount of change in this fifty year period. In 1959, the landmark Seward Park Cooperative Houses were completed, which now surround the original 1909 structure. These cooperative houses changed the face of the neighborhood irrevocably. In many ways, this study seeks to determine the way in which educational services were carried out in the "old" neighborhood of the Lower East Side as it dealt with issues such as immigration, poverty, and depopulation. Additionally, the 1960s would see a distinct change in philosophy of educational services in the nation's public libraries, the full details and implications of which will be

discussed in the literature review, below. The fifty year period, while a historical convenience, also serves a distinct purpose.

Purpose of Study

This project was undertaken in the belief that while national portraits of educational services provided by public libraries during this period are undoubtedly a major contribution to the literature on this said topic, an historical effort which studies the phenomena of educational services of a single branch library may reveal factors of educational services in public libraries previously unobserved or under-emphasized. It is hoped that in altering the scale of observation from the national and library system level to a more community-oriented study, the conclusions this project makes may serve to complete or challenge generalizations made by the large body of macro-studies this project draws from in chapter two.

Conceptual or Substantive Assumptions

Given that many of the sources which this piece's originality is based upon come from the written records of library professionals themselves, it is only fair to explicitly state certain assumptions this study necessarily makes. First of all, it is assumed that the written reflections of personnel are true statements which reflect the majority, if not the entirety, of what the author wished to express. Secondly, it is assumed that these expressions were not distorted by pressure from the library system or their publics to produce flattering or problematic accounts of their service. While it is fully acknowledged that these assumptions are potentially reckless and detrimental to a more subtle understanding of the period, its necessity is maintained for the sake of rendering the project manageable; mostly due to time constraints, the scope of the web of

content which would need to be consulted in order to tease out any ulterior motives embedded within the sources is simply beyond the purview of this essay.

Research Questions

In order to gain an understanding of how the Seward Park branch was able to fulfill an educative purpose for children and adults in its first fifty years of operation, this project will attempt to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What kinds of educational services to adults were carried out at the Seward Park library during its first fifty years?

RQ2: What kinds of educational services to children were carried out at the Seward Park library during its first fifty years?

RQ3: How were educational services used by patrons at the Seward Park branch?

Importance of Study

As stated before, it is hypothesized that examining documents which contain the phenomena of educational services of a single branch library may reveal qualitative factors in educational services in public libraries previously unobserved or under-emphasized. It is hoped that in altering the scale of observation from the national and library system level to a more neighborhood-oriented study, the conclusions this project makes may serve to complete or

challenge generalizations made by the large body of macro-studies this project draws from in the literature review.

Additionally, though the library of early to mid-twentieth century may be very different from the library of the twenty-first century in many ways, the relationship between the public library and its educational purpose, while markedly different, remains significant. The degree to which we may learn from acquainting ourselves with the educational challenges of the library of one hundred years ago may well serve to prepare us for the educational challenges which the future holds. As previously mentioned, the Seward Park branch is a branch of an iconic urban public library system located in the Lower East Side, a neighborhood which stood at the center of the twentieth century American debate surrounding immigration and Americanization, as well as social issues such as poverty, housing, and unemployment, among others. To this day libraries are still seeking to properly address these challenges in the twenty-first century, especially in light of growing income inequality, cultural tensions, and urbanization; the way in which the Seward Park branch succeeded or fell short of addressing these challenges can be a lesson of great importance and relevance. Perhaps disparities between the narrative of national rhetoric behind library service and the metanarratives around practices of neighborhood librarians in response to changes in the neighborhood more than a century ago may help illustrate similar disparities in theory and practice which persist today.

Chapter II: Review of Related Literature

Overview

A survey of trends reveals that there are, generally speaking, three periods which fall between 1909-1959 that can be regarded as distinct from one another: 1909-1929, 1930-1946, 1947-1959. These periods are, for convenience, clarified as the progressive era and the twenties, the depression and war years, and the postwar years. It must be urged that the reader exercise a high degree of understanding that while these three periods did more or less demonstrate separate philosophies of service, one can safely assume that these various “sea changes” may not have been so viscerally felt by library personnel or patrons from one year (or decade) to the next.

Before looking at these periods in-depth, it is helpful to point out that the library literature published during the first fifty years of the Seward Park branch reflected two general trends: first, beginning in the twenties, circulation numbers alone would cease to be the paramount measurement of effectiveness of educational service during these fifty years. Librarians across America would increasingly develop a more holistic understanding of their educational mission, extending their services outside the walls of their library, seeking to immerse themselves within the affairs of their neighborhood’s social network (Bloom, 1976, p.386); second, that public libraries placed a great deal of emphasis on their “educative” role in society over against their “informative” role. To elaborate, if librarians during this time period were taking their work to the streets to gain a greater understanding of their communities, the way in which librarians understood their mission in terms of serving the needs of the community were much different from the way one might understand this relationship today (Bloom, 1976, p. 387). If the library of today can be generically summarized as a user-oriented organization, the library of the first

half of the twentieth century was institution-oriented insofar as it carried with it a great deal of assumptions as to what the value of an education consisted of, which were shared amongst a cultural elite (Ferguson, 1972, p. 752).

Particularly after the mid-sixties, library service would undergo a tremendous amount of change due to pressure from the populist social movements tied in with the decade. Whether from boldness to meet new challenges or from fear of obsolescence, libraries throughout the nation would radically reconsider their role in society, aiming to remain a vital force in this new populist era (Williams, 1988, p. 99). In turn, if since the 1960s the aims of the library's educative purpose in light of the countercultural movement and civil rights typically sought to understand how groups within a neighborhood might function in relative advantage or disadvantage to each other through coming to terms with antagonisms of race, income, age, and educational background, "community" in the first half of the twentieth century was commonly employed to evoke a set of homogeneous social, civic, and educational ideals to which library service was an inseparable part. Whether or not these elitist educational ideals of library service in the early twentieth century were beneficial or harmful will not be taken up in this paper; that said, the reader must bear this distinction in mind to fully understand the philosophy of service that characterized the era this project tries to understand (Bloom, 1976, p. 387).

1909-1929—The Progressive era and the twenties

Introduction—1909-1929

The beginning of the twentieth century saw the establishment of library systems throughout the nation. This period is intimately associated with the aims of the reform

movement. Characteristic of the movement was a concern for the discrepancy between the moral ideals of the potential patrons and the actual social conditions in which they had to live. Thus, the “eternal verities” in good books were thought to enhance the quality of life of one who was by-and-large cursed by the strife and hardship of daily routine. In this light, integral to the educational mission of librarians of the progressive period was their acting as a guide for their patrons towards better quality reading. In other words, the ability for libraries to provide access to high quality literature for the casual reader was paramount, as it was thought to contain the transformative seeds of personal betterment (Bloom, 1976, p. 381).

If we wish to understand the philosophy of service during this period, it can be succinctly summarized as a duty to provide “the best books for the greatest number at the least cost”. This rather passive attitude towards educational service would mostly remain unchallenged during this period until the 1920s. As the decade progressed, many in the profession began to feel that merely placing good books on library shelves and taking metrics of use was a poor method of service. This changing viewpoint was embodied in Carl Roden’s 1923 address to the American Library Association, who advocated for a more active kind of service which would instead work with patrons to produce a greater understanding of their needs. Instead of a “library for librarians”, libraries would emphasize the choice of the reader. Roden saw this as the future of library service, and in such a way, saw library service in its promotion of readers’ choice as essential to the future of democracy itself (Bloom, 1976, p. 381). These were the first winds of readers advisory service and the field of active adult educational services in libraries. Tied up with the development of these services was an attempt to understand collection and programming needs of the city’s ever-increasing industrial workers, the institutionalized,

members of adult education classes (such as English classes), and service to rural inhabitants. While the closing of the twenties would see a more sensitive approach to adult services, reading needs resulting from disparities of race were rarely, if ever, considered (Bloom, 1976, pp. 382-383).

Adult educational services & patron interest—1909-1929

What exactly constituted educational services for adults was a source of considerable debate in the twenties. William S. Learned, employee of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching was an avid proponent of adult education programs which would establish the public library as a location for “community intelligence”. In concrete terms, libraries would be an institution of knowledge in whatever form it took, be it books, lectures, art exhibits, and even moving pictures. ALA president Judson T. Jennings, another aggressive proponent of adult education, believed that such expansions of service were off-base; the proper field of activity was books and other printed matter. Jennings believed that the proper domain of adult education by public libraries was to offer reader’s advisory service, publish reading courses, and increase the availability of books in whatever way possible; any services which went beyond the promotion of print material was not an appropriate endeavor (Williams, 1988, p. 43).

Hand-in-hand with the changing attitudes towards adult educational services was the debate surrounding service to immigrants. Since the late nineteenth century, immigration from Great Britain, Germany, and Ireland sharply decreased, while immigration from southern and eastern Europe and Asia sharply increased. A growing concern that the cultural rift between the

Anglo-American tradition and traditions brought by new waves of foreign immigration would be too great to surmount became the cause of much unease (Novotny, 2003, p. 343).

It would not be until the year 1903 that providing books to immigrants would be recognized in major journals of the profession as an issue of serious concern. Edwin White Gaillard's "Why Public Libraries Should Supply Books in Foreign Languages" argued that libraries ought to meet the needs of working classes whether they spoke English or not. Typical of the educational pretenses of the day, Gaillard argued that duty to morally uplift Americans of all ethnic backgrounds was too important to ignore. Therefore, the best books of the English language ought to be translated and offered at any library with a foreign born population. This article was followed up by a response from J. Maud Campbell in *Library Journal*. While agreeing that service to immigrants was important, Campbell believed that an effort to understand and make accommodations for the tastes of immigrants themselves was a better way to serve the foreign born than by pushing a librarian's idea of wholesome material onto the patron (Novotny, 2003, p. 345).

Despite the rhetorical grandstanding of the national conversation around library service to immigrants, actual efforts towards this end were frequently unsuccessful. A typical case of this is borne out in Eric Novotny's (2003) case study of the Chicago Public Library system, whose 1916 commitment to meeting the challenges of a changing Chicago fell woefully short despite genuine efforts to train staff on how to conduct storytimes and properly perform reference work with immigrant populations. A decade after the plan's initial publication, books in languages other than English made up a measly 8% of all circulating materials. From book selection to outreach

to foreign born communities, the most significant barrier to service was usually due to the fact that most librarians did not speak the language of their constituency in areas of high immigration. Despite the best of intentions, library service to immigrants usually involved a slow process of getting to know various institutions in the neighborhood who could act as a conduit for explaining various library services. After all, to many new Americans, the very concept of borrowing books at no cost was a strange one (Novotny, 2003, p. 346).

In terms of educational programming, a popular approach overcoming the difficulties of cultural incongruity was “Americanization” programs. Practically speaking, this would involve teaching new Americans the English language, United States History, and lessons in civics. In more extreme cases, Americanization pressed upon the need for foreigners to shed the cultural habits brought with them from their country of origin. Naturally, the library’s commitment to education as well as their presence in major American cities would place library work at the center of the Americanization debate (Novotny, 2003, p. 343).

Lest we simplify a complicated issue, it’s fair to remember that despite the paternalistic undertones of Americanization programs which may upset today’s reader, library literature on the whole reflected a generally progressive attitude towards immigrants at a time when the culture was rife with theories of genetic inferiority and essential degeneracy of new immigrant groups (Novotny, 2003, p. 349). If one were to go so far as to claim efforts towards Americanization were nothing if not an agent of social control pushing the values of ruling elites, which is reasonable to a degree, it would have to do so at the expense of downplaying the fact that these efforts expressed a rare form of concern in a desert of hostility. After all, instruction is a two-way

street. Oftentimes these programs brought librarians closer to the cultures of their constituency, serving as a bridge towards better, more equitable service (Novotny, 2003, p. 344). A seminal advisory pamphlet by Cleveland librarian Eleanor E. Ledbetter (1918) is a shining example of the common responsibility felt by librarians towards their public. Ledbetter recommends that the librarian frequently leave the building to get to know the markets, clubs, and newspapers offered in foreign languages. While many efforts of librarians were sure to be met with suspicion or outright disdain, Ledbetter emphasizes the virtue of patience and persistence (Ledbetter, 1918, pp. 10-11). Ledbetter writes:

To be sure, all people of foreign birth are not alike, nor are any of them just like Americans. It is only fair, however, to remember that no two Americans are just alike. The Bohemian and the Pole, those brother Slavs, in all essentials of thought and living differ no more widely than the New Englander and the Southerner, or the Southerner and the Westerner. The word "foreigner" is, therefore, only a term of convenience, not of large descriptive value, and after my years among them, our friends in the 'foreign districts' certainly seem to me to differ from the American stock, not in fundamentals, but only in minor characteristics. Like us, they are honest and sincere, or the reverse. They love and hate, they trust and distrust, just as we do. They are kind friends, good neighbors, intensely grateful for kindness from others, and, to their credit, be it said, less nervous and more even tempered than we are. (pp. 2-3)

Children's educational services & patron interest—1909-1929

Arguably, the early twentieth century's most significant development, educational or otherwise, was service to children. Though service to children might seem to be an obvious facet of library service today, it was not even considered a category of service at the time of the ALA's founding in 1876 (Fenwick, 1976, p. 334). Much of this had to do with the way in which American society regarded childhood in the nineteenth century. Instead of a period of life which required specific needs and quality of attention, childhood was popularly understood as a sort of "chrysalis" state before adulthood. The increasing urbanization of America during this period saw the employment of children in factories under obscene working conditions; this development helped to elevate the issue of children's welfare as a major social concern (Fenwick, 1976, p. 330). Library professionals began to recognize the importance of establishing the reading habit early on in a person's life in order to instill a lifelong commitment to education. Unlike rural areas, cultivating an education had clear advantages in the big cities and provided a way out of the dangerous, exploitative factories. Libraries saw themselves as a crucial component to providing this education (Williams, 1988, p. 30).

While the last decade of the nineteenth century introduced circulation desks and reading rooms for children at a select few branches, children's librarians were not granted full professional status by the ALA until 1900 (Fenwick, 1976, p. 344). Thereafter, great gains were made in the first two decades of the century towards children's services, characterized by bold experiments which sought to develop and organize new methods for working with children. Many library systems began separate children's departments and collections which sought to meet the needs of young patrons. Vigorous programs of outreach to neighborhood youth

organizations were undertaken to spread the word about the library's various educational offerings, including storytimes, literary and oratory clubs, among other efforts. In some cases, outreach took the form of offering full reference service to public schools who did not have a school library of their own (Fenwick, 1976, p. 342). While the aggressive, innovative tactics of librarians' service to children would begin to subside in the 1920s, this active philosophy of service was very much characteristic of children's librarianship in the progressive era.

1930-1946—The Depression and war years

Introduction—1930-1946

On a cultural level, the America of the thirties and forties saw changes on a scale and pace never known before. Attitudes were increasingly at the sway of mass communicative forms of information consumption such as the radio and cinema, relegating audiences to the backseat as passive spectator as opposed to active participant. The executive power of the president of the United States was strengthened. Public schools would serve as "social services stations", providing hot lunches, health examinations, and lessons in citizenship. Higher education would gradually become popularized and began to accept students who may have been considered academically lacking in the past; the aims of education became increasingly utilitarian (Rice, 1953, p. 185). Studies of antiquity in higher education, once a mainstay of the educated person, declined in importance and was seen as a luxury rather than an academic requirement (Rice, 1953, p. 189). The availability of the paperback, made possible through new technologies in book production and the streamlining of the publishing process, made available a deluge of titles in American bookstores, drugstores, and the library itself, having a profound influence on the way America read books (Enoch, 1954, pp. 213-215).

Adult educational services & patron interest—1930-1946

One can imagine the impact the Great Depression had on the ability of the library to follow through with certain educational services begun in the previous decades. Many of the gains towards adult education made during the progressive period (such as robust reader services programs) were severely curtailed if not eliminated due to insufficient staff levels (Bloom, 1976, p. 382). When employees left their station at a branch, the position would typically remain frozen for years. If by 1939 the worst of the Depression years were over, the onset of the Second World War brought with it similar troubles; staff depletion and other trials which had occurred as a result of the Depression resumed in the forties as a result of the war effort. Rather than expand educational services, many libraries shifted priorities to repairing book collections so that cuts to funding would not be felt quite so severely (Ferguson, 1972, p. 744). After all, book collections were hit especially hard during the Depression as book expenditures fell more sharply than total library expenditures, which declined at average of 13% between 1930 and 1935 (Herdman, 1943, p. 320). Small victories in collection preservation and building repairs came by way of help from WPA programs (Kramp, 1975, p. 63).

Circulation of the 1930s demonstrated that patron interests were increasingly practical in nature, seeking materials which would help them in their vocational aspirations. This was a unique development in the library's educational premise. Total figures of circulation soared, with nonfiction titles focusing on jobs and training soaring, even outweighing fiction (Ferguson, 1972, p. 744). Between 1930 and 1935 libraries across the nation loaned more books than in any other five year period prior to the Depression, reaching a Depression-era peak during the years of 1932

and 1933 (Herdman, 1943, p. 311). Into the forties, patron tastes demonstrated a distinct flavor of wartime interest. Vocational titles were still sought out, but were increasingly focused upon wartime industries such as methods of welding and aircraft design. The popularity of books containing information on areas of the world suddenly thrust into the spotlight, such as the Pacific Islands, were also in high demand. Cookbooks which contained instructions on how to make baked goods without using rationed ingredients were also very popular with borrowers looking to approximate the culinary delights of better days. As is perhaps evident from the character of readers' tastes, the interests of adult patrons during this period often went well beyond the expertise of the local librarian which was commonly rooted in the humanities (Ferguson, 1972, p. 744).

When it came to serving the borrowing needs of immigrants, a survey conducted by the *Library Quarterly's* William M. Randall (1931) found that the majority of major urban library systems were still woefully behind in serving the needs of their immigrant patrons. At the beginning of the Depression, New York City's libraries had a collective book stock whose foreign holdings in their circulation departments was a mere 9.83%; astounding, when one considers that at the time of the study, the City's population was 30.5% foreign born (Randall, 1931, p. 81). Randall also found that purchasing of foreign titles was usually done upon the advice of "educated" foreigners who rarely purchased what was in demand by most patrons. Even in the thirties, most of what made up foreign collections still consisted of French and German titles, despite the fact that the French population in American cities was almost negligible and the German population ran at an average of well below 15% (Randall, 1931, p. 83).

While the expansion of programming was a rarity during the Depression, the slight recovery of 1936 saw a cautious resumption of adult education services. The nature of these services would reflect the more vocational, practically minded readership spawned by the Depression. Training classes, study clubs, and civic forums were initiated at many public libraries throughout the nation. As librarians' knowledge of specific vocations was likely limited, effectively providing these services frequently involved partnering with adult educational agencies within their neighborhoods (Bloom, 1976, pp. 384-385).

During the war, libraries would try as best as they could to build on the small gains of the thirties. Educational programs for adults during this period would continue to take on a more civic tone. With limited success due to staff shortages, libraries would design programs which promoted democratic practice within the communities they served. Many of these programs centered around the push for social responsibility which the war had catalyzed through public service announcements around rationing programs (Bloom, 1976, p. 387).

Children's educational services & patron interest—1930-1946

If the progressive era saw the establishment of service to children, the Depression and war years established and consolidated standards of service, especially in urban areas. Juvenile circulation typically made up a ratio of 40-45% of total circulation. This ratio would remain a relatively stable ratio for this period (Fenwick, 1976, p. 346). It must be clarified that despite the significant gains in circulation mentioned above, most of these gains were experienced in the

adult category; juvenile circulation actually declined, particularly during the first five years of the Depression. This falling off of circulation in children's books makes sense in light of the 1.76% decrease in elementary school enrollment from 1930-1934 (Herdman, 1943, p. 313). That said, practices which sought to reinforce readers' services to children became common such as direct interaction with children by librarians and selection of books which aimed to respond directly to the children of the community (including book lists, booktalks, displays, and story hours which met the children at their level). As reading aloud by the fireside became less common, and public schools began to encourage silent reading, storytime in libraries would remain an important, distinctive part of educational service to children, particularly younger children still developing reading skills. That said, as the years went by, radio and movies would present challenges which sometimes eclipsed the success of neighborhood storytimes. In possible connection to this, storytime audiences would become younger and younger during this period, a trend which would increase with the coming decades. In order to keep alive the art of storytelling, many children's librarians would become more active in their practice, touring schools and children's centers around the neighborhood to read aloud (Fenwick, 1976, pp. 346-347).

The Depression and war years also identified a growing need to provide services geared towards teenagers. A notable example of an effort to this end was the New York Public Library's Young People's Book Committee, formed to read, discuss, and evaluate books for teenagers. The Nathan Straus Room became a center for young people in New York City. On the whole though, work with teenagers was rarely realized in a robust program and was frequently still understood as part of work with adults as most librarians lacked a favorable orientation towards literature for

teenagers, nor did they carry reference and nonfiction titles required to help young students with their homework; this was seen as the domain of school libraries (Fenwick, 1976, p. 349).

1947-1959—The Postwar Years

Introduction—1947-1959

Like the periods discussed above, the postwar period would see tremendous change in the United States which would have effects on the library's educational purpose. Mass communication became further entrenched in American culture through the vehicle of the home television set. Children enrolled in compulsory education would grow in numbers due to the Baby Boom after the Second World War; basic education, in general, became an increasingly common asset of the average American. The number of high school graduates in 1950 was 37% of the total populace. In 1960, this percentage rose to 45%. College graduates that same decade rose by 34%. As people were living longer, the number of senior citizens also increased by 35%. Finally, and no less significantly, the number of people living in metropolitan areas saw an increase of 25%, as opposed to central cities, which grew by only 9%. Residence in the suburbs received the greatest share of these increases during this decade, growing a whopping 48% (Ennis, 1964, pp. 163-164).

Since library service is typically concentrated in metropolitan areas, the move of Americans towards metropolitan areas meant that libraries across America has a larger audience. That said, these readers (which had increased by almost a half during a decade) were more geographically spread out. As a result, the potential audience of libraries increased, but they were much harder to reach due to sheer geography (Ennis, 1964, p.166).

Of these shifts in population, whites would make up the majority of migration to the suburbs, while black and Spanish-speaking groups would make up a larger share of movement to the central cities. Those who had moved to the suburbs were generally more affluent and much more likely to fit the educated, well-off profile of the typical “library user” prevalent at that time. Meanwhile, those migrating to the cities often came from agricultural communities who suffered generations of educational suppression due to racist oppression and other disadvantages. The central cities were a tremendous contrast for many of these migrants and immigrants; library usage for classical educational purposes as had been outlined in past decades would largely not be a priority for this new patronage, and the challenge of reaching out to the library non-user would become a significant issue for public libraries in America’s cities (Ennis, 1964, p.165).

Between 1950 and 1959, national circulation of materials increased by 50%. Much of this is due to the demographic factors cited above; more people were living in areas closer to libraries than ever before. The baby boom also saw a tremendous increase in the circulation of children’s materials. If in 1940 children’s materials made up a third of total circulation, by 1960 they would account for one half. During this same period the circulation of adult fiction declined from 46% of total circulation to 24%. Much of this decline was due to consumer trends as the increasing availability of cheap paperbacks made private purchase of reading material a realistic prospect (Ennis, 1964, pp. 171-172).

The increase in circulation notwithstanding, Americans were not necessarily reading more and the end of the postwar era. Indeed, a Gallup poll taken in 1959 revealed that 77% of

Americans never read books regularly. This ratio of non-readers to readers was uncannily similar to the ratios reflected in reports conducted after the end of the Second World War (Ennis, 1964, p.174).

Adult educational services & patron interest—1947-1959

Arguably the most important series of information on the relationship between public library reader habits and adult education to come out of the immediate postwar period were the reports from the Public Library Inquiry in the summer of 1949. The Inquiry was a joint effort of the ALA and the Social Science Research Council which aimed to set an agenda for library objectives through the measurement of the social and economic health of libraries and librarianship. It was hoped that findings would reveal the best way towards fortifying the library's educational services (Maack, 1994, p. 28). Far and away the most influential of all the reports from the Inquiry was Bernard Berelson's *The Library's Public*, a sweeping investigation of the impact of mass media on public library use. Berelson's research found that the average American did not read much; just 25-30% reported reading a book a month. Of those books, America's public libraries supplied about one fourth. Furthermore, 18% of Americans used the library once a year, and 10% once a month; only 20% of this percentage was responsible for 70% of borrowing. Of these books borrowed, half were children's books, and two thirds of the total borrowed was fiction. Against this, half of all American adults saw a movie once a month, and 90% of Americans read the newspaper. As a force of intellectual influence, the library had very little pull (Williams, 1988, pp. 66-67).

Berelson's findings were devastating to the self-image librarians had of being an influential force for the spreading of education, better reading, and democratic principles to the

masses. Berelson's recommendations in light of his findings were that since the library was not significant in its contributing to a greater enlightened public, it ought to cater to a select few of the population whose educational ideals already closely matched those of the library; that is, instead of trying to serve the entire community, it should try to best serve the more "serious" users identified in the study who already knew how to best take advantage of the educational programs their library had to offer. According to Berelson, those who were in greatest need of the sort of enlightenment the library felt responsible to provide would probably never be convinced to visit (Williams, 1988, p. 67). In an age of mass media, Berelson saw this as the library's strength:

To a greater extent than ever before, people read newspapers and magazines, see films, and listen to the radio. These media provide recreation, information, and education to a greater or a lesser degree; and they thus represent, in a special sense, competitors of the public library. In the field of recreation and entertainment they compete quite effectively. In other respects, however, these media do not, and by their nature cannot, compete. They cannot present the range and depth of "serious" communication materials held by even the most modest public library. The public library is the only communication agency within the community which makes permanent accessibility of reading materials an objective. The public library does not need to depend upon immediate popular support so much as the commercial media. It is thus freer of the topical or fortuitous shifts in popular taste and more able to apply sounder criteria for its activities. (Berelson, 1948, p. 132)

In short, Berelson saw the library as having a duty to serve its “initiated” rather than try to reach out to the entire populace; in trying to serve everyone the library would end up serving no one effectively. Such an attempt would only result in poorer service to the library’s core clientele, and would wound the library’s educational purpose. Berelson did not see this as a problem unique to the library, but as central to all cultural institutions who cannot reasonably please everyone all the time. Berelson recommended that the educational program of the public library follow this premise (Berelson, 1948, p. 130).

Similar reports resulting from the Inquiry, such as Robert Leigh, *The Public Library in the United States*, William Miller’s *The Book Industry* and Joseph Klapper’s *The Effects of Mass Media* would reinforce the idea of the library as a place for serious reading, finding that while other forms of communication might threaten the library as a proprietor of recreational literature and programming, mass communication did very little in threatening its ability to provide material for deep learning to those who sought it (Maack, 1994, pp. 32-33).

Reports from the Inquiry, while controversial and by no means universally accepted, had a palpable effect on the way in which philosophy of service was carried out at public libraries during the postwar period, particularly in educational services. While perhaps not a direct result of the Inquiry, the library would aggressively commit itself to programs of debate and discussion in adult education through national initiatives such as the ALA’s 1951 effort, *The American Heritage Project*.

As the Second World War was drawing to a close, the American Library Association sought to outline the way in which libraries would best function in the postwar world. Their manifesto entitled “Demobilization and the Library” recommended that libraries function as crucial centers for seekers of information about job opportunities, personal development, family adjustment, social and civic obligation, and psychological problems; patrons targeted by these aims were largely those who were in military service or who had served as workers during the war. That said, this brief focus on meeting the demands of a demobilizing nation quickly shifted to a broader question of what the library would look like in the postwar world; this world was, after all, one in which the United States came out as the clear leader of the democratic world (Williams, 1988, pp. 54-55).

The aforementioned Heritage Project is the most notable effort of a national push for libraries to come to terms with their new role in an America that was now the mecca of so-called free nations. In this spirit, the Project set out to ignite debate around crucial documents in America’s history which would, in turn, inspire discussion about the state of American democracy in this new era (Preer, 1993, p. 169). The ALA’s Four Year Goals outlined in 1948 articulated the library’s importance in light of this new world picture. The Goals understood the new critical problems as stemming from a concern for,

[...] peace, food, and security. They are international, national, and local. Political, economic, and social; racial, agricultural, industrial, ideological, and spiritual. They are not new in themselves. But they are newly dangerous, because they exist in an atomic age. They must be solved peacefully. (p. 121)

The philosophy of educational service during the postwar period to end of the fifties emphasized the institution's ability to enrich the lives of its users and promote enlightened citizenship. To this end, discussion programs such as the Great Issues Program and Great Books Program sought to realize the library's new role as arbiter of a better informed America. Programs were meant to include films, lectures, and article and books discussions; though, similar to other nationwide initiatives, the success of these programs (particularly the Great Issues Program) were limited in the extreme and received very little participation by neighborhood branches (Williams, 1988, p. 59) with a mere 14% of American Public library branches participating in the Great Issues Program (Bloom, 1976, p. 391). That said, the commitment to free speech at the heart of these discussion programs was a bold move in a time where federal funding for libraries was becoming increasingly common, particularly after the Library Services Act of 1956 (Preer, 1993, p. 184). While censorship and McCarthy-ism was rampant, libraries lobbied for greater support during this period, largely on an ideological program closely aligned with the findings of the Public Library Inquiry; that the library was a bastion for democratic ideals and serious debate (Williams, 1988, p. 89).

Suffice to say, by the end of the 1950s, the lukewarm participation of branch libraries in grand educational gestures like the ALA's AHP stoked doubts about the pretenses of the recommendations of the Public Library Inquiry. Whether from a lack of purpose, logical response to demographic shifts in metropolitan areas, or out of genuine conviction to revise public libraries' philosophy of service, library services in adult education in the sixties would be outpaced by a refocus on serving the library non-user. Rather than provide service which

reflected distinct educational ideals, libraries would instead provide guidance and support for quotidian information needs and begin reader readiness programs, all while utilizing a two-way dialogue between patron and library professional (Bloom, 1976, pp. 393-394). This sea change from education to information (as mentioned in this chapter's introductory paragraph) is perhaps most significantly embodied in the Ford Foundation's closing of its Fund for Adult Education in the Early Sixties, followed by the ALA's closure of the Office for Adult Education in 1964 (Williams, 1988, p.94).

Children's educational services & patron interest—1947-1959

If educational services to younger children remained relatively static (apart from the growing emphasis on the importance of storytime in an age of the television) older youth educational services during this period underwent changes mainly resulting from two factors; an increase in the share of children's circulation largely due to the baby boom, as well as major changes in school curricula and school library services (Fenwick, 1976, p. 357). Both factors are intertwined. The high birthrate in the United States led to a growth of school enrollment; from 1950 to 1960, enrollment in Kindergarten and elementary school increased by 50%. Naturally, public libraries would try to meet the demand for children's educational services that followed (Mills, 1963, p. 58).

As to the second factor, prior to the 1950s curriculum could arguably be summed up as instruction towards the mastery of technique, skill, or body of knowledge. Methods of learning often took the form of rote memorization. During the fifties, education was repositioned towards

developing social skills and group work. Through learning subject matter, students would also learn to work successfully with others. In other words, the postwar period began to focus less on the teaching of content and more on the activity surrounding the learning process. Additionally, the major role in foreign policy and international affairs the United States would assume at this time would lead to content of lesson plans becoming more pointedly topical, addressing aspects of nuclear energy, the atom, or the development of the modern state. As these less straight-forward lessons often required the student to go beyond the textbook to find the answers, public libraries' role as reference centers for students would grow in importance during this period (Mills, 1963, p. 59-61).

Finally, the assignation of homework became common practice during the post-war era. In likely relation, surveys taken during the postwar period indicate that the decade of the 1950s saw an increase in reference questions being asked by children as young as the third-grade. Furthermore, the nature of these questions were less general and more specific than many librarians of yore were accustomed to. As a result, having a well-stocked reference collection became paramount to properly serving youth educational needs (Mills, 1964, p. 64).

Gaps in Literature

For a summary of attitudes which made up the educational ecosystem of libraries during this fifty year period, attempts to grasp broader perspectives from the level of the library system or as reflected in historical surveys or primary source documents within library literature are quite abundant; in contrast, essays which reflect an understanding of how libraries on the branch level sought to educate their public are uncommon. The original research found below seeks to

investigate the efforts towards education for adults and children performed at a single branch library of a major urban public library system during this period in light of some of the statistics and trends cited above. Additionally, while examples of attempts to understand the way in which libraries adapted (or failed to adapt) to national demographic and economic factors are evident, an examination of how a branch library might be affected by circumstantial changes within their own neighborhood of operation is not forthcoming; through a study of the educational services for adults and children offered by the Seward Park branch, as well as habits of use of educational services by patrons of the branch, the research exhibited in chapter four of this study aims to complete or challenge some of the major trends of educational services which were cited in this chapter.

Chapter III: Methodology

Overview and Restatement of Research Questions

While the relationship of education to public libraries' sense of purpose is well-documented on a national level, to date no study addresses the way in which this sense of purpose played out on a branch level. To this end, this study seeks to gain an understanding of how a public library branch (Seward Park) of a major library system (The New York Public Library) was able to fulfill an educative purpose for children and adults in its first fifty years of operation. The analysis of the branch and its educational purpose will attempt to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What sorts of educational services were provided to adults at the Seward Park Library during its first fifty years?

RQ2: What sorts of educational services were provided to children at the Seward Park Library during its first fifty years?

RQ3: How were educational services used by patrons at the Seward Park branch?

Definition of Terms

The focus of this piece is to make a meaningful comment on educational services during a fifty-year period at the Seward Park branch. Consequently, it was essential that the term "educational services" be clearly defined. The particular substance of educational services was in

large part determined by identifying precedents set by other essays which sought to outline major features of educational services to patrons during this period. To this end reflective essays within *Library Trends*' landmark 1976 issue, published during the year centennial of the American Library Association's founding, did much to provide a foundation for what this research would understand as educational library activity. Particularly, two essays were incredibly enlightening, namely S. I. Fenwick's "Library service to children and young people", and H. Bloom's "Adult services: The Book that leads you on".

As established in the previous chapter, adult and children's educational service developed at different paces from one another. As a result, the character of these two services have considerable differences.

One of the most obvious differences is that in educational services for children the split between educational and recreational services is not always clear, especially when attempting to determine what counts as "education" for extremely young patrons. Indeed, it was not always clear to librarians themselves whether educational service to children who could not read was worthwhile; yet, especially after World War II, storytime for pre-literate children was understood as an established educational tool (1978, Benne, pp. 499-500). Due to the role of play in a child's education, educational services to children in public libraries often had strong recreational character. As a result, activities such as storytimes must be included alongside more obvious educational activities for children during this period (such as reference work with classes and individual students) in order to provide a complete picture of educational services to children.

For adults, the nature of educational services is clearer since the educational purpose of public libraries in relation to adult services had been well-established before the twentieth century. As can be identified following Bloom's (1976) essay, there are two main components to adult educational services; services which contributed towards the user's personal betterment and services which assisted in the patron's formal educational or vocational aspirations (pp. 380-381).

The first component is the trickier of the two to define. Broadly speaking, "personal betterment" was a byword for encouraging the patrons on their journey towards becoming a part of the learned fold of the middle classes who valued education for its own sake (Bloom, 1976, p. 381). Many services of this kind were passive in nature, revolving around access to good, wholesome material. Provisions for wholesome material were at the heart of the so-called "fiction question". Disproportionately high circulation of popular fiction was often understood as the library failing to influence the tastes of its readers towards books which promoted the "elevation of the people". Consequently, instead of playing to popular tastes the librarian was meant to elevate the taste of the average patron through the availability of "good" (non-fiction or literary) books (Williams, 1988, p. 9). To this end, passive, non-programmatic educational services will be considered in this piece, such as the circulation of non-fiction materials, readers advisory services, as well as displays and exhibition work. More active approaches to encouraging personal betterment during this period were designing programs which exhorted patrons to reflect upon "eternal verities" contained within great works of the past, or to create a deeper understanding of their duty as citizens or their role in American democracy. These programs often took the form of clubs and discussion or lecture series (Bloom, 1976, p. 391). As

a result, any trace of educational discussion or lecture series in the primary source documents will be understood as evidence of educational services to adults.

Secondly, programs which assisted patrons in their formal educational and vocational aspirations will be examined. These educational activities will be identified as efforts which sought to instruct patrons towards gaining or strengthening a skill. Included in this category will be language classes (including any Americanization work similar to the examples in the previous chapter), as well as vocational and skills-based classes and workshops. Naturally, reference work either through casual, student, or group consultations will also be observed.

Scope and Focus of the Study

The scope of this research will be limited to an analysis of educational services as outlined in the above paragraphs. The chronological scope of the project is limited to fifty years. There are also certain geographic parameters which must be taken into account. After all, the Seward Park branch was by no means the only library in the Lower East Side. Other branches include(d) the Chatham Square branch in Chinatown to the immediate west, the Rivington Street (closed in 1942) and Hamilton Fish branches to the north, as well as the Tompkins Square and Ottendorfer branches in what is now considered the East Village. While a degree of overlap in service areas between the branches ought to be expected, it is reasonable to make a rough approximation of the Seward Park branch's province of service as bounded in by Delancey street to the north, Allen street to the west, and all areas to the East River south of the Williamsburg Bridge.

Research Methodology

The content analysis research method was deemed appropriate to the historical nature of this research project. Specifically, this piece is a time series analysis which attempts to utilize a range of techniques to better understand changes during a cross-section of time in order to come to meaningful conclusions which will assist in examination of the chains of cause and effect within this period (Wildemuth, 2017, p. 156). Of all the research methods available, content analysis is the most likely to meaningfully reveal the changes within this project's cross-section of time.

The bulk of the primary sources consulted for this project are a number of journals, annual reports, and other written records authored by Seward Park library staff during the fifty years under observation. Analysis of these sources will be qualitative in character. As a result, through the determination of descriptions and typologies, this analysis will pay close attention to themes within these documents which serve to illustrate the range and meanings of the phenomenon of "educational services", rather than attempt to render numerically the frequency of occurrence certain terms or ideas are expressed (Wildemuth, 2017, p. 319). Though quantitative analysis will play a role in answering the third research question, the first two research questions will be addressed entirely through a qualitative analysis. Units (or categories) of analysis were determined through an attempt to identify an exhaustive list of expressions of educational services in public libraries during the period in question, as well as expressions which would serve to assist in the overall evaluation of the branch's ability to meet the educational needs of the neighborhood.

Research Design

Taking these factors of educational service into account, a coding scheme was created to guide the collection of data explicit or latent within the primary sources. The scheme was carefully designed to answer all three research questions thoroughly by identifying key aspects of educational services to adults and children. Precedents were not found to provide a basis for such a scheme. As a result a close consultation with secondary sources, particularly the two iconic articles mentioned above in *Library Trends*, was necessary.

Research Instrument

Having gained an understanding of secondary sources surrounding the question of educational services in library, the coding scheme reflects ten major categories of educational services, three categories which reflect patron usage of educational services, and a final category to accommodate for emerging themes:

- (1) Outreach programs; whether or not the library actively sought to engage the neighborhood beyond the walls of the library
- (2) Types of classes, workshops, and other educational services for immigrants, particularly in the progressive period (when the Lower East Side's foreign born population was at its height)
- (3) Vocational classes or workshops for job training, particularly during and after the Depression years

(4) Clubs and other miscellaneous groups geared towards literary or other educational interests

(5) Lectures series geared towards civic purpose or the discussion of “great books”, particularly after the depression years, especially in the post-war era

(6) Readers’ advisory services

(7) Relationship with public and private schools/classes and groups (“school work”)

(8) Early literacy (storytimes)

(9) In-house displays and exhibits

(10) Collections/ Book stock patterns

(11) Patron reading habits (circulation figures); whether they were mostly recreational (popular fiction) or educational (non-fiction)

(12) Patron reference requests; whether the Seward Park library was equipped to address reference requests from students and casual users

(13) Patron program attendance figures

(14) Miscellaneous interactions between patrons and library staff of educational orientation

Table 3.1

Instrument Checklist

<u>Research Questions</u>	<u>Categories</u>
RQ1: What kinds of educational services were provided to adults at the Seward Park branch during its first fifty years?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 14
RQ2: What kinds of educational services were provided to children at the Seward Park branch during its first fifty years?	1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14
RQ3: How were educational services used by patrons at the Seward Park branch?	11, 12, 13, 14

Pilot Study

In order to test the research instrument, a pilot study was conducted for the year 1920. For this year, data was collected from circulation figures from the Bulletin, as well as an annual report issued by the Seward Park branch for the year.

The year shows the fulfillment of a steady decline in circulation figures since the branch opened roughly ten year prior. These figures were layered onto the considerable amount of branch activity which was seen in the year 1920; evidence of educational work with both children and adults as defined by the coding scheme were quite abundant, exhibiting work both

inside and outside the walls of the library itself. The author of the report even tries to ascertain patron responses to branch efforts, and makes helpful suggestions as to what could improve the branch's ability to provide better educational services. As is perhaps not surprising due to the make-up of the neighborhood the branch served, much of the qualitative content is geared towards "foreign work" and adult education. It was felt by the researcher that the coding scheme was both adequate for the analysis of content, as well as a tremendous help in parsing through the data; at this point, the researcher felt confident that they could continue with the project under the current scheme.

Selection of Sample

The majority of the sample for this study includes annual branch reports, reference reports, children's department reports, and young adult reports submitted annually. Most of these reports date from 1920-1959. A children's librarian's log (1913-1917) was used to gain a picture of children's educational activities prior to 1920, as well as various correspondences surrounding the debate on Americanization and service to immigrants. A no less crucial area of sampling will be the circulation statistics which were published annually in the *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*. Where appropriate, the sample also includes various newspaper articles and journal articles contemporary with the period of study. Though few in number, these pieces are rare glimpses of the operations of the Seward Park branch which do not come from the point of view of the branch's library personnel.

Data Collection and Recording

Being that most of the primary source materials had not been digitized, a large part of data collection consisted in trips to the central building of The New York Public Library where many of the documents listed above are held. As the finding aid for these items was not especially descriptive of the contents within each of these boxes, it was a considerable challenge to sort out which items were essential to the project; unavoidably, each item had to be assessed for its relevance to the project. The sheer amount of material meant that this painstaking process could only be completed through multiple trips. It should be noted that though the bulk of the substance of this project is contained in these documents, there are large gaps in departmental (reference, children's, etc.) reporting, sometimes for years at a time.

Another collection which offered valuable data was the Seward Park branch's own Lower East Side Heritage Collection. While the finding aid for this collection was considerably more descriptive, none of the items contained have digital surrogates, much like the central building's collection. The LESHHC provided many of the supplementary documents which placed branch activities in context (such as newspaper articles and other forms of commentary). Profiles of the Lower East Side were also found in this collection. It is thought that these profiles might be able to shed some light on the third research question.

Surprisingly, the annual reports found in the Central Building often did not contain a numerical summary of common measurements of library service such as circulation and book stock. As it was felt that this material would provide a useful supplement to the qualitative picture of educational services at the branch, sources were found in the Hathi Trust's digital

repository of the *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*. Since the Bulletin contains annual breakdowns of these figures, consulting the Bulletins was essential to gaining a broader perspective of service revealed by numbers rather than the decidedly more reflective analysis found in the annual reports. Although the value of the Bulletins was incredible, it must be noted that the reporting categories often changed or disappeared as the years rolled by; instances include the circulation numbers of foreign books by language only beginning to be reported in 1918, and ceasing to be reported after 1946; circulation of different classes of non-fiction ceasing to be reported after 1953. As a result, the degree to which a full profile of the sort this paper aims to provide the reader is often contingent upon what categories were deemed to be worthy of reporting by the circulation department.

Finally, bound volumes of the East Side Chamber of Commerce News were consulted at The New York Public Library's Science Industry and Business Library. These volumes contained quantitative data of demographic trends which assisted in understanding the branch's relationship with the neighborhood.

Data Processing and Analysis

In order to make the most of the data within the primary source documents, the documents needed to be transcribed so that their contents could be rendered more easily searchable. Having done so, the process of identifying the occurrence of themes as expressed in the categories of the coding scheme was much easier. Meaningful conclusions about the Seward Park branch's educational services could then be reached after careful interpretation, using the coding scheme as a guide.

Circulation statistics of the Seward Park branch were recorded into Microsoft Excel for data manipulation and visualization. Circulation statistics of The New York Public Library system were also recorded to provide contrast to those at the branch.

Limitations

Many of the limitations of this project are a result of attempting to keep the scope of this project within workable limits.

A major limitation is the fifty-year time period. As has been noted in the first chapter, there are nameable reasons for why this particular period of time was chosen; yet, a more in-depth project might attempt to broaden this timeframe. For instance, an analysis of educational activities of the Aguilar Free Circulating branch at 197 East Broadway (the Seward Park branch's predecessor, founded in 1886) as well as a brief analysis of educational services after 1959 would do much to place the nature of services rendered during this fifty year period in context. That said, as is the case with much historical research, such round figures of chronological analysis are in large part a convenience. Such an inquiry would undoubtedly make for a better study, but exceeds the workable scope of this project.

Additionally, most of the primary source data used for this study were written by library staff members. As a result, this study lacks qualitative dimensions of the patrons' point of view. Nevertheless, such accounts are not immediately available or in great abundance. Consequently, the point of view of library staff is perhaps disproportionately represented in this study. Also, as

mentioned above, this library-staff point-of-view itself potentially lacks narrative flow due to large chunks of missing reports, sometimes for years at a time. Finally, the “annual report” itself may be a questionable vehicle for this inquiry insofar as annual reports are usually written at the request of the branch librarian or director of a department. For the sake of workability, considerations such as the potential pressure members of staff may have felt to overemphasize certain programs of educational service, or downplay complications, will not be entertained. A project which is able to accommodate these considerations may one day make for a more comprehensive understanding of educational services at the Seward Park branch.

Finally, the interpretations in this paper represent those of a single researcher. Had there been multiple coders involved in this project a more dynamic interpretation might have been the result. As this is not the case, this study runs the risk of a lack of reliability testing.

Chapter IV: Findings

Restatement of Research Problem

This research seeks to gain an understanding of how a public library branch (Seward Park) of a major library system (The New York Public Library) was able to fulfill an educative purpose for children and adults in its first fifty years of operation. The analysis of the branch and its educational purpose attempts to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What sorts of educational services were provided to adults at the Seward Park Library during its first fifty years?

RQ2: What sorts of educational services were provided to children at the Seward Park Library during its first fifty years?

RQ3: How were educational services used by patrons at the Seward Park branch?

For the following chapter the researcher tried to compose the data in such a way that would both answer the research questions effectively, and maintain a readable, narrative form appropriate to the historical artform.

Organization of Chapter

The research was divided into three major parts according to time period: 1909-1929, 1930-1946, 1947-1959, or, the progressive era and the twenties, the depression and war years, and the postwar years. These three major sections were further divided according to their

pertinence to the elements within the coding scheme. An introduction and epilogue is included for all three periods.

1909-1929—The Progressive Era and the Twenties

I. Period introduction - 1909-1929

The Seward Park Library would begin operation at a time when the Lower East Side had been long established as an immigrant Jewish cosmopolis. Since the 1870's the Lower East Side began to swell with immigration from Eastern Europe, becoming solidly Jewish by the 1890's (Rischin, 1962, p. 78). The year 1907, just two years before the Seward Park branch's opening, would see a peak in a general surge of immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe (Jackson, 1976, p. 38). Yet, this was not a community without its own cultural divisions. The languages spoken amongst the Jewish population alone were many, including Hungarian, Galician, Rumanian, Levantine, and Russian (which could in turn be divided into Polish, Lithuanian, Bellorussian, and Ukrainian dialects). The Seward Park branch's building shared East Broadway with Jewish educational organizations such as the Educational Alliance, the Home for the Aged, the Jewish Maternity Hospital, the Machzike Talmud Torah, the Hebrew Sheltering House, the Young Men's Benevolent Association, among many others (Rischin, 1962, p. 78).

As a result, it is no surprise that service to immigrants made up a great deal of educational services for adults at the Seward Park branch in its first few years. After all, in 1910 the Lower East Side's foreign-born population would total at 68%. That year would also see the neighborhood reach peak congestion at 542,061 inhabitants; from here on, a decline in population would set in (Rischin, 1962, p. 93). As the end of the 10's saw decreasing rents,

plenty of work, and the falling off of immigration coupled with the New York Jewish diaspora moving to sections of Brooklyn and The Bronx, the Lower East Side would gradually see an alleviation in overcrowding (Tribune, 1916, p. 16). A mere two years into operation the branch would never again serve a population so great in number, nor so challengingly diverse.

II. Outreach programs - 1909-1929

During this period, collaborations with educational Jewish neighborhood organizations was common practice at the branch during this period, though frequently uneven depending on the type of organization. Free synagogues were more cooperative with working with the library than orthodox synagogues. Work with study classes and evening schools in the area was more forthcoming because of the shared educational premise.

Beginning in the early 1920s, letters in Yiddish were sent to many of these schools recommending parents to come to the library and make use of their materials in Yiddish and easy books in English. Outreach Jewish social settlements was also strong, if only because of the large proliferation of them on the East Side. Social settlement groups were also common targets of library outreach. Groups from the social settlements would usually visit the library by appointment. It was cited that work with Jewish fraternal and labor organizations was a demographic of tremendous potential. That said, at that point the Yiddish collection was not felt to be large enough to warrant its being made known on a large scale. This was particularly the case in the sociology department, which many Yiddish readers who were members of unions and labor committees wished to find material about ("Letter and Report", 1921). Perhaps for this reason, outreach to these organizations was scarce.

The children's department performed a great deal of outreach to neighborhood schools, the details of which will be covered in section VII below.

III. Types of educational services for immigrants - 1909-1929

The Seward Park branch hosted a number of English classes for adults during the progressive era and the twenties. English classes for new Americans were carried out under the auspices of the Young Men's Christian Association and held semi-weekly (Bulletin, 1916). While the number of English classes held during one season reached around nine or ten at its peak, by the mid-twenties the average number of English classes decreased to about five or six. Reports contemporary with the decline suggest that this was likely due to the steady depopulation of the area in conjunction with the Immigration Act of 1924 (Leslie, 1924). A survey taken by the Jewish Welfare organization reported that by 1926 the Lower East Side's native born population equaled that of foreign born for the first time in years; additionally, the population of the entire Lower East Side had dropped by 240,000 in 15 years since the Seward Park branch had opened its doors (Tribune, 1926, p. 15).

In an area with a multitude of Jewish settlement houses and educational institutions offering English classes, it was by no means felt that teaching English was the most crucial educational service the library could offer. A branch librarian remarked that, "There are so many classes for foreigners in the neighborhood that our branch does not need to add to them. We do need to supplement their work by talks and by books and this has been covered in the past year" ("Report for 1920", 1920).

IV. Vocational classes or workshops for job training - 1909-1929

While mention of vocational classes or workshops during this period were not abundant, the branch hosted a monthly stenography classes for girls from Washington Irving High School.

V. Clubs and other miscellaneous groups - 1909-1929

In its early days, the Seward Park branch hosted meetings of the East Side Debating Club for young men and women, monthly meetings of the Gaynor Club for men, and the semi-monthly meetings of the Downtown Physicians League (Bulletin, 1916). Not many details about the Gaynor Club or the Downtown Physicians League were readily available. Clubs/groups geared towards Yiddish speakers were by far the most popular club for adults during this period.

The Yiddish Mothers' Club met on a weekly basis to discuss issues of local importance. This particular club was hosted by a library staff member (first by Ms. Barag, then Fanny Wlodawsky) who spoke English and Yiddish; a large part of the discussion at these clubs revolved around explaining American practices and customs to the women who counted themselves among the Mothers ("Report for Mr. Hopper for 1921", 1921). Though topics of discussion tried to remain high-minded, the Mothers often got caught up in the latest area gossip, such as the gruesome details of the latest murder within the neighborhood ("Annual Report", 1927). The club would become one of the most popular at the Seward Park branch; attendees of this club would grow exponentially during the 1920s (Leslie, 1924).

The children's department ran well-attended clubs which sought to elevate the minds of the children. The branch's Literature Club, which discussed the work of James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Edgar Allen Poe among others, had attendance of anywhere from ten to twenty children per session. Their Poetry Hour Group consistently had over twenty children in attendance. The Boys Reading Club was also well-attended. One boy, who had been to the very first Boys Reading Club held at the branch, came back three years later to see if it was still running; the seventeen year old expressed his gratitude, saying that he always felt he got a great deal out of the club ("Journal", 1914). Occasionally, these clubs did more than just read. A Girls Reading Club which named themselves "Pindar's Children" after the ancient Greek poet, performed a dramatization of Caroline Dale Snedeker's *The Perilous Seat* on the rooftop reading room of the library. In attendance were neighborhood children along with the Yiddish Mothers Club (Westover, 1928). Even a junior debate club was tried out in the branch's early days. The topic of conversation was the civilizational accomplishments of white people and Chinese people; the children concluded that that Chinese people were more civilized than white people ("Journal", 1913). Finally, though not a library run group, chapters of the Boy Scouts held regular meetings at the branch (Bulletin, 1916).

VI. Lectures and discussion series - 1909-1929

As is the case across the board, this period's most successful programs were those conducted in Yiddish. This is equally the case for lecture series and discussion groups. The Yiddish Forum series which featured lectures and dramatic readings by Jewish authors and critics, followed by discussion. Attendees were characterized in a 1920 annual report as, "men who represent the fine things in Jewish life, literature and tradition" ("Report for 1920", 1920, p.

2). The Yiddish Forums were so well attended that they became “standing room only” events which threatened to outstrip the facilities of the branch; to accommodate a larger audience, lectures were relocated in 1923 from the community room to the children’s floor (O’Connor, 1923).

VII. Readers’ advisory services - 1909-1929

A children’s librarian journal dating from 1913 bears evidence of the high degree of seriousness children’s staff took towards their educational mission in relation to readers’ advisory services. Contained are lists of book titles with advisory notes; many books by Bret Harte were recommended for older boys, though “not for general use”; one such title, *Luck of the Roaring Camp*, came with a word of warning: “use wisely”. *Wan Lee, the Pagan* comes with the proviso, “Good for older children not prejudiced against Christians. Needs to be [cut] for Jewish children.” Stories about the Battle of New Orleans and the Battle of Trenton were recorded as “read to a group of newsboys”. A story, bluntly titled, *On a Vulgar Little Boy*, came with the note, “Children’s Librarians will enjoy this. Not for children. You see him every day” (“Journal”, 1913, p. 1).

While the above example may be a tad anecdotal, the entry succinctly demonstrates the way in which librarians during this period understood their educational purpose. Additionally, the paragraphs below in section XI will show that librarians at the Seward Park branch tended to promote a carefully refined set of ideals (manifesting as the promotion of non-fiction and high-minded literature) rather than unreflectively seeking to meet a multitude of tastes.

VIII. School work - 1909-1929

Entries of this journal are rife with examples of feverish attempts at networking with the local schools to spread the library gospel and assist in school work. The success of school work, while frequently beneficial for the students, often depended on how willing the school's staff was to work with the library. Many school faculty members expressed reservations about visiting the library premises as a class since "herding a procession [of students] through the streets" seemed too great a task. As school work with public libraries was not an established practice at this point, the benefits were not always apparent to school staff. Miss Elsie W. Kornman, principal of P.S. 23 on Madison and Jackson Streets a few blocks away from the branch said that while she'd be glad to send older students to visit for natural science subject material, she felt that the library's method of lending books for free was a questionable enterprise since "[library books] are too easily obtained to make their value appreciated" ("Journal", 1913, p. 6).

In the examples of P.S. 147 at Henry and Gouverneur streets, school work was a great success. The Seward Park children's staff found a willing collaborator in Dr. Kottman, the principal of the school, who arranged to send over his upper grades (at 40 students a class) for lessons. Classes visited one week apart from each other. The branch's relationship with P.S. 147 would be consistent and long lasting during this period. P.S. 62 was another success story; their principal, Mr. Goldwasser, arranged a schedule for 14 classes to visit the branch, particularly to take advantage of subjects he felt the library would be most apt in providing: "the cultural, the literary, the intellectual" ("Journal", 1913, p. 7). Many groups visiting from foreign children's classes at P.S. 60 numbered anywhere from 60-90 students. These students were often cited in

the journal as expressing an admirable eagerness to learn English. Work with these groups often consisted of silent reading hours with easy book and foreign material (“Journal”, 1913-1917).

Other relationships with schools were less involved, falling short of actual lessons and school work. Some teachers requested that the librarian visit to deliver a summary of library services, while others, such as the case of P.S. 34’s Mr. Peyser, requested the library send over 50 books a week to his class on subjects of his choosing that would supplement his lessons. Books were kept for one week at a time and returned promptly. While this arrangement received no complaints from the Seward Park children’s librarians, other teachers often had a misunderstanding of what services the library was able to reasonably provide. Requests for textbooks by children who were told by their teachers that the library could lend them was cited as a cause for frustration in this period. It would not be until the end of the library’s first decade that neighborhood schools would begin to be equipped with proper school libraries (“Journal”, 1917).

One of the most frustrating issues librarians had with students from the schools was book mutilation. Teachers often stipulated that students would need to include a picture in their school work. While some made appointments for their students to visit the branch’s picture collection for temporary use, (“Journal”, 1913) other students would simply tear pictures out of library books to fulfill the requirement. The problem got so bad that librarians convinced the principal at Seward Park High School to send a letter to all his teachers requesting that they no longer require pictures for their school assignments (Westover, 1928). Unfortunately, the picture requirement remained common practice and tearing persisted, to no avail (Westover, 1933). That said, the

most of the gravest offenders of book mutilation were younger children. Dirty hands were a plague on new titles. Children were often sent home to wash their hands; numerous instances of this are evident in the children's librarian journal ("Journal", 1913-1917).

As the years went by, school work activity declined, particularly in the 1920s. A survey of the schools composed by the Lower East Side Community Council for the period between February, 1926 and September, 1926, school districts 2 and 3 in the branch's immediate area showed decreases of 19% and 21%, respectively. Seward Park High School and its annexes reported an "unofficial" figure of about a 12% decrease ("Annual Report", 1926).

IX. Early literacy (storytimes) - 1909-1929

The Seward Park library held two storytime hours during this period; one on Friday for the older children and Saturday for the younger ones (O'Connor, 1923). Reflecting on how hectic it became to settle children down during story hour, one librarian remarked that "the two story hours a week attract more children than we can care for" ("Annual Report", 1926, p. 3).

Additionally, storytime outreach to various institutions in the neighborhood was carried out regularly. Pura Belpre, New York City's first Puerto Rican librarian who would go on to become a famous storyteller and puppeteer, was one of the staff members who performed outreach to various institutions on the branch's behalf, including visits to the School for Crippled Children, the Madison House, and the Henry Street Settlement ("Annual Report", 1927).

X. In-house displays and exhibits - 1909-1929

Exhibition work for adults at the Seward Park branch was quite extensive, beginning in 1909 with plates from J.C Dana of *Arctic Exploration* (Bulletin, 1910). Throughout the progressive era and the twenties, the branch hosted pieces from the museum of Natural History of American Indian art as well as a series of reproductions of Modern American artists lent by the Pratt Institute (Leslie, 1924). From the Metropolitan Museum three paintings were secured on indefinite loan, which “served to soften to some extent the ugliness of the walls” (Leslie, 1925, p. 3). In 1927, the American Irish Historical Society lent etchings by Power O’Malley, exhibited in the reference room (“Annual Report”, 1927). The branch often continued its collaborative spirit through working with local organizations and artists to find additional exhibition material, such as works from the art school at the neighboring Educational Alliance and the showcasing of a group of etchings by Mortimer Bernstein (“Annual Report”, 1926).

Exhibits on the children’s floor rotated quickly at the branch, often reflecting current events, such as an exhibit about the building of the Panama Canal in 1913 (“Journal”, 1913). Other exhibits in the children’s room were donated by artists and children’s book illustrators, as in the case of Mr. Van Everen lending library four colored wall decorations and several originals of the black and white illustrations from *The Laughing Prince* and *Mighty Mikko* (“Annual Report”, 1927).

XI. Collections/book stock patterns - 1909-1929

Figure 4.1 on the following page gives us a picture of the quantity of different languages the Seward Park branch held from 1909-1929. Note, data from 1916-1917 was not available,

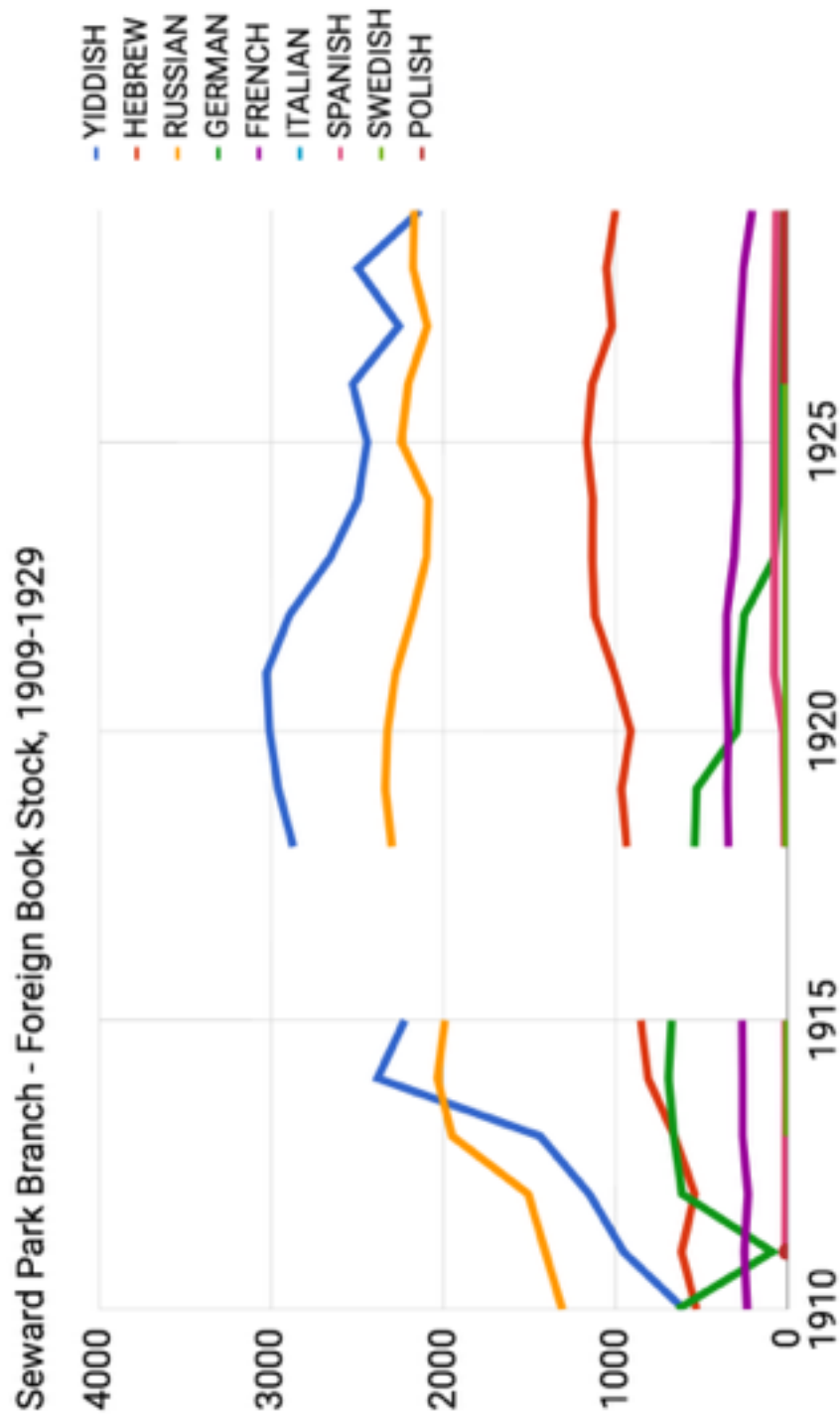


Figure 4.1. Seward Park branch - foreign book stock between the years of 1909-1929. This figure illustrates which foreign books were purchased in what language by the branch from 1909-1929; note, data was not available for 1916-1917.

perhaps due to complications resulting from the Great War. As can be inferred from the graph, the purchase of Yiddish materials shot up most dramatically of all language categories in this period (Bulletin, 1910-1930). Indeed, the debate around Yiddish materials was very heated in the first years of the Seward Park branch's operation.

The branch's lack of a Yiddish book stock in its first years did not go unnoticed. An article from 1914 issued by the *Jewish Daily News* went so far as to proclaim that, "The history of the Jewish books in the American Public Libraries will remain an ugly page in the history of the Jews in America" ("What the public wants", 1914, p. 1). The unnamed author of the article cites the lack of Yiddish material at the Seward Park branch as a symptom of a larger aversion to the language by other educational institutions on the Lower East Side, largely run by an educated elite of German Jews who felt that Yiddish was not supposed to "cross the threshold" of an educational Jewish institution. Though the author admits that the simple availability of Yiddish reading material was a unique service of the Seward Park branch not available in other local educational institutions in the neighborhood, he insists that the provisions of Yiddish material were delivered with an attitude towards its Yiddish readership as if it were "[...] an encumbrance, like orphans in the house of a bad step-mother" ("What the Public Wants", 1914, p. 2). The author further claims that, "You may come for days and weeks without a chance of getting a Yiddish book at Seward Park" ("What the Public Wants", 1914, p. 2), and that it was no exaggeration to say that not even one-tenth of the demand for Yiddish books was being met by libraries on the East Side. Furthermore, the sight of the shelves could be shameful: filthy books were disorderly shelved, often carelessly inter-mixed with Russian titles. The librarians were

charged with being completely ignorant of Yiddish literature, and that if they did have a Yiddish speaker on-site, they must have been ashamed of it (“What the public wants”, 1914).

Such bad press was not taken well by the branch librarian at Seward Park, who insisted that “The entire article [...] was strongly Nationalistic in tone and could see no good in anything which might tend to Americanize the Jewish people in this country.” (“Letter to Mr. Adams”, 1914, p. 1). Nevertheless, it was admitted that there was a lack of Jewish books at Seward Park and in East Side branches in general, as there were never more than a dozen Yiddish books on the shelf at one time due to their extreme popularity. In a sentiment which expresses the educational spirit of the day quite succinctly, the librarian remarks, “Of course it is impossible to place the bulk of Yiddish work on the shelves of a public library as it is the worst kind of trash. The only hope is in duplication of titles already in the Library and the addition of good works as fast as they are published.” (“Letter to Mr. Adams”, 1914, p. 3) These views notwithstanding, the librarian wished to express their “heartly sympathy” with the needs of Yiddish readers and the movement to produce better books in that language (“Letter to Mr. Adams”, 1914).

In any case, whether from external pressure or from an organic response to demand, purchase of Yiddish books skyrocketed, peaking in the early twenties. The early twenties also saw a concerted effort of outreach to immigrant enclaves in the neighborhood to let the community know about the various educational services the Seward Park branch provided. Through obtaining names and addresses from various Jewish settlements such as the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society and the Council of Jewish Women, a letter in Yiddish was sent out to the new American households in the area (Jones, 1921).

Moving on from foreign languages, the following page features figure 4.2 which charts the book stock of non-fiction titles of any language available in the branch during this period, as represented by class. While sociological titles in any language were not exactly sparse during this period, they were not the strongest category either. The graph below demonstrates that this period's most common class of non-fiction was the literature category. Sociology, however, hangs close behind. Titles in religion follow, then biography, with other categories clustering below. The fact that science is so high in the beginning is due to a categoric eccentricity; After sociology and philology were reported by the NYPL as categories in their own right in 1912, science plummets.

XII. Patron reading habits - 1909-1929

Figure 4.3 on page 69 contains a figure of patron usage of circulating materials at the Seward Park library for major categories. Circulation in general experienced an overall decline in the twenty years examined. All categories experience a similar decline in use, though foreign titles remain remarkably stable. At times, non-fiction overtakes fiction in numbers circulated, while fiction leads at other points. All categories reflect a slight recovery at the end of the decade apart from fiction. While book-shabbiness is often cited as the culprit in the annual reports, it is more likely due to the depopulation the neighborhood experienced which began in 1911, just two years after the Seward Park branch opened its doors.

As mentioned in the above section, the Immigration Act of 1924 had a palpable effect on the makeup of the neighborhood. Causality can reasonably be established between this piece of

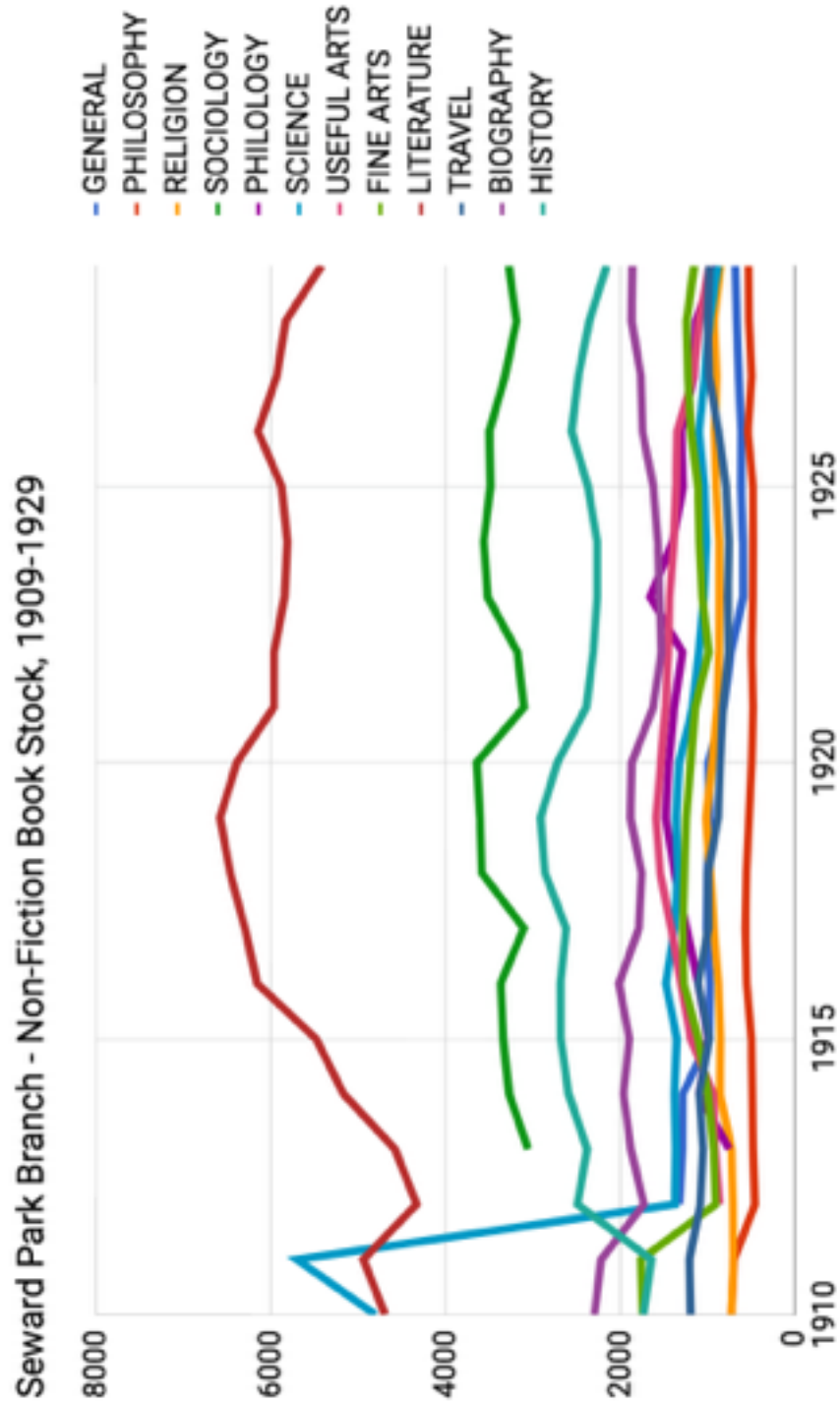


Figure 4.2. Seward Park branch - non-fiction book stock between the years of 1909-1929. This figure illustrates which foreign books were purchased in what language by the branch from 1909-1929.

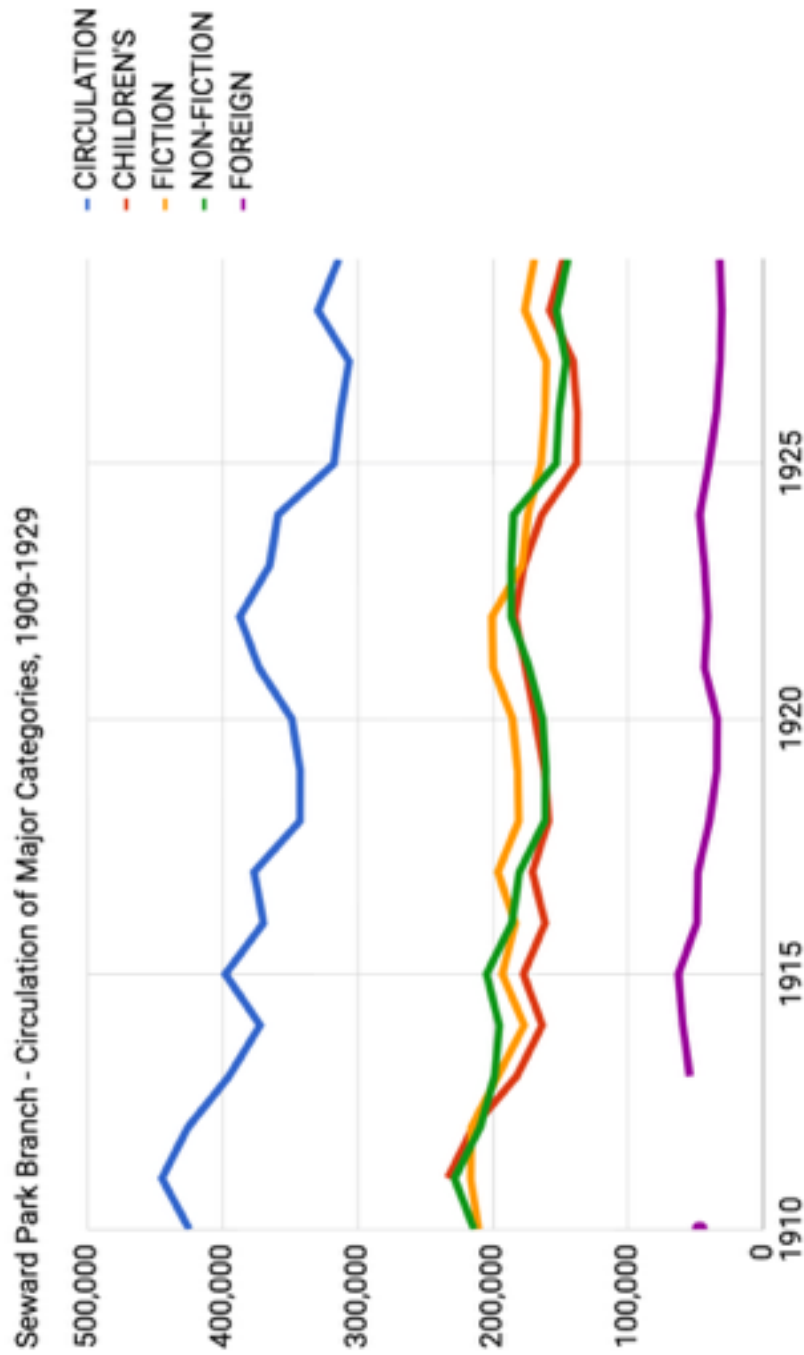


Figure 4.3. Seward Park branch - circulation of major categories between the years of 1909-1929. This figure illustrates which major categories were circulated by the branch from 1909-1929.

legislation and the general downward trend in foreign circulation. Figure 4.4 on the following page contains a summary of language categories within foreign circulation. Note, foreign circulation only began to be measured in 1918. As is evident, Yiddish was the clear leader in foreign language circulation during this period, despite seeing a sharp decline in the mid-twenties. Russian held second for most of this period, but was outpaced by Hebrew at the end of the twenties. Yiddish, Russian, and Hebrew would be the “big three” categories for this entire period; all other languages cluster at the bottom. The downward trend in Hebrew by the end of the period may have been the result of the Talmudical Society moving out of the neighborhood to 187th Street in 1928, though the trend began before this development, in 1926 (Westover, 1929).

In terms of non-fiction circulation, it was seen in the “major categories” graph above that non-fiction often outranked fiction in units circulated. Figure 4.5 on page 72 contains a line chart which breaks down the non-fiction tastes of readers at the Seward Park branch during this period.

If the literature category outpaced sociology by a large margin in the non-fiction book stock graph analyzed earlier, the two categories would compete for the most circulated genre of non-fiction during this period. It was mentioned in a report above that sociology was a very popular category with patrons during this period, so perhaps this should not come as a surprise. Reports also demonstrate that the crowd at Seward Park had very “literary” tastes; the graph above certainly confirms this. Despite the fact that literature was the largest non-fiction category in terms of book stock, patrons would often not be able to procure the titles they were looking for, as they were already being borrowed (“Report for 1920”, 1920, p. 4; Leslie, 1924, p. 3).

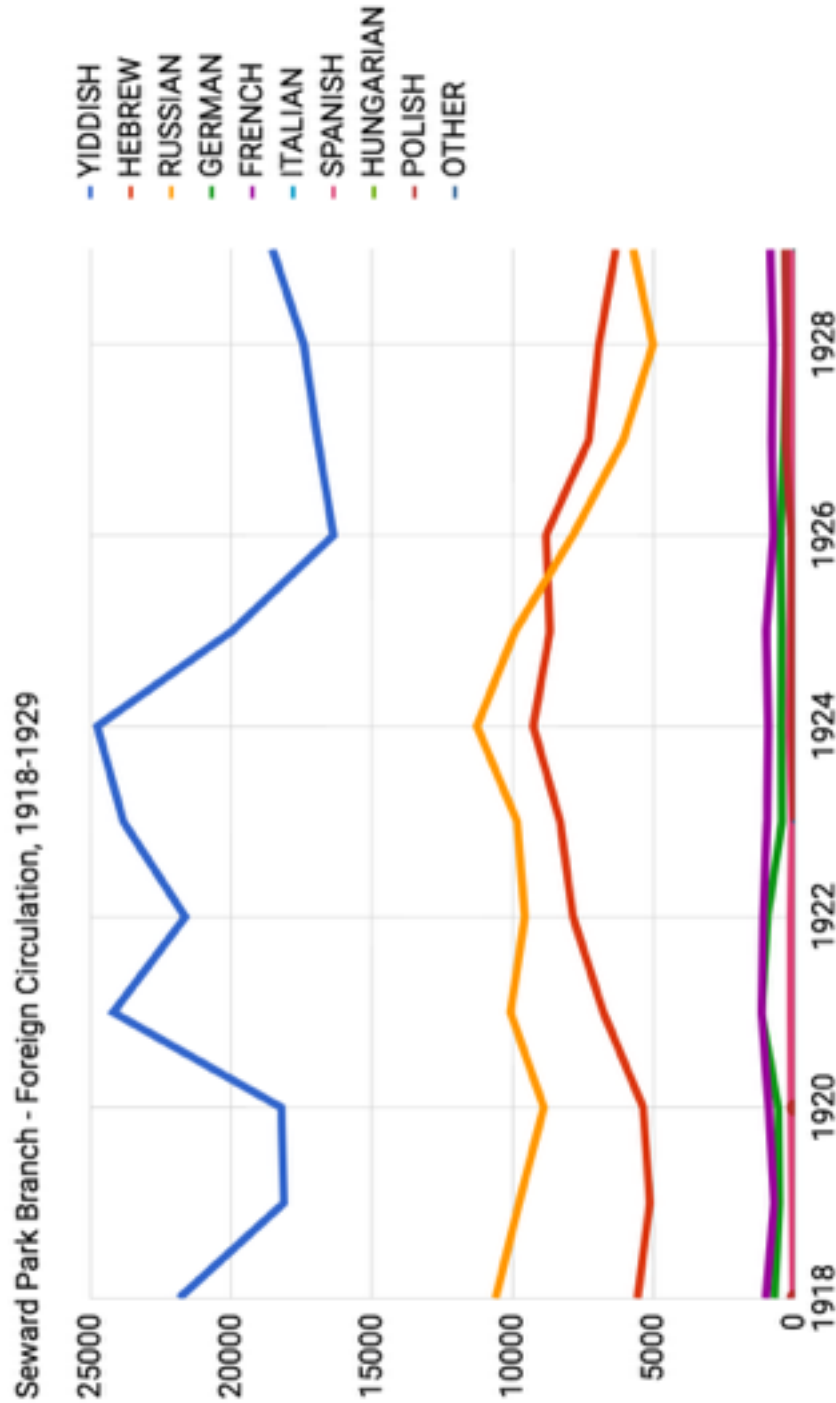


Figure 4.4. Seward Park bBranch - foreign circulation between the years of 1918-1929. This figure illustrates which language categories were circulated by the branch from 1918-1929; note, data from previous years was not readily available.

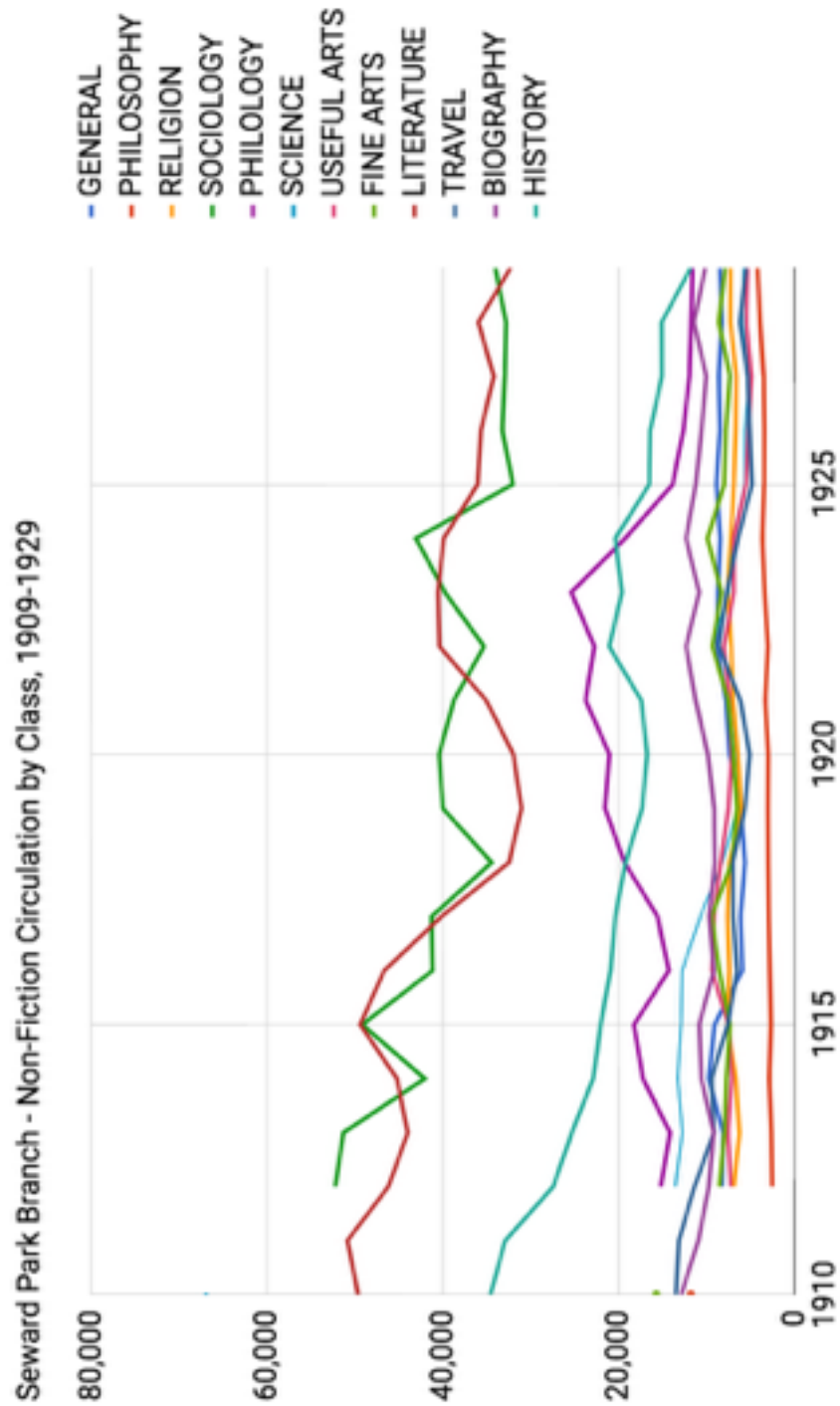


Figure 4.5. Seward Park branch - non-fiction circulation by class between the years of 1909-1929. This figure illustrates which non-fiction classes were circulated by the branch from 1909-1929.

Finally, in 1929 the useful arts category was cited as receiving a minor increase due to the growing influx of tradesmen and artisans moving to the area from other major American cities like Baltimore and Pittsburgh (Westover, 1929). Philosophy and biography were also cited as popular categories of non-fiction during this period, though none of this is especially evident in the graph above, perhaps it is significant that despite an overall decline in total circulation, these categories remain remarkably constant. Philology and science would experience the largest decline (Westover, 1928).

Apart from educational titles, recreational fiction also remained popular. Between literature and fiction, it was often a challenge to keep good books on the shelf. To this end, Seward Park would institute various borrowing rules, such as limiting fiction to two books a borrower. If this did not go down well with borrowers, nothing was mentioned in the reports (“Annual Report for Mr. Hopper”, 1922).

Of course, it has been established that circulation in total would experience decline during this period, peaking just two years after the branch opened. Reports insist that circulation figures should not be taken as proof of usage, as it was noted that branch usage remained exceedingly high despite the decline in total circulation. (Leslie, 1925)

XIII. Reference services - 1909-1929

Though not many concrete details exist about the reference work during this period, almost every year the annual reports describe the reference work as being “overwhelming” and “busy”. The third-floor reference room became so crowded during this period that in 1928 the

branch began enforcing a rule that anyone on the reference floor was required to have proof of a library card on-demand; this was mainly used as a tactic to root out “sitters” such as the infamous “homeless man” or the “Bowery bum” to make room for students and serious readers (“Annual Report”, 1927; “Annual Report”, 1928). Apart from these trifling developments, a pamphlet and clippings collection of local interest material was developed during this period and made ready for service by 1924 (Leslie, 1924).

XIV. Program attendance - 1909-1929

It can be deduced from the sections above that programming for both adults and children seem to be very well attended during this period, though the numbers for adult programs in particular are most striking of all. The reports cited above demonstrate that many of the educational programs at the branch were overwhelmingly popular with patrons, particularly those conducted in Yiddish. It is difficult to get an idea of how popular the English classes were, as not too many details about their operation exist since they were carried out by another organization, though they did level off in number by the end of this period.

XV. Period epilogue - 1909-1929

If the beginnings were a little rocky, on the whole the Seward Park branch’s devotion to adult education from 1909-1929 was demonstrable. A letter written to Marcus Eli Ravage (a Jewish immigrant to the Lower East Side and author of the infamous article, “A Real Case Against the Jews”) by library staff asked for advice as to how the library might possibly extend its educational services to immigrants in the area. His response, quoted at length, was simple:

[...] while it would be possible to increase your staff and enlarge your facilities, there is very little more that you could do than you already are doing. The immigrant who wishes to learn English will accomplish his purpose with the assistance of the various agencies provided by the city and the multitude of private enterprises, whereas certain other types will do nothing toward Americanizing themselves no matter what opportunities. I see absolutely no way of helping the latter class, because they are not in the least inclined to help themselves. If I were to make a criticism of the library or the night-school, I would say that it is over-doing its work. It's business, as I see it ought to be, is to whet the appetite of the willing and show them the way, not to surfeit and dull the poor edge of the neglectful". ("Letter from Marcus", 1917)

1930-1946—The Depression and War Years

I. Period introduction - 1930-1946

At the opening of the 1930's, the trend in depopulation continued. In the area served by the Seward Park branch alone, from Gouverneur's Slip to East Houston Street, a population of 94,980 in 1920 would plummet to 53,704 by 1930 (Beer, 1937, p. 413). Even the building of large housing projects such as the Amalgamated co-operative and Knickerbocker Village did not stem the tide of declining land values and depopulation (Platzker, 1947, p. 6) which would hit its lowest point in 1937 at 220,000 residents. The Lower East Side would be the only area in New York City where the birth rate would fall below the death rate up until after the second world war (Levinson, 1949). It might have been the extreme rate of redevelopment due to cheap land values which led to the massive depopulation of the area, with 15,000 apartments eliminated up until

1938, and an additional hundreds more old-law tenements being boarded up. 90% of these demolitions would occur under the New York City Housing Authority; as a result, the promise of a new population boom after these projects were completed was always a looming, hopeful possibility. Yet, with 632 lots of 1,580,000 square feet of structureless land, suffice to say the Lower East Side was a different kind of neighborhood to serve during this period than it had been from 1909-1929 (Platzker, 1938, p. 6; Platzker, 1941, p. 6).

The decline in population would not be the only factor affecting the types of educational services the Seward Park branch would provide. As alluded to in the previous section, the Lower East Side was becoming decidedly less “foreign”. Certainly, part of the decrease in residents was due to the tightening of immigration laws. Greater restrictions in immigration played out in other ways as well; fewer immigrants were entirely illiterate and a level of proficiency in English was now required for citizenship. Though the native languages of Yiddish and Italian may have been spoken at home, English was increasingly becoming the language of public life (Beer, 1937, pp. 413-414). By 1940, the Lower East Side would for the first time be less than 50% foreign born (Githens, 1946, p. 94).

Specific to school-age children, if in 1930 there were a total of 60,000 children on the Lower East Side, by the end of the decade the number of school children would be halved to 30,000 (Calderone, 1942, p. 8). More of the children of the Lower East Side were attending school and finishing high school, even pursuing college degrees. More and more young Lower East Siders would shun manual labor, aspiring towards more prestigious professional work (Beer, 1937, pp. 413-414).

II. Outreach programs - 1930-1946

The number of staff members decreased during the depression years from 19 to 16 members. As a result, less outreach and educational programming work could be carried out (Westover, 1932). Nevertheless, outreach to adults was performed by the branch during this period, mostly targeting local English classes and vocational schools. A large portion of the details of these efforts are contained in the sections, below.

A notable outreach effort during the Depression years was performed at the Salvation Army's "Gold Dust Lodge" which housed 2,000 unemployed men from all across the United States. While such a large number could not be accommodated by a single branch library, Seward Park librarians were able to connect the Lodge with The New York Public Library's Extension Division to supply them with books. Some of the more serious readers were invited to spend their time at the library itself; this select few found themselves studying French, Esperanto, the arts, and music (Westover, 1932).

Other forms of outreach to adults included book talks and lectures performed at the neighboring Educational Alliance, the Workmen's Circle, Seamens' Institute, and the Stuyvesant section of Hadassah, performed by reference librarian, Mrs. Nichols (Westover, 1939). In the children's department, outreach continued to be performed to convince the schools of the value of the library, the details of which are contained in section VIII.

III. Types of educational services for immigrants - 1930-1946

While short staff and the falling off of immigration meant less work was done with English language students, a partnership was developed with the adult Evening School at P.S. 147 to prepare a list of books suitable for people of limited education in English. Work with the class immediately lead to a new crop of regular borrowers (McCarrick, 1934).

IV. Vocational classes or workshops for job training - 1930-1946

While evidence of the library hosting vocational classes and workshops for job training was not forthcoming, work with local agencies who serviced the unemployed or those seeking a second chance at getting an education increased. In response to changes due to the Great Depression, the Seward Park library made an effort to reach out to classes for the unemployed at the East Side Continuation School, and the “opportunity classes” at the East Side Evening High School. Lists of books were given to the classes and books were added to Seward Park’s collection to meet their needs. While work with this crowd was undoubtedly valuable, it was very narrowly focused and seldom interesting work for the library staff. The students had very little interest in high-minded works, preferring instead books which prepared them for civil service exams. Even these simple texts were, at times, difficult for the students to comprehend (Westover, 1931).

V. Clubs and other miscellaneous groups - 1930-1946

Obviously, less staff members meant that less clubs could be hosted and run on branch premises. This was particularly the case for the children’s department. The excellent work in reading and poetry clubs achieved from 1909-1929 had to be cancelled due to short staff levels.

Though a reading club was started with a group of High School age boys, not much information is available about the club after 1931 (Westover, 1931).

Despite the changing neighborhood, attendance of the Yiddish Mothers Club remained high, frequently totaling at 80 mothers per session (Westover, 1930) who were the audience to authorities on current affairs such as local authors and newspapermen from the *Jewish Day* and the *Jewish Daily Forward* across the street. Under librarian Miss Wlodawsky's leadership, the Mothers were provided two outings: one to the Jewish Theological Seminary of America to see an exhibition of ceremonial objects and old books, and another to the Yiddish Art Theatre to see *The Brothers Ashkenazi*. It was recorded as a very memorable event for the club, that would, "go down in the annals of many East Side families" (Westover, 1937, p. 3). The club would remain popular during this entire period, seeing its 25th anniversary in 1941 ("Report on Foreign Work", 1940).

VI. Lectures and discussion series - 1930-1946

Unfortunately, no mention is made of the Yiddish Forum in the reports from thirties or forties. That said, civic lectures of a more practical nature were carried out during the Great Depression. In one example, the branch worked with an organization called the Proportional Representation Joint Committee to acquaint patrons with new forms of city government emerging due to the Depression. At the end of the discussion, a mock election was held to prepare Lower East Siders for what to expect on election day (Westover, 1937). Other lectures included a lecture on "the making of a Jewish newspaper", which featured editors from The

Jewish Day. The lectures were given to accompany the exhibit on the same topic set up the very same year (Westover, 1939).

VII. Readers' advisory services - 1930-1946

Most of the readings lists for readers' advisory services mentioned in this period's reports were composed to supplement English language and vocational outreach work or accompany the various in-house exhibits on the branch. Details on the exhibits are contained in section X, below. It should be said that the librarians often enjoyed the pulpit of the information desk for the promotion of good reading material. One youth librarian reflects:

It was when I started floor work that I realized where the real Young People's work is. Book talks are really introductory. But in floor work the building up of a 'book friendship' becomes important and that is where true reading guidance can be accomplished. Delores comes back to you for another good book like the one you gave her last time. You have established a rapport that makes subsequent collaboration possible.
("School and Reference Report", 1946, p. 4)

VIII. School work - 1930-1946

Despite these figures Seward Park's relationships with the public schools continued in the thirties, even flourished at points. New relationships were built with schools such as P.S. 12, and P.S. 92, as well as old stand-bys such as Dr. Kottman's P.S. 147, and P.S. 65, who continued to send classes of junior high school students that made use of Seward Park's impressive new reference collection for their schoolwork (Perry, 1934). During the 1940s, P.S. 110 would be

added to the outreach roster, as well as P.S. 31, an open air school for “crippled and cardiac” children.

Special work was done with the Metropolitan Vocational High School, which opened up Annexes on Madison and Monroe Streets during the forties. While most of the materials prepared for these classes were vocational in nature, special material was prepared for students for a unit which would help them understand America’s religious and racial minority groups (Brauneck, 1944). Other efforts with the MVHS included remedial classes in English, book talks, and a trip to the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (Brauneck, 1945).

The branch was also able to work with a Jewish parochial schools during the thirties and forties, including the Herzliah Hebrew Academy, Rabbi Jacob Joseph School, and (especially) Mesivta Tifereth Jerusalem. Classes from these schools would visit at either five or six o’clock in the evening for reading. The branch librarian remarked that, “the boys with black skull caps over the little foreign faces made an old world picture in the children’s Room”. (Westover, 1933, p. 3) An extra evening was added to the children’s room hours during the week to accommodate quiet reading for the Hebrew school children and other older readers (Westover, 1936). Although work with these schools would be on and off, contingent upon the branch’s changing hours and personnel, the students would be a constant presence at the Seward Park library during the Depression and War years, and among their best consumers of “serious” reading materials.

Work with St. Teresa, a Catholic parochial school, would also begin in this decade. Since the teaching staff of this school were nuns, children’s librarians would visit the school

themselves in order to bring the students to the library, as the nuns were not allowed to leave the school's premises (Westover, 1941).

IX. Early literacy (storytimes) - 1930-1946

Storytimes not only continued during this decade, but received an innovative twist through the designs of children's librarian Elizabeth McCarrick, who delivered stories through Czech-style marionette theatre (Westover, 1930). The marionette theatre became such a hit that Miss McCarrick would begin working with the Lower East Side Community Council to set up a marionette theatre at the nearby Hamilton Fish Park branch (Westover, 1932). McCarrick would work at Seward Park until she was transferred in 1938 to the Webster branch; her final puppet show saw an attendance of 100 children, with 540 being turned away for lack of space (Westover, 1938).

Seward Park would also experiment with exchanging story telling staff members with the nearby Chatham Square and Tompkins Square branches, especially if the storytellers were new assistants. It proved to be an ideal method for new staff members to build repertoire and techniques (Westover, 1941).

X. In-house displays and exhibits - 1930-1946

The most innovative exhibition work for adults during this period was inaugurated by a librarian, Miss Garrison, who set up a series of displays called "Facts Behind the Headlines". The displays sought to counteract misinformation propagated by tabloids in current affairs, featuring articles from the World Peace Foundation, The Foreign Policy Association, and the

Oxford University Press (Westover, 1936). Another hot topic during this period was public housing, as the neighborhood began to change from a neighborhood of tenements to a neighborhood of housing blocks. To respond to this change, the library worked with the New York City Housing Authority to set up an exhibit which contained information on how to apply (Westover, 1937). As mentioned earlier, in 1939 Mrs. Nichols arranged for an exhibit by the *The Jewish Day* on the “making of a Jewish newspaper” to accompany the series of lectures given by members of the paper’s staff (Westover, 1939).

The forties saw a few exhibits as well; in conjunction with Columbia University, Seward Park hosted an exhibit celebrating the 500th anniversary of the printing press, with a catalog of early books and further reading (“Columbia University Library”, 1940). In 1942 an exhibit celebrating the American labor movement was set up. The title of the exhibit was called “American Labor Today”; the exhibit was accompanied by titles of books and pamphlets which informed patrons about how the labor movement was continuing to play a role in 1940’s America (Kosmak, 1942).

For children, educational exhibits of note included a showcase for the English Coronation in 1937, inspiring a rather well informed exchange of current events issues between the children and library staff (McCarrick, 1937). Children’s book illustrators made up the majority of other exhibits for children, with printed illustrations by D’Aulaires, James Daugherty, Katherine Milhous, Brois Artzybasheff, James Audubon, Leslie Brooke, Katharina Von Dombrowski, Vera Bock, Ivan Sanderson, Alexander Pinta, Robert Lawson, and Eilda Van Stockum being shown in the year 1940 alone (Westover, 1940).

XI. Collections/book stock patterns - 1930-1946

As English became the public language of the Lower East Side, book stock of foreign items declined at the Seward Park branch. Taking a look at the number of foreign language titles the branch held, we can see this decline expressed in figure 4.6 the following page. The “big three”, Yiddish, Russian, and Hebrew, all experience overall decline in stock, with Russian seeing the sharpest decline of all. All other language categories cluster at the bottom. While this could be in response to a decline in foreign language circulation (see figure 4.9 on page 91, below) less purchases of foreign language titles may also have been the result of less money to do so due to the hardships of the Depression.

The sharpest decline of titles in all foreign language categories was seen during the Second World War (“Report on Foreign Work”, 1940). The inability to purchase new titles did not go unnoticed by Seward Park’s patrons. Many longtime users of the Yiddish collection ceased to travel long distances to the branch to find material, as they were frequently out of stock (Westover, 1933, p. 2). While Yiddish was purchased whenever the fund became available, the need for Russian was never identified in the reports from this period. In the late thirties, Hebrew made a slight, if temporary, increase after Seward Park inherited the Aguilar branch’s Hebrew collection (Westover, 1939).

The lack of funds to make additions to book stock was not limited to foreign titles. It is apparent that total additions to the branch’s collections are sharply curbed beginning in 1930, never significantly recovering during this period. See the figure 4.7 on page 86 for details.

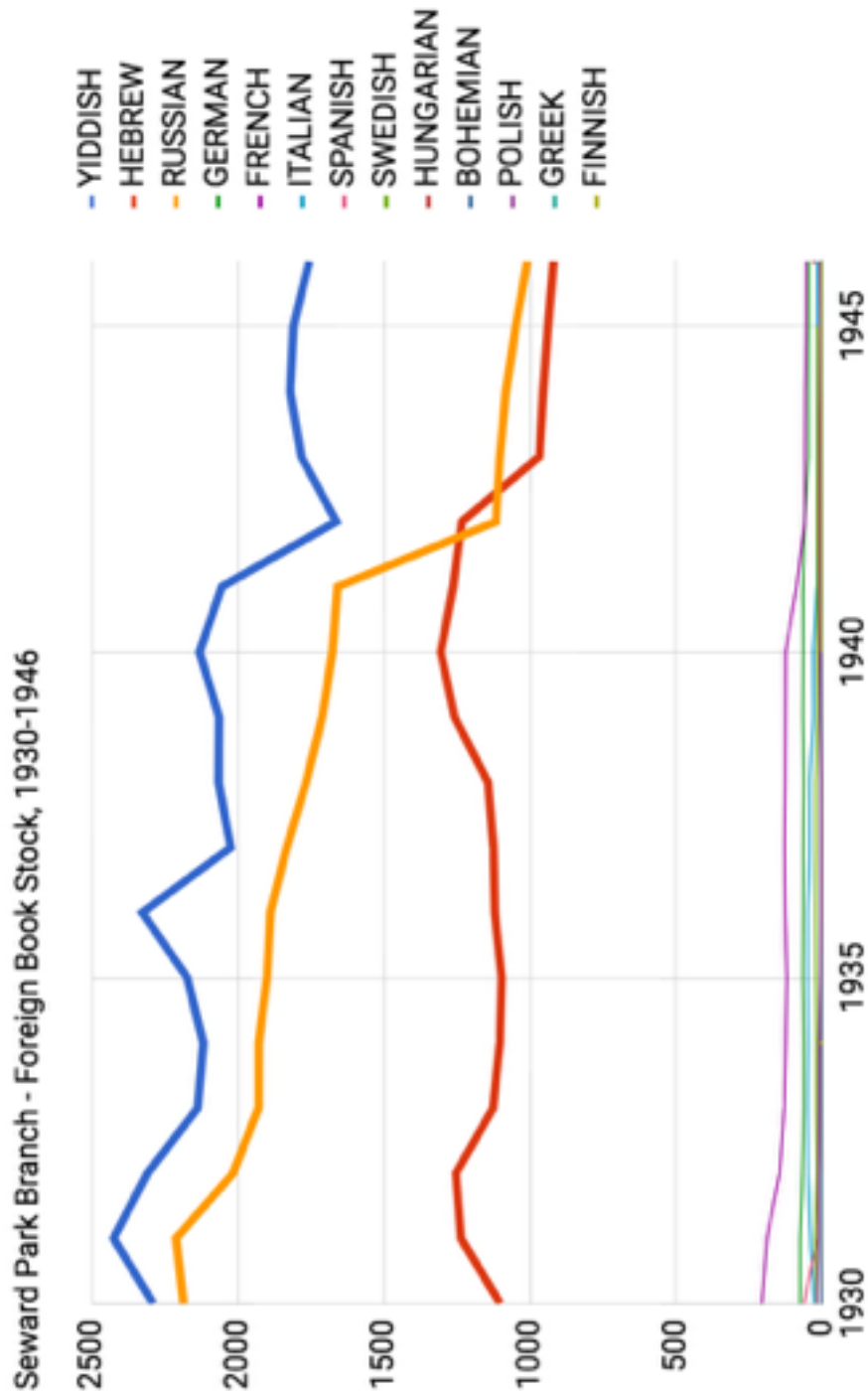


Figure 4.6. Seward Park branch - foreign book stock between the years of 1930-1946. This figure illustrates which foreign books were purchased in what language by the branch from 1930-1946.

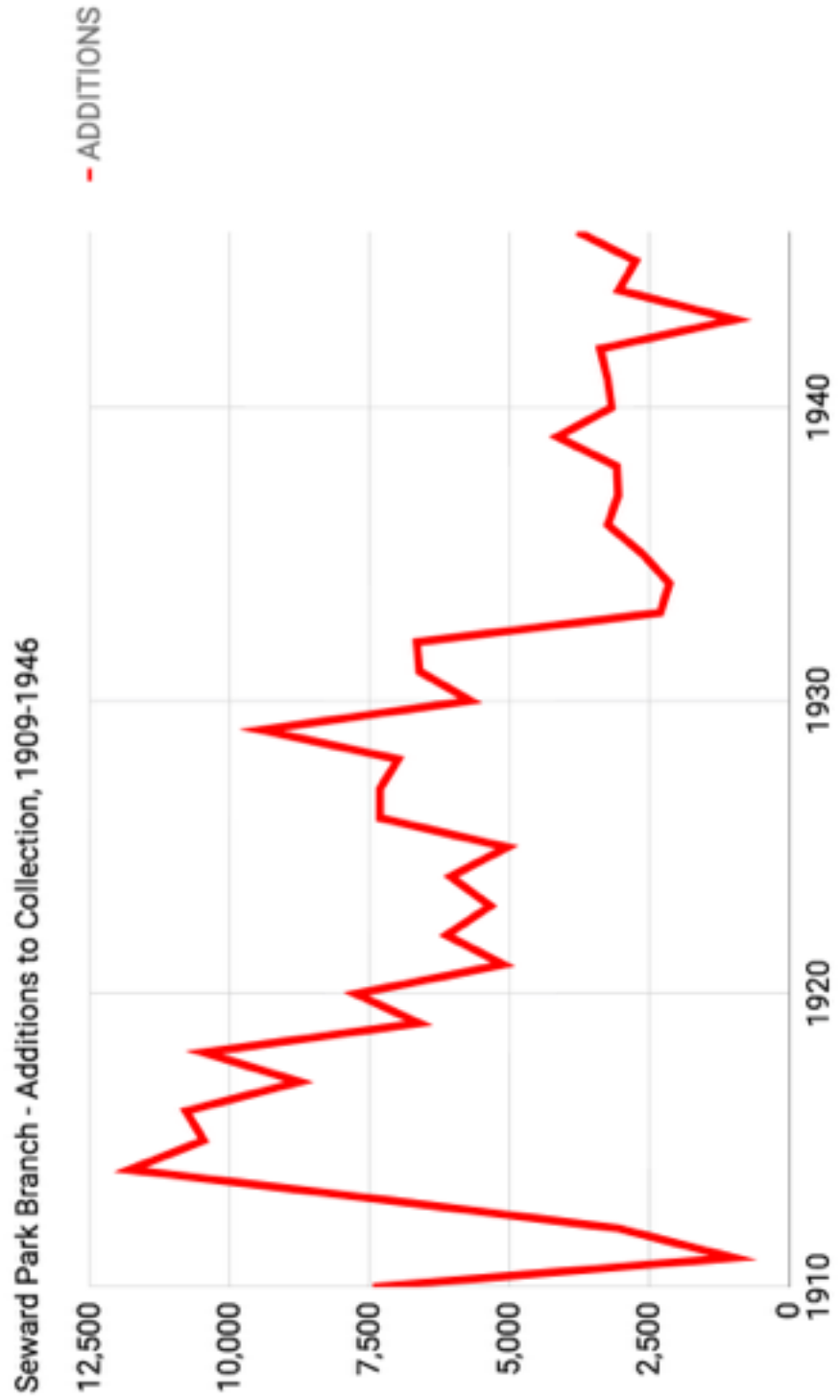


Figure 4.7. Seward Park branch - additions to collection between the years of 1909-1946. This figure illustrates the rate of purchase of books in all categories from 1909-1946.

Other categories in non-fiction (as shown in figure 4.8 on the next page) also reflect downward trends, apart from Useful Arts and Fine Arts, which increased steadily. Though the increase in Useful Arts is not dramatic, this is perhaps due to a lack of funds for purchasing materials. Given that libraries were increasingly being used for vocational endeavors, the steady increase in the number of Useful Arts material is not surprising. Already within the first year of the Great Depression, a commitment was made to purchase more Useful Arts titles (Westover, 1930). Literature book stock take a remarkable dive during this period. The lack of “good” fiction was of great concern to the branch librarian in 1934, who lamented that all new purchases of books came from restricted funds for Western, detective, and sports stories rather than high minded literature (Westover, 1934).

XII. Patron reading habits - 1930-1946

A study of the readership of the Seward Park branch was carried out by the *Library Quarterly* in 1933. This study gave an interesting snapshot of (primarily) adult readership and use at Seward Park. The study, which began in 1932, was cause for excitement at the branch, for it was a rare opportunity to receive a profile of their readership.

The result of these questionnaires painted a complex picture of the East Side readership and their use of the library as a center for education. According to the study, the neighborhood consisted of 80% readers (this as compared to the population at large, which they estimated at 92-97%). The quality of reading was incredibly diverse in an area with 135 newsstands that sold papers in English, Yiddish, Polish, Hungarian, Russian and Spanish (in that order), though it was

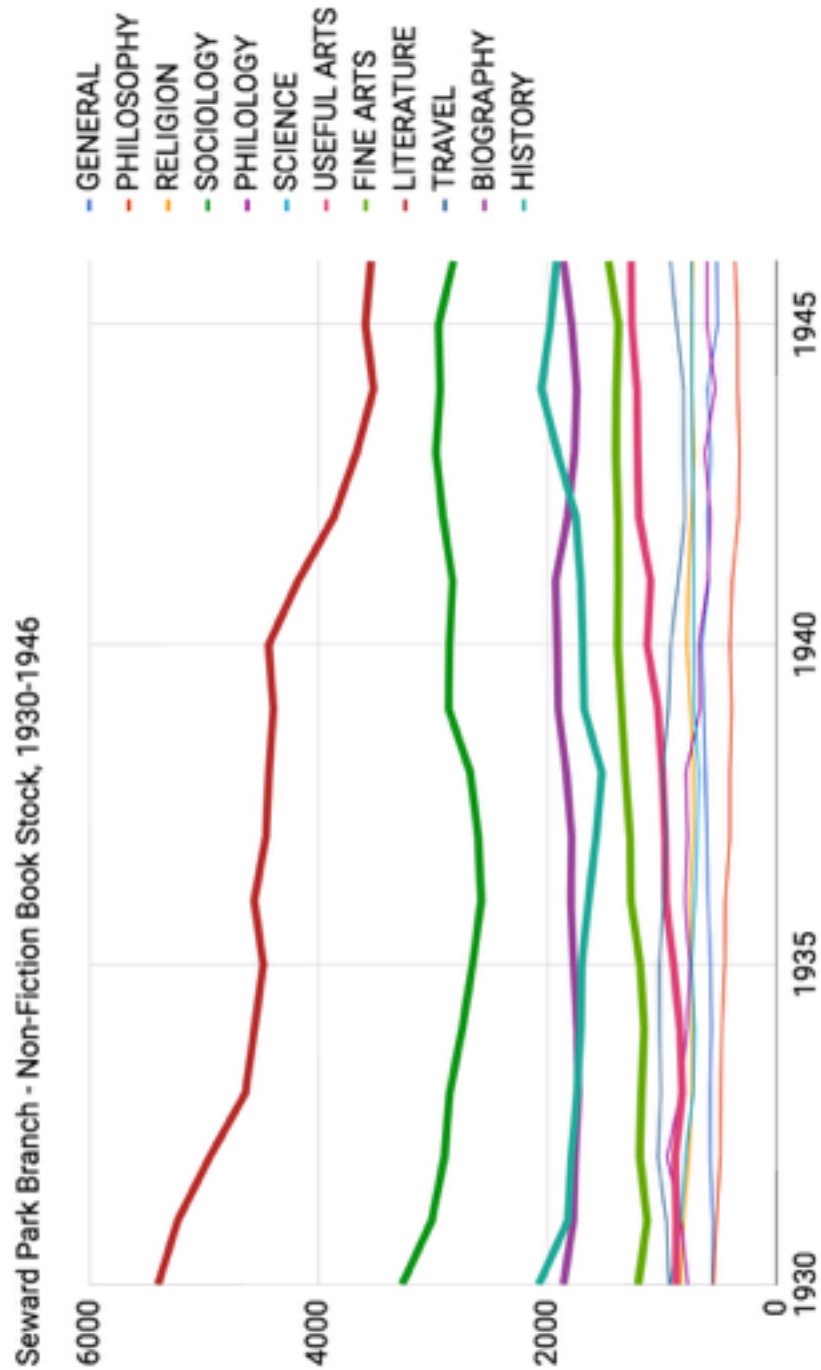


Figure 4.8. Seward Park branch - non-fiction book stock between the years of 1930-1946. This figure illustrates which foreign books were purchased in what language by the branch from 1930-1946.

emphasized that papers in all languages were decreasing in circulation for the past year without any sign of recovery (Waples, 1933, p. 6).

The same study showed that the readers of “reputable” books counted among the library’s clientele, who made up about 20% of the neighborhood, a neighborhood where home libraries were extremely rare apart from an occasional set of Hebrew scriptures. That said, the *Library Quarterly* determined that readers of “serious social issues” who were not students were “probably fewer than 1% of readership” (Waples, 1933, p. 8).

Another interesting aspect of the study found that men outnumbered women as users of the branch by 10%. The largest portion of the patrons were students, making up 38% of patronage, and skilled tradesmen and women, making up 18.3%. Of total registered card-holders, about one-third were currently borrowing materials, indicating that most card-holders read very little. Young people continued to make up a large part of patrons of the library, standing at 40%. The study raised a conjecture as to whether such a large amount of juvenile patronage had an adverse effect on the ability of the branch to serve the educational needs of the adults (Waples, 1933, pp. 10-11).

In characterizing the effect changes in the Lower East Side had on the educational drive and reading tastes of the neighborhood, Waples observed that:

Today much of the area’s intellectual energy has escaped into Brooklyn and the Bronx.

The eager groups on young radicals with whom Lincoln Seffens went to school in the

back rooms of the wine shops are now older and less eager and less radical. Most have moved away, the remnant live on their memories and hope for better times (Waples, 1937, p. 7).

In terms of hard numbers, below is a chart exhibiting trends in circulation of foreign titles. The staunch influx of immigration during this period is evident in the circulation figures featured in figure 4.9 on the following page.

The trends are quite shocking. If 19,793 units in Yiddish circulated for the year 1930, a low would be hit in 1944 at a mere 4,148 units circulated. Overall, all “big three” categories suffered decline. German circulation would double for just a year in 1939 due to the influx of refugees from Europe. While an increasing interest in Hebrew was cited in the annual reports as a result of persecution of Jewish people, this trend is certainly not overwhelmingly evident in the numbers. That said, the types of books sought in Hebrew did change. While many of the older, dwindling Hebrew readers continued to seek the traditional religious and historical titles, younger readers looked for more modern titles (Westover, 1939). Figure 4.10 on page 92 features a breakdown of major circulation categories for the period.

The pattern of decline in all major categories of circulation more or less matches the rate of decline in total circulation, with juvenile materials suffering slightly more than adult fiction and non-fiction. Within the non-fiction categories, represented in the line chart on page 100, we see a steep decline in literature and sociology, both losing a significant share of total non-fiction circulation as a result, as all other non-fiction categories remained relatively stable during this

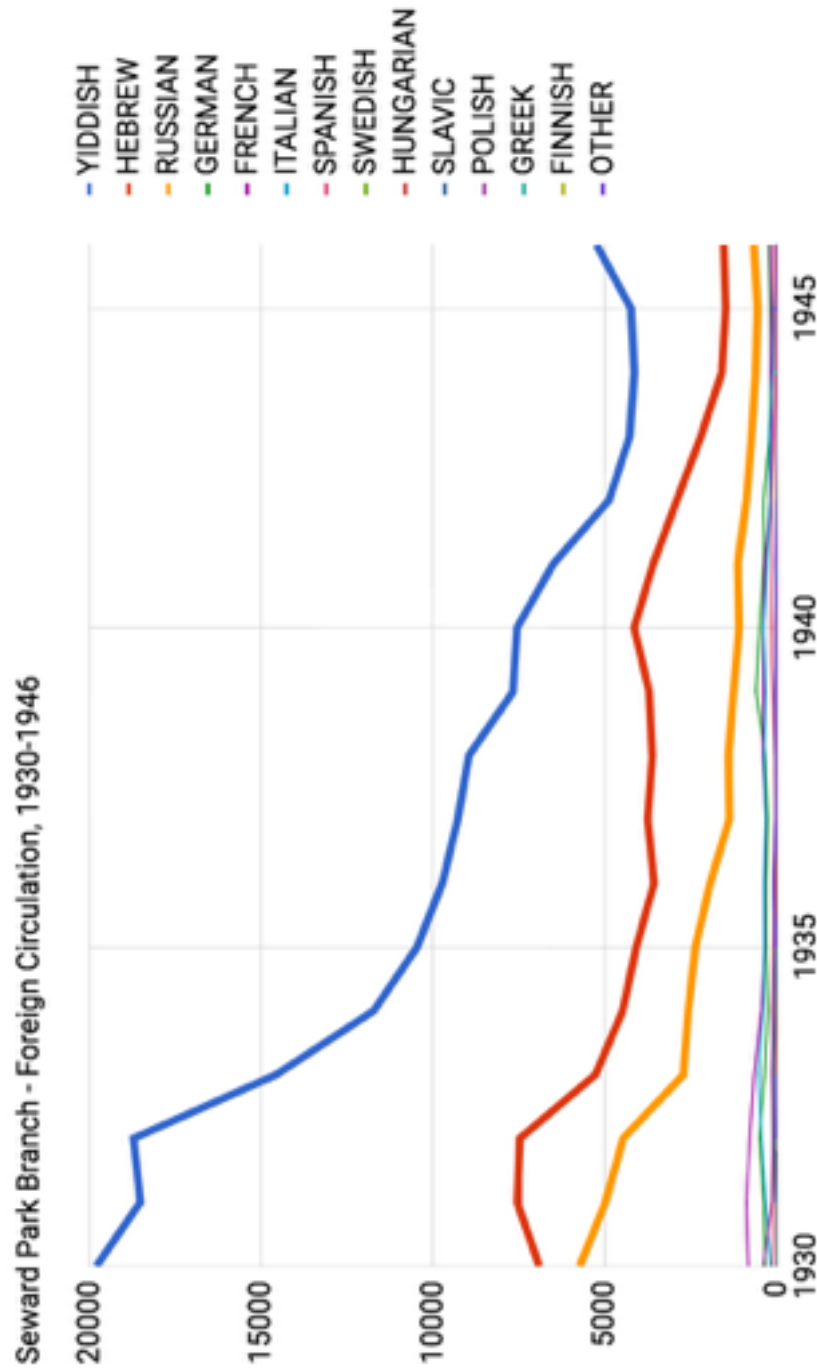


Figure 4.9. Seward Park branch - foreign circulation between the years of 1918-1929. This figure illustrates which language categories were circulated by the branch from 1918-1929. Note, data from previous years was not readily available.

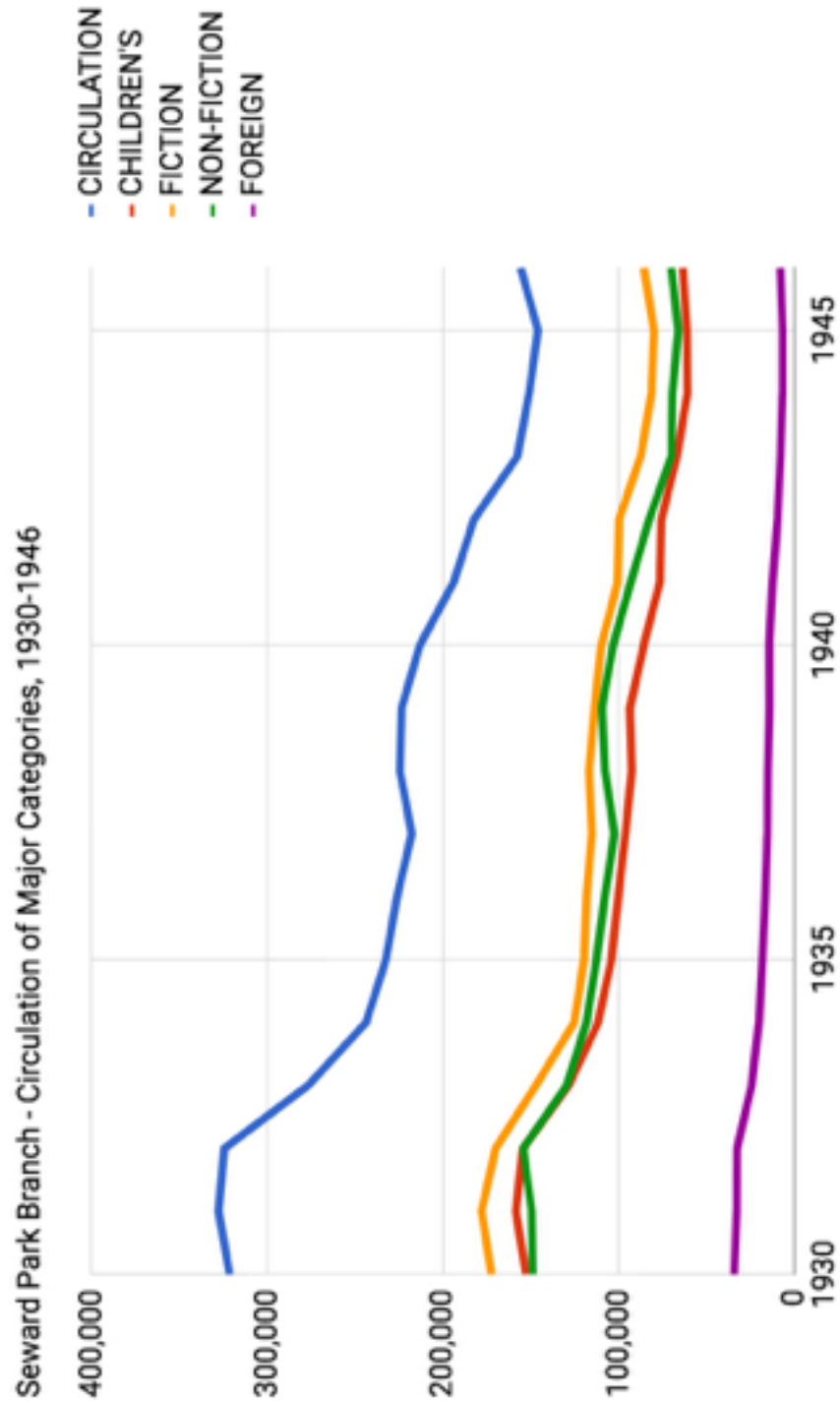


Figure 4.10. Seward Park branch - circulation of major categories between the years of 1930-1946. This figure illustrates which major categories were circulated by the branch from 1930-1946.

period. Unlike the previous period, the use of non-fiction at no point overtakes that of fiction. Figure 4.11 on the following page shows the different types of non-fiction circulation at the Seward Park branch by class.

The beginning of the Great Depression saw non-fiction reading which was markedly more directed towards vocational matters, reflecting the tastes of the leagues of unemployed or underemployed who visited the library. Apart from the dramatic decline in circulation received by the literature category, all other categories remain relatively stable. It can be inferred that though their numbers remained steady in terms of total units circulated, these categories would continue to make up a greater share of patron interest as the Lower East Side depopulated and total circulation declined.

Not surprisingly, patron tastes were reported to have taken on a more practical, vocationally oriented flavor during this period. This saw a noticeable proportional increase in the circulation of books in the Useful Arts category, with patrons checking out titles which ranged from hobbyist to professional interests (Westover, 1932). Many very specific vocational requests were made during this period, such as books on toymaking, the clothing industry, and the psychology of salesmanship. Librarians felt the higher demand for vocational titles, yet there was only so much that could be done in Depression times with minimal funds for the purchase of new titles, though building up the collection in the Useful Arts was deemed a priority. By far, most of the vocational requests during this period were titles on the civil service exam (Westover, 1930). Interest in civil service materials would grow so strong, that in 1939 the Seward Park branch was designated the Lower East Side center for civil service material (Westover, 1939). Use of the

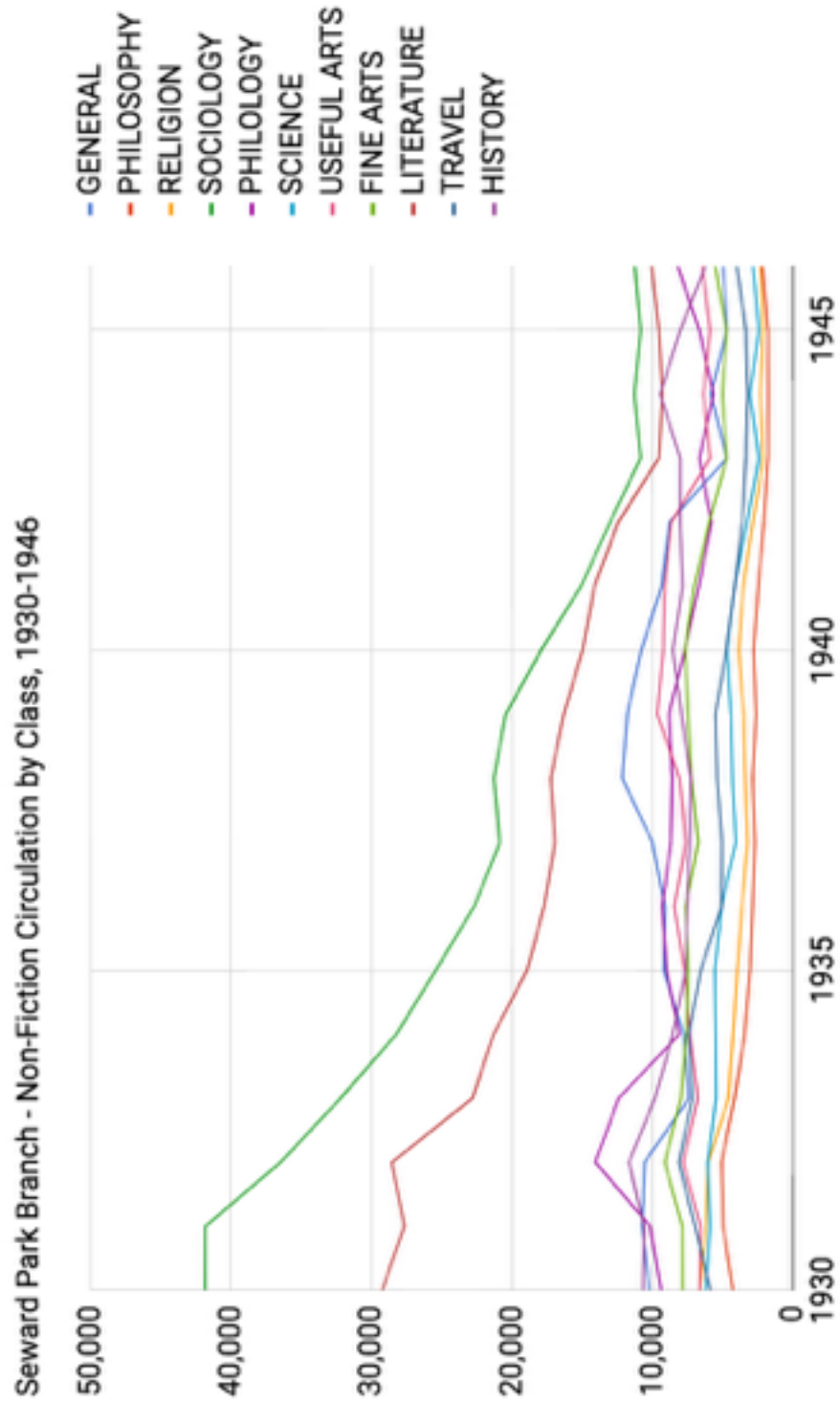


Figure 4.11. Seward Park branch - non-fiction circulation by class between the years of 1930-1946. This figure illustrates which non-fiction categories were circulated by class in the branch from 1930-1946.

civil service collection dwindled during the Second World War, increasing again immediately at the war's termination when servicemen returned home (Westover, 1945).

Other trends are evident as well; Interests usually reflected the state of world affairs, much of which involved the growing crisis of Europe and the War. Citing the growing use of serious college student work in the branch, it was found that:

National and international topics have an importance in everyday life. [Students] want to know why we have depressions and how they may be avoided. It is important that these readers have the best books available and many have been added this year. (Westover 1931, p. 1)

Works about Zionism and Judaism were noticeably popular (Westover, 1938). Other high-demand titles included John Gunthers' *Inside Europe* (Westover, 1936) and well as Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (Westover, 1939). Trouble in Europe and Social Security advances in the United States also increased the demand for books on Citizenship and Easy English. The branch librarian observed that, "not since the early twenties have we had so many requests for these books. The troubles in Europe are reflected every day in the library" (Westover, 1936, p. 1).

For the first time in Seward Park's history the children's circulation for the year dropped below the 100,000 units-circulated mark in 1937 (McCarrick, 1937). Much of this is probably due to depopulation and the falling off of registered school-age children in the area.

Much like the adult tastes, Children's reading requests would often follow the trajectory of current events; the forties would see more requests for the "history of bullets, peace, democracy, tolerance, and aviation" (Westover, 1940, p. 1). Requests by children for information for school assignments became increasingly difficult to keep up with, as teachers seemed to have been granted increasing freedom to design the content of their lessons. With a poor book stock due to a lack of funds, this was even more difficult than it might have been a decade earlier. Children's librarian Elizabeth McCarrick lamented that the Seward Park library was often unable to satisfy the diverse kinds of demand that children made on the branch, whether to fulfill a school assignment or out of sheer interest in some esoteric topic (McCarrick, 1937).

XIII. Reference services - 1930-1946

Of all the facets of educational service that were provided during this period, reference work did not seem to suffer comparatively. At the beginning of the decade, the reference room was reorganized to accommodate for some of the more "serious" requests being made. Much of this was in response to the moving of Seward Park High School further away from the branch. As a result, many of the more "textbook" style reference materials were weeded to make room for other more academic titles (Westover, 1932). Through a special fund, the branch was able to purchase a fine crop of expensive reference titles which better reflected the inquiries of Depression Era patrons (Westover, 1935). Their holding of a copy of the Thomas' Register of American Manufacturers received much attention during this period, not least of all because its availability at the branch was advertised in the *East Side Chamber News* (Westover, 1936).

As the high school crowds dwindled in the thirties due to the falling off of school registration, the reference room saw an increased number of use from college students, whose inquiries were both more difficult and more interesting for the reference room staff. In response, the reference collection ordered more academic titles at the expense of some of the more “textbook” style titles suited for high school audiences (Westover, 1930). This dwindling of high schoolers would continue throughout the thirties. A large civil service collection was built up to meet the overwhelming demand for those materials by prospective playground attendants, welfare workers, nurses, and clerical workers. To make more room for rapid use, patrons were only allowed one hour with each title (Westover, 1937). Frequently consulted titles included the *Congressional Record*, *Congressional Digest*, *Monthly Labor Review*, *Statistical Abstract*, *Commerce Yearbook* and government bulletins of all kinds. Material which could be used to debate the merits or demerits of New Deal legislation was particularly popular (Perry, 1934).

During the war, reference interests naturally shifted as men were called up to fight and women had to work production lines. The war years saw a greater ratio of high school and college student use which reflected wartime interests such as salvage, rationing, new government agencies, and diseases of Africa, among others. Interest in civil service material shrank. Requests for titles on technical radio books also saw a surge as a result of a radio school for merchant marine operators opening up at P.S. 20 on Rivington Street nearby, as well as a branch of the U.S Signal Corps School at 63 Park Row. After meeting with these schools, requests for additional funds to meet the needs of their students were granted (Brauneck, 1942). Once the war was over, the reference room flooded with former GI’s looking to resume their studies or take up a new

course. Civil service requests also saw an upswing in those looking for job security and decent pay after the War.

Due to short staffing levels during the war, for the first time in the branch's history the Reference Room would close temporarily between the months of July and August of 1944.

XIV. Program attendance - 1930-1946

Though programs were cut across the board, those conducted in Yiddish, such as the Yiddish Mother's Club, were increasingly popular and saw attendance levels rise. Lectures which featured local personages such as newspaper editors of Jewish dailies also remained popular.

Although this period did not see much variety in programming work in the children's department due to staff shortages, it can be deduced that storytimes during this period, particularly as delivered by Elizabeth McCarrick through marionette performance, were extremely popular and received a heavy amount of attention from patrons.

XV. Period epilogue - 1930-1946

While this period would not see the intellectually oriented programs of the first twenty years, work during this period would take on a more vocational flavor due to events of national and international consequence. If the reference collection did not receive attention in the annual reports of the previous period, the Depression and War years would see increased emphasis on the collection, particularly in civil service and useful arts. The Seward Park library would

become a hub for those who were out of a job, either through assisting patrons trying to find new ways to ply their trade, or to help them find different avenues for stable work.

1947-1959—The Postwar Years

I. Period introduction - 1947-1959

Immediately after the war, the character of the ever-changing East Side once again shifted demographically. One of the largest noticeable changes to the neighborhood was the post-war influx of people migrating from Puerto Rico and, to a lesser but considerable extent, African-Americans from the south. By the late fifties, Puerto Ricans would make up 35% of all Lower East Siders, up from merely 6% in 1950 (“Manhattan Communities”, 1959, pp. 6-7). In a decade, African-Americans would jump from a just 907 persons to 4,910 (Fowle, 1964, p. 6). Other new residents of the Lower East Side were displaced persons from Europe, mostly ethnically Jewish. Finally due to cheap rents, many artistic types were moving into the neighborhood as Greenwich Village had become too expensive for those without a steady income (Behar, 1953, pp. 9-10).

Even as waves of people moved out of Manhattan, from 1950 to 1960 the Lower East Side’s trend of depopulation would reverse as vacancies within the various private and public housing projects finally began to fill up. Between 1945 and 1949, the number of children in public schools increased by 19% (Behar, 1953, p. 10). Most of the gains in population during the fifties would be children aged 6-13 years (“Manhattan Communities”, 1959). If in 1950 the total population of the immediate Seward Park neighborhood was 46,981, it would increase to 60,966 (30%) by the end of the decade (Fowle, 1964, p. 5).

Although not mentioned explicitly in the reports, the postwar era was in many ways the “television era”. As studied by reports issued in the late forties cited in the literature review above, the television as a mass-communicative information medium probably did more to upset the centrality of the library as the educative force par-excellence in this period than moving picture and radio in the previous periods. Lower East Side mothers interviewed would even credit the TV set as curbing juvenile delinquency in the neighborhood. Indeed, it seemed as if many of the perceived accomplishments the library wished to achieve through education, the television set was already achieving:

To the aged, the infirm and the ailing [television] has provided a great morale building - a medium of magnetic attraction. To the uneducated it has provided and is providing a visual-aide education of considerable value. To all other members of the family there usually is some program of special interest. [...] TV is becoming a tonic without rival for an increasing number of low-income families. And the Lower East Side is indeed in the lead. (Platzker, 1949, pp. 6-7)

Before embarking on a full picture of educational services for adults during the postwar era, it is important to point out that Frances Westover, branch librarian for 19 years at Seward Park, retired in 1947. Her retirement was observed in many local papers who celebrated her as “the gentile who spreads Yiddish culture” (“The Jewish Day”, 1947). Her roots in the neighborhood ran deep; her retirement was felt as a significant loss to the community.

II. Outreach programs - 1947-1959

This would be a difficult period for the branch in terms of outreach and programming. In 1948 the branch would close for repairs, not reopening until January of 1950. By the time of its reopening all but three original members of staff had been dispersed throughout the system; the branch was operating with fifteen full-time members of staff, nine professional and six clerical, most of whom were completely new to the neighborhood (Behar, 1953, pp. 19-20). Low staff numbers combined with inexperienced staff members posed a challenge in this period (Beckerman, 1955). As a result, the branch's ability to provide consistent, regular programming beyond reference and circulation services suffered. In 1957, a visiting staff member from the Riverside branch observed that in an area like the Lower East Side which observed so much change in its area of service, having a small number of staff who had little experience with the neighborhood was particularly limiting in terms of providing good service (Greenfeder, 1957).

Despite staff shortages the library would continue to work with community institutions in the area, including work with the neighboring Educational Alliance. Book lists which focused on sex education, parenting, home budgeting, and other related topics were prepared for the Educational Alliance's marriage clinic (Weeks, 1948). Regular visits were made to a women's club at the Henry Street Settlement to perform book talks on titles the group requested (Behar, 1953, p. 43). Though these book talks were popular, some receiving attendance of over 80 people, the library staff grew weary of the ladies' choices as they seemed to have an endless appetite for "best-sellers" rather than serious literature (Beckerman, 1955). Similar book talks were performed by the branch librarian at the Recreation Rooms Settlement House ("Adult Services", 1954). Work with the local Florence Crittenton League was for the most part straight-

forward, with books and reading materials being left by the library for the girls' home use. On one occasion, a songbook was requested by the girls; by the end of the loan period, four of the girls had memorized some of the songs and sang them for the staff. Unfortunately, the League closed by the end of the forties (Weeks, 1948).

Longtime Seward Park staff member Fanny Wlodawsky recognized a change in the neighborhood which required a revision of outreach strategy at the branch. This change could be generally articulated as a complete revolution in the topography of the neighborhood. Given the growth of housing projects in the Lower East Side, her advice to attract future users was to embark on a vigorous outreach program similar to those performed to tenement immigrants in the twenties; though, instead of sending letters to the tenements, the library would send them to the projects. Rather than wait for a new crowd of borrowers, Wlodawsky advised that:

Each project has a meeting room for the tenants and it seems to me that we ought to take advantage of it. If we show an interest in the tenants, the housing committees, parents associations and housing authorities could be easily persuaded to cooperate with the library. We may be able to arrange a lecture, book talk or a film form [sic] in the project meeting rooms. If foreign speaking people live in the project we could arrange a lecture and have an assistant, who speaks the language, make them acquainted with the library in the neighborhood and the foreign books available. (Wlodawsky, 1952, p. 2)

If such an outreach effort ever did come to fruition, there is no record of one in the annual reports.

III. Types of educational services for immigrants - 1947-1959

While work was technically carried out with immigrants during this period, staffing levels were such that the library did not typically host programs which primarily served immigrants. As had always been the case, many local neighborhood organizations already provided adult educational services for English language learners. Rather than compete with these organizations in providing languages classes, the branch would instead supplement them with appropriate literature to assist in study. Given the amount of displaced persons from Europe arriving in the Lower East Side during the forties, Seward Park would work to foster a relationship with the Committee for Refugee Education to assist in providing material for the teaching of English. Work was also done with men from the Manhattan Trades Center. In both cases, visits were set up between the two organizations for the purpose of explaining library services to the students, as well as introducing the students to the easy books collection for English language learners (Weeks, 1948).

In general, class work with immigrant adults seemed to slow down as the fifties progressed. By 1958, the branch was only working with three classes for the entire year (Chow, 1958). Citing the amount of services available for adults in the Lower East Side, adult librarian Rose J. Chow felt the library could only do so much in terms of unique educational programming, insisting that the neighborhood was better served if the library merely distributed program announcements for local organizations like the New Era Club and the Henry Street Settlement (Chow, 1957). While this is a similar refrain to those made as far back as the twenties,

the types of services recommended as the proper domain of libraries are noticeably far less ambitious.

IV. Vocational classes or workshops for job training - 1947-1959

No branch-hosted vocational services were apparent during this period.

V. Clubs and other miscellaneous groups - 1947-1959

Unfortunately, this period as a whole did not see much club work. Prior to 1948's closing, the Mothers Club was completing its thirty-second year, and saw many interesting programs including regular author and artist visits (Weeks, 1948). Naturally, the Mothers would not meet at Seward Park during the branch's closing. Fanny Wlodawsky, who had been running the Mother's Club since the thirties, made an attempt to start up the Club once again after the branch reopened. Attendance was much lower than before at 20-35 mothers on average. Regrettably, after only three months, Wlodawsky reported that at the current level of staff she was no longer able to run the Club (Wlodawsky, 1951). In 1955, after many years of service, Fanny Wlodawsky would pass away. She would leave a gaping hole in the kinds of educational services for immigrants the Seward Park branch was able to provide (Beckerman, 1955).

VI. Lectures and discussion series - 1947-1959

Like a few other branches across the nation in the fifties, the Seward Park branch introduced programs of discussion forums during the postwar period. The branch held a few civic discussion programs delivered in a town hall format whose aim was "to build a community spirit through talks and discussions on problems of common interest to all groups". Topics

covered included crime and government (East Side News, 1953, p. 32). Other discussion forums sought to appeal to the neighborhood's Jewish cultural heritage. A lecture on Jewish life in the Far East received attendance of over sixty people (Beckerman, 1956). Another such program featured the various phases of Jewish literature; attendance was fair, but enthusiastic ("Adult Services", 1954).

This period would be the first to see the introduction of film programs at the branch; many of these programs were designed to promote discussion of the film after screening. Prior to the postwar period, a film was shot in 1942 by a Miss Hardie, former assistant branch librarian. Miss Hardie filmed the mother's club during its 25th anniversary, as well as various scenes from the neighborhood. In 1947, this film was screened for the first time, to the delight of the Mothers (Weeks, 1948).

Many films in the burgeoning film discussion series were geared towards the Jewish community. One film, *We Survived*, was screened on loan from the Educational Alliance immediately after the war. Another early film featured folk dances and ballet from Russia (Weeks, 1948). The creation of the state of Israel saw the screening of the films *Flight to Freedom* and *The House in the Desert*. These films in particular were said to have stoked lively discussion and appreciation from Seward Park's patronage ("Foreign Work", 1952). The screening of *Of These Our People* was incredibly popular, and, like many programs decades prior, featured a lecture and discussion with a columnist from The Jewish Day (Goodfleisch, 1955). Seventy five people were in attendance (Beckerman, 1955). Other notable programs included the screening of *Tomorrow is a Wonderful Day* about the life of a Jewish boy in Israel.

Other non-Jewish screenings in the film forum series were extremely popular as well, particularly a film on the modern French school of painting and Grandma Moses. Upwards of fifty people showed up to the screenings, and roughly twenty five stayed for the discussions (Weeks, 1952; Behar, 1953, pp. 42-44). While other film programs would not be quite as successful, they would receive varied attendance. Other topics would include films and discussions on “great men in American history”, and “the trade union movement”. In order to appeal to the new influx of Puerto Rican migrants, a program was designed around a film called *The Roots of Happiness*, a mental health film issued by Puerto Rico’s Department of Health. Unfortunately this film only counted one person in attendance, despite heavy publicity (Beckerman, 1955). While a great deal more screenings on educational topics occurred at the branch, suffice to say the film screenings varied a great deal in popularity.

Film was not the only electronic medium to be introduced. In 1954, the branch celebrated the WNYC book festivals through playing a live radio broadcasts in the reference room. Despite these broadcasts receiving heavy promotion, attendance was disappointing (“Annual Report”, 1954).

Though the character of the Lower East Side would change during the fifties, programs like the many film programs above that appealed to the Jewish heritage of the neighborhood would continue to be popular during this period. That said, the changes in the neighborhood were palpable enough for the librarians to take note. Librarian Harry S. Weeks remarked that the new patterns of immigration and changing constituency living in the housing projects meant that,

perhaps, programming at the Seward Park library needed to try to appeal to, and cultivate the interests of the growing non-Jewish presence on the Lower East Side. (Weeks, 1952).

VII. Readers' advisory services - 1947-1959

Most evidence of readers advisory service were done with groups from other organizations, assisting English language learners with supplementary reading lists. Other advisory service work would be carried out through providing reading lists in conjunction with in-house exhibits.

VIII. School work - 1947-1959

Under assault by unstable staffing conditions as well as a rapidly changing neighborhood, the Seward Park branch would continue to perform school work to the extent that it was able to in the postwar period. The 1954 children's report alone cites work with ten schools: 5 public, 2 junior high, and 3 Jewish parochial schools (Farganis, 1954).

As can be seen in this chapter thus far, P.S. 65 had always been a major source of school work for Seward Park's children's department. In the early postwar period, formal school work with P.S. 65 was almost non-existent. Instead of regular visits to the library to work with materials, librarians would more often than not visit the campus to give book talks, bringing twenty books per class visit for the students to check out at the school and return when they were finished (Walls, 1951). Similar talks were given at P.S. 160 (Farganis, 1953).

Reports from the mid-fifties bear evidence that visits to the library by the public schools picked up again, if only for a moment. Elementary schools P.S. 110, 31, and 160 all sent classes during the mid-fifties, as did the Metropolitan Vocational High School, Seward Park High School, and junior high schools P.S. 65 and 12. The students from these latter junior high schools were observed as having disciplinary problems, perhaps stoked by the indifference of the teachers towards student behavior during library trips (Farganis, 1955). To add insult to injury, teachers from these schools often did not make their scheduled appointments and rarely bothered to explain why (Lambert, 1954). Between the high-percentage of non-readers in the public school classes and the seeming reluctance of the teachers to bring their students to the library, librarians often had to prioritize which classes they pursued in these times of inadequate staffing levels. This usually meant that the library only made time for the highest performing classes led by the most willing teachers (Farganis, 1956).

For whatever reason, the 1950s saw an escalation of passages describing young children from the public schools who, in increasing numbers, did not know how to read at their own grade level, or even sound out certain letter combinations (“Children’s Report” 1951). For older groups at the junior high school public schools, the young person’s librarian explicitly made a point to make her book talks more “simple” so that the students could follow along (Freedman, 1955). Children’s librarian Evangeline Farganis cites a lack of enthusiasm of teachers when it came to reading; during one of her book talks at P.S. 160, Farganis observed that book talks were often not simply for the benefit of the students, but desperate attempts at convincing teachers of the values of recreational reading. Too often, teachers only understood reading comprehension as a series of word tools and exercises (Farganis, 1953).

Perhaps this indifference stemmed from the teachers' lack of confidence in their own students. Young person's librarian Helen Lambert recalls:

So often I met with indifference or misunderstanding of what we were trying to do. It is particularly difficult to win the confidence of a class when the teacher comes up and announces in anything but a whisper that the class is stupid and doesn't want to read anyway. I must admit that on one occasion I summoned enough courage to tell the teacher to restrain himself at least until the students were out of earshot. I am very glad I did. (Lambert, 1954 p. 2)

As indicated above, staff shortages would eventually lead to a prioritizing of school work. Although the Seward Park branch had traditionally provided services in varying degrees to ten schools in the area, by 1957 it had altogether dropped junior high schools P.S. 65 and 12, and elementary schools P.S. 110, 31, and 160 (Farganis, 1957). Only the most high achieving classes (in terms of reading proficiency) from P.S. 147 and 42 were seen that year as they were in the most immediate area to Seward Park. Classes from all of the Jewish parochial schools were maintained. Dropping these public schools, particularly P.S. 65 and 12, had a direct effect on the branch insofar as middle-schoolers were few and far between in the later fifties, though high schoolers would continue to perform reference work at the branch and borrow from the adult collections (Farganis, 1958).

Children from the Jewish parochial schools would remain the most active and sophisticated readers at Seward Park during this period. Mesivta Tifereth Jerusalem, Rabbi Jacob Joseph, and Beth Jacob were all named in the reports. Work with students from these schools was a pleasure as always, since the yeshiva students' reading levels were usually at least average or above average, with students who were enthusiastic about good reading (Farganis, 1955).

IX. Early literacy (storytimes) - 1947-1959

Despite the shortages, storytimes and picture book hours remained on the regular roster of programming at Seward Park. Marionette shows receive a mention here-and-there, and were very popular when they were conducted, receiving crowds of over one hundred people. Such events were very rare, however. Evangeline Farganis reported: "Unusual programs like this always give us a lift but because of the time and work involved more than one or two a year is not possible" (Farganis, 1955, p. 2). During the warmer months, librarians made weekly visits to the playground to read stories aloud in the open air (Bryant, 1955). Rotating storytellers from other branches continued to be practiced during the postwar period (Farganis, 1956).

Providing even the most basic format of storytimes with a short, constantly rotating body of staff was difficult. At times, the librarian would have to perform story hour at the sacrifice of being able to help children at desk. After the story hour was over, the librarian would scramble to try and answer a line of children's questions for schoolwork and book recommendations. Naturally, it was difficult to do quality work under such conditions (Farganis, 1957).

Some of the most exciting programs during the fifties were author and illustrator visits. One such visit was from illustrator Louis Slobodkin and author Sydney Taylor. Mr. Slobodkin drew entertaining chalk drawings, while Taylor's charisma and dramatization of everyday events made for a very enjoyable evening for the over 100 children in attendance that night (Farganis, 1953). This type of program was repeated with a visit from Maurice Sendak (Farganis, 1956). Another guest of note visited in 1956; she was none other than Pura Belpre, former children's librarian at Seward Park in the twenties. She had since become a renowned storyteller and puppeteer. During her visit she regaled the children with stories in Spanish, drawing a crowd of over 100 children from all across the East Side (Farganis, 1956).

X. In-house displays and exhibits - 1947-1959

In 1954, during Brotherhood Week, the branch had on display a series of pamphlets and books on the subject of inter-cultural relations ("Annual Report", 1954). Other exhibits would showcase artworks. Much exhibition work during this period was usually curated in conjunction with local Jewish heritage events such as yearly exhibits prepared for the annual Jewish Book Month, which included original drawings and etchings by Saul Raskin from his book, *The Land of Palestine* as well as paintings by Rachel Kahn, depicting scenes from various cities in the new state of Israel ("Foreign Work", 1952).

One of the most unusual exhibits during this period was the result of children's librarian Evangeline Farganis and assistant Ida Malamud paying a visit to the frozen foods corporation (no reason for why they were making this visit is given). Mr. Harrison Huster's office (the president of the corporation) was decorated with whaling instruments, illustrations, miniature whales, and

logbooks of whaling ships. The women were given permission to take as many of these items as they could carry back to Seward Park; an exhibit on whaling in America was set up next to such titles as *Moby Dick* and *Greasy Luck* (Farganis, 1955). It was received well by adults and children alike, providing a showcase of tools and articles not common in the Lower East Side (Bryant, 1955). Other exhibits for children included Franklin Watt dolls, ballet slippers shown with Degas prints, African woodcarvings for the Museum of Natural History, and jewelry, trinkets, and books from Thailand. While exhibition work could be very taxing for a thinly staffed library, it was felt that the ways in which the exhibits exposed children to other ways of life from around the world was incredibly valuable (Farganis, 1955).

XI. Collections/book stock patterns - 1947-1959

Unfortunately, the *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* stopped recording the book stock of foreign language classes and individual non-fiction classes at the branch libraries in 1947. This makes it difficult to illustrate a complete picture of the classes of non-fiction that the Seward Park branch stocked during this time since no statistics are readily available. Nevertheless, particularly for foreign languages, we can gather from various comments made during the decade that not meeting the needs of foreign patronage was a concern for the Seward Park branch, particularly with the arrival of displaced persons after the war (Weeks, 1948).

Although the shift in demographics towards an increasingly Spanish speaking populace was noticed by staff almost immediately, there was little demand for Spanish books by Puerto Rican adults. As a result, the purchase of Spanish books for adults receives little mention. While outreach was performed to some of the evening classes at Seward Park High School where many

of the students were Puerto Rican, success in recruiting borrowers was limited; after borrowing a few easy books during their initial visit, these students usually did not develop into repeat borrowers. For whatever reason, the Russian and Yiddish speaking students were more likely to become regular patrons (Wlodawsky, 1951). Minimal attempts were made throughout the fifties to increase the circulation of Spanish books for adults, such as a display about Puerto Rico (“Adult Services”, 1954).

The concern for providing a decent stock of Yiddish and Hebrew titles persisted into the fifties. A long-time foreign assistant, Ida Malamud, wrote a letter to the central building communicating the lack of attention the collections were receiving. The book stock of Yiddish and Hebrew was described by Malamud as extremely poor, going so far as to recommend that 50% of the books be discarded to make way for new books in better condition. Provisions of Hebrew classics with emphasis on Biblical literature was cited as particularly important to include in future purchase requests as many Hebrew schools continued to make up a significant presence in the neighborhood (Malamud, 1956). The letter would go on to request the sum of \$500 for this purpose; in 1958 \$100 was granted. The prayer for better biblical titles in Hebrew would eventually be answered by the Samuel Dickstein Lodge of B’nai Brith in 1959 when the organization gifted restricted funds for the purchase of Judaica.

By 1960, adult non-fiction book stock would amount to 13,075 units over 7,531 units for adult fiction, while children’s book stock would amount to 8,123 non-fiction units over 7,115 units in fiction. The non-fiction categories were particularly strong in the 200s, 300s, 800s, and 900s, and was weakest in philology, science, and technology (Fowle, 1964, pp. 17-18).

XII. Patron reading habits - 1947-1959

Unfortunately, the lack of availability of consistent and rich numerical data for circulation during the postwar era means that the data is not as insightful for this period as it is for the previous periods. Summaries of circulation for classes of non-fiction ceased to be published in the Bulletin after 1953. Fiction and non-fiction are also no longer reported as categories in their own right after 1953. Detailed reporting of foreign language categories ceased after 1946. Thus, sketching a picture of patron habits around circulation was more difficult for the postwar period. In general, circulation would remain within the neighborhood of 150,000 units circulated per year until the very end of the postwar period. As can be seen in figure 4.12 on the following page, circulation would plummet due to the branch's closing immediately after the Second World War. Upon opening, the fifties would see a steady decline in circulation until 1955. The sudden increase in circulation from 1956-58 was likely the result of temporary closures of the Chatham Square and Hamilton Fish branches, Seward Park's immediate neighbors to the west and the north (Chow, 1958). It's important to note that the increasing use by teenagers of the branch was such that about 40% of adult circulation would be from teenage use by the mid-fifties, increasing to almost 50% by the end of the decade (Fowle, 1964, p. 18).

Figure 4.13 on page 116 contains a profile of circulation within the non-fiction collection until 1953, when the data ceases to be available. We can see that although a decline in all categories was seen until the mid fifties, this decline was much less severe in the

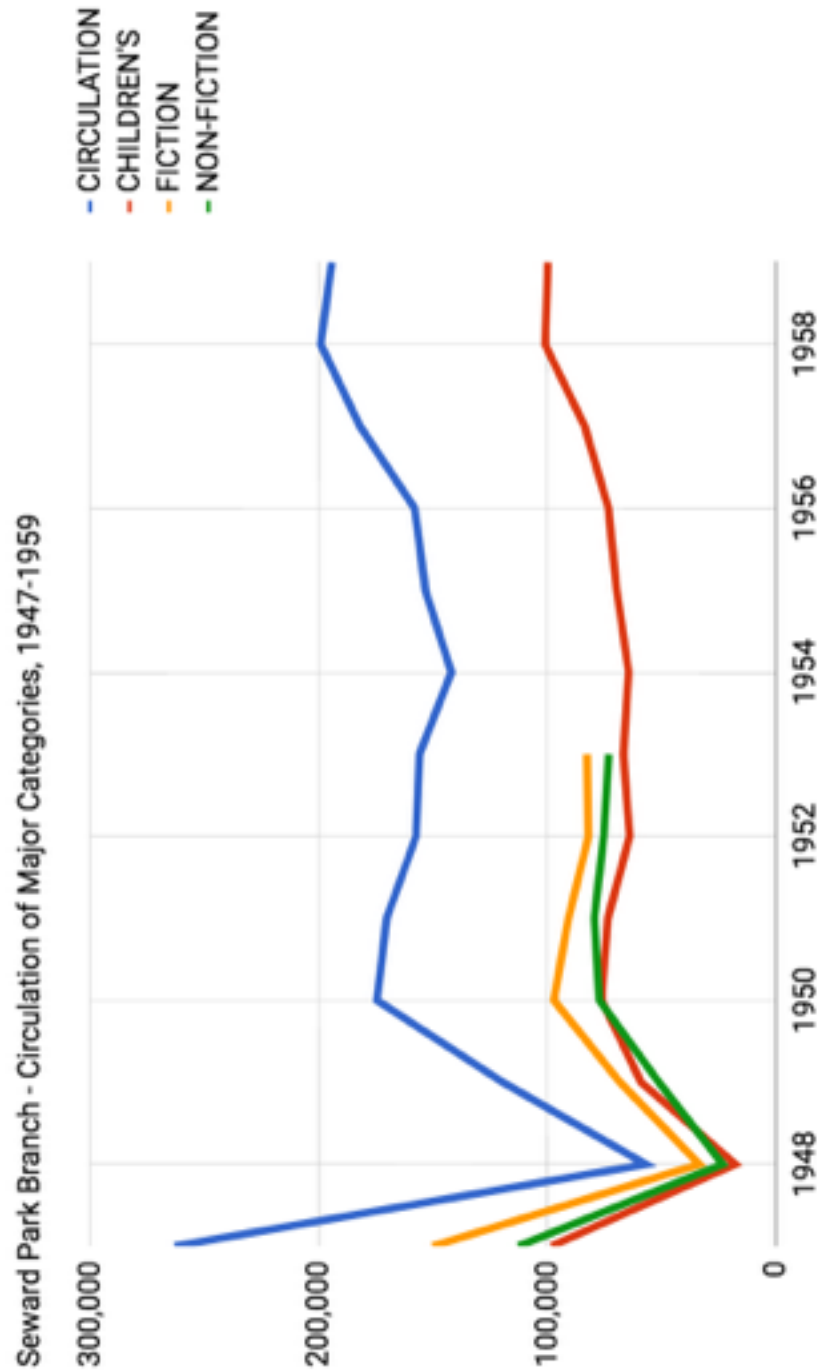


Figure 4.12. Seward Park branch - circulation of major categories between the years of 1947-1959. This figure illustrates which major categories were circulated by the branch from 1947-1959.

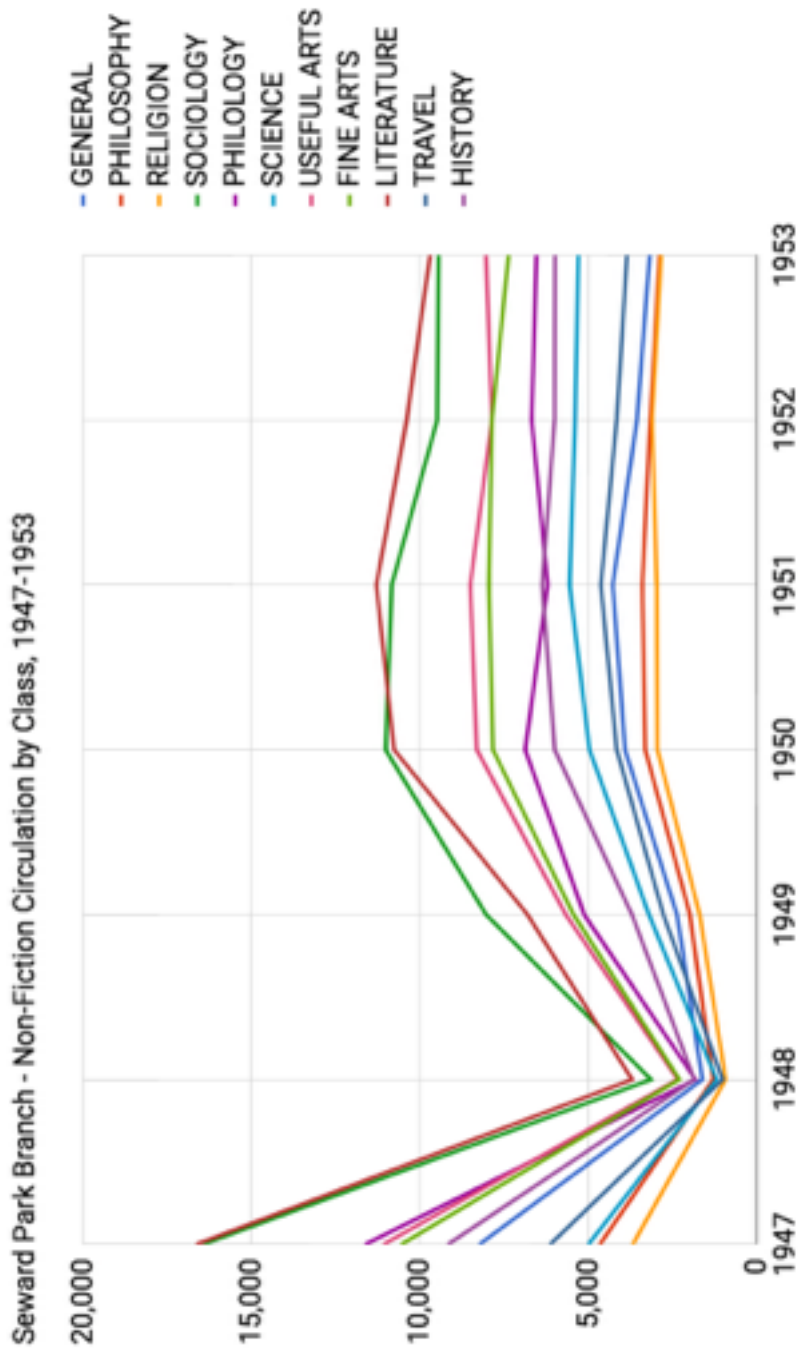


Figure 4.13. Seward Park branch - non-fiction circulation by class between the years of 1947-1953. This figure illustrates which major categories were circulated by the branch from 1947-1953; note, figures are not readily available beyond 1953.

children's department. It is clear that sociology and literature would remain the most popular categories of non-fiction from 1947-53, followed by useful arts and fine arts. The demand for sociological titles and educational works was in large part requested by teachers and intellectual segments of the branch's clientele (Fowle, 1964, p. 17). As mentioned earlier, the postwar period saw the movement of young artists and intellectuals into the Lower East Side who could no longer afford the rents in Greenwich Village. Though their number was not great, the proportion of reading this group did on topics like literary criticism, modern poetry, fine art, philosophy, and psychoanalysis was considerable (Behar, 1953, p. 43). In general, readers at the Seward Park branch read at a much higher reading level than that of the rest of the community.

It was mentioned in the foreign report of 1951 that there was a noticeable increase in circulation of materials in both Yiddish and Russian with the arrival of displaced persons from the war. Russian displaced persons from the Soviet Union led to a doubling of Russian circulation in 1951 (Wlodawsky, 1951). By the next year, Yiddish circulation would hit 6,292, Hebrew came in second at 2,229, and Russian would hit third at 1,653 ("Foreign Work", 1952). Hebrew would eventually settle down at 1,447 units circulated by the end of the decade. Reading in Spanish doubled from 1950 to 1960 at 600 total units. While "doubled" sounds like a dramatic improvement, "600" is a disappointing figure considering the total circulation of around 200,000 units for the same year, as well as the fact that Spanish speakers made up one-fourth of the entire neighborhood, with a concentration in Seward Park's own community (Fowle, 1964, p. 16). A casual profile of the demand on foreign languages is given in 1955 showed that German readers tended to prefer classic titles in their own language, which Spanish readers preferred more utilitarian items such as Spanish/English dictionaries (Goodfleisch, 1955).

XIII. Reference services - 1947-1959

In keeping with current events and anxieties, the Seward Park branch's reference room contained a large collection of civil defense materials which contained pamphlets on topics such as the effects of atomic weapons, medical aspects of atomic warfare, and civil defense against atomic attack. The collection was significant enough for the branch to be declared a "Civil Defense Center" (Behar, 1953, p. 44). Though the book stock was impressive, the collection rarely received use from patrons (Heywood, 1953). The Lower East Side collection also continued to grow during this period. The clippings and other items were a well-rounded "goldmine" of local history and current events (Behar, 1953, p. 44). As referred to earlier, in 1959 the Samuel Dickstein Lodge of the B'Nai Brith purchased a replacement 35 volume edition of the entire *Babylonian Talmud*, as well as 10 volumes of the *Midrash Rabbah*, 7 Volumes of *The Mishnah*, and 5 volumes of *The Zohar* to assist in Judaica reference work (Zeit, 1960).

The civil service collection still saw quite a bit of use from adults, particularly during the recession of the late fifties (Williams, 1958). Questions continued to reflect topical interest (Heywood, 1953), ranging from anything from the Korean war, to atomic energy, to socialized medicine (Heywood, 1954), and of course, Sputnik (Chow, 1958). In general though, reference work would slow down immediately after the war despite Seward Park's having a very well-stocked reference collection. In response, reference room hours were shortened without much complaint from the public, closing completely during the off-season student months of July and August (Heywood, 1951). While an increased use of the room was noted repeatedly in the mid-fifties (Heywood, 1953, 1954, 1955) this did not stop the complete closure of the third floor reference room by the end of 1955 with an attendant downsizing of the entire collection to

prepare it for relocation to the first floor (Hunton, 1956). Naturally, this had an effect on the way patrons used reference services at Seward Park. Reference librarian Lyn Williams observed that lack of space and conflicting interests of patrons on the third floor made for a less than ideal study environment for patrons seeking a quiet, fully-stocked place to work (Williams, 1957).

While it is difficult to trace the development of the type of reference requests from 1947-1959, it is clear that junior high and high school students would become the major users of the reference room during this period. As a result, much of the reference work was done around common subject areas in high school (Behar, 1953, p 41) making extensive use of subject oriented encyclopedias and digests of stories and plays (Zeit, 1960). Other popular items for the younger crowd included college catalogs and books about scholarship and loan funds (Heywood, 1954). For many of the students not performing at grade level, all that could be managed were the Worldbook and Scholastic reference works as the other more academically rigorous reference titles were frequently too difficult for them to use (Freedman, 1955). The subject oriented reference desk work with young patrons was frustrating at times. In 1955's reference report, Elizabeth Heywood remembers that frequently she would be asked by younger and older students alike to help them find information on a subject they seemed to misunderstand or misinterpret. Students rarely articulated why they were researching a subject, or what or who the person was they were trying to find out information was. Heywood reflects:

They do not seem to understand what they are doing, or why, or to make any connection with something they already might have learned. Their assignments just seem to be (at least as understood by them) a hodge-podge of unrelated facts. [...] They seem,

too, to be completely unaware of many things we've always considered just common routine knowledge of any fourth or fifth grade child. (Heywood, 1955, p. 3)

The students from the Jewish parochial schools, however, remained some of the most interesting reference patrons, (Haywood, 1955) making extensive use of the large Socino Edition of the Babylonian Talmud and other items of Judaica (Goodfleisch, 1955).

Figure 4.14 on the page below contains a bar chart graphically exhibiting reference requests as they fell within the year 1955-56. While the data obviously varied from year to year, this cross section of data serves to give the reader a graspable visual representation of the sorts of questions being asked at the reference desk at Seward Park during the fifties. The X axis lists the series of Dewey Decimal numbers each inquiry fell under, and the Y axis lists the number of times asked.

XIV. Program attendance - 1947-1959

Certainly, the number of programs which could be held at the Seward Park branch had to be cut back due to short staff. Nevertheless, the survey of adult services at the beginning of this section is enough to demonstrate that in most cases educational programming at the Seward Park branch was very popular. This is particularly the case for the film programs and programs which celebrated Jewish heritage. The adult services librarian remarked that "of the two years I have been connected with Seward Park, I have never seen a program of any kind that was poorly attended" (Beckerman, 1956, p. 3).

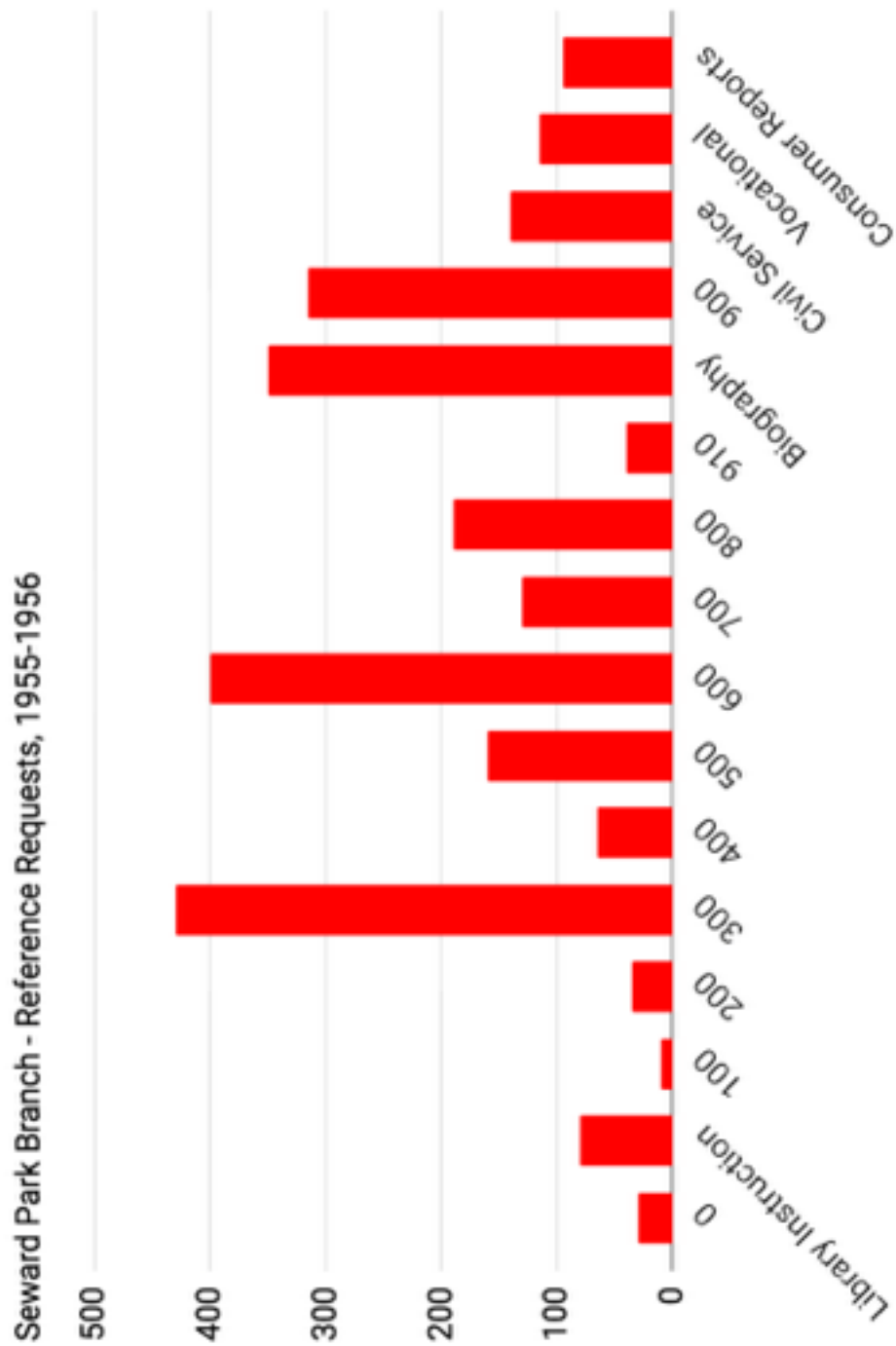


Figure 4.14. Seward Park branch - reference requests between the years of 1955-1956. This figure illustrates which major categories were consulted to answer reference questions between the years 1955-1956.

Rarer forms of programming, like marionette shows and authors and illustrator visits, were obviously very popular, as has been demonstrated in the summary of children's educational services for this period, above. More regular types of programming, such as storytimes, could be very hit-or-miss. The reasons for why certain days drew crowds while others didn't could be confounding (Bland, 1957). While hard, longitudinal figures to back such conjectures are not immediately available, the following page contains a table documenting weekly story hour attendance for a (roughly) two-month period may provide the reader with a useful cross-section:

Table 4.1

Story Hours

1957		1958	
<u>Date</u>	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
Oct. 30	20	Oct. 29	17
Nov. 6	16	Nov. 5	20
Nov. 13	12	Nov. 12	Day after holiday
Nov. 20	20	Nov. 19	23
Nov. 27	4	Nov. 26	20
Dec. 4	5	Dec. 3	24
Dec. 11	11	Dec. 10	9
Dec. 18	24	Dec. 17	20
Dec. 23	2	Dec. 24	3
		Dec. 31	2

(Beagle, 1958)

The reason for such fluctuating numbers of attendance not always clear. It is probably significant that the Seward Park branch was in a neighborhood with many different educational social services for children. Of course, it didn't help that the library's main juvenile users, the Yeshiva students, remained in school until five or six o'clock (Beagle, 1958).

XV. Period epilogue - 1947-1959

1959 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the branch's opening. In celebration, Hardie's film of the library and neighborhood in the thirties was screened with a similar film of the neighborhood and services of the present day. In reflection, adult librarian Jean McIntosh says that she,

[...] couldn't help but be aware of the great change in activities from the days of the Mother's Clubs, debating groups, etc. to the present when smaller staff could not possibly meet such demands. There is still evidence, however, that SE is meeting a demand from its community and is still looked on by many of its adult readers with the same respect for its well rounded collection. For many of our readers are still the type drawn to books by their content, not publicity. (McIntosh, 1960, p. 4)

When reading the reports from this period, one gets a visceral sense of the stress many Seward Park employees felt in the fifties. Despite best of intentions, librarians could only do so much with lack of assistants, pages, clerks, and staff members who were not acquainted with the neighborhood. This forced the Seward Park staff to prioritize which educational services were delivered, and to whom. These decisions were all the more important in this time of incredible

transition in the Lower East Side. After all, the fifties was in many ways, “a tale of two neighborhoods”. Evangeline Farganis recalls:

The Puerto Rican children, heavily concentrated in the public schools, are afternoon regulars and choose both Spanish and English books. [...] The Jewish children [illegible] reading habits remain a tightly knit group. A majority of them go to private parochial schools until 5 or 6 P.M. and then go home to other parts of the city. Hence there is little or no mixing with other children. Language barriers and cultural differences do not lend to free intermingling. (Farganis, 1958)

Summary of Chapter

In broad terms, the findings of this study indicate the evolving, varying commitment to educational services to adult and juvenile patrons in the branch and the way in which they were used by patrons of all ages. In particular, the findings reveal how educational services were carried out and used by patrons at a single branch of a major library system in the first half of the twentieth century.

In the first period, 1909-1929, it was found that the Seward Park branch was aggressive in its approach to providing educational services, namely to Yiddish speaking immigrants and to children. The findings bear evidence of the branch’s attempt to meet the needs of a community which spoke many different languages, posing veritable challenges in service. It was seen that the Seward Park branch went beyond the simple provisions of books in foreign languages and English classes for foreign work. The branch operated as an intellectual and cultural hub of the

community with programs such as the Yiddish Forum and the Yiddish Mothers' Club. Work with children was robust, with children's staff members actively reaching out to schools to assist in students' research and school work. The relationship with the public schools during this period was strong where it was able to come to fruition. Where it was weak, the effort to work with the schools was forceful. The educational services to children during this time were varied and impressive, ranging from story times for younger children and literary clubs for older children. In both departments outreach was a crucial element to anticipating the educational needs of the neighborhood. Both patron use of circulating materials and educational programs were heavy in this twenty year stretch.

In the second period, 1930-1946, it was found that the Seward Park branch's educational mission was challenged by material disadvantages stemming from the Great Depression such as staff shortages and shortage of funds for collection development. Furthermore, the rapid depopulation of the neighborhood due to an exodus of residents to Brooklyn and the Bronx, as well as massive area redevelopment by government agencies posed additional challenges to the branch. While some services from the previous period continued during this period, many services were cut. It was found that educational services for adults took on a vocational flavor during the thirties and forties. Reference work would be increasingly important in delivering services to adults. For children, while storytimes and school work with classes continued at a regular pace, literary club work ground to a halt. School work continued with the public schools; even parochial school work was practiced during the thirties and forties. While outreach would still remain an important facet of service, it would play less of a significant role in pinpointing the attributes of the educational needs of the neighborhood. Patron use of circulation materials

and programs during this period would dwindle, but this might be due to depopulation rather than lack of interest.

In the final period, 1947-1959, educational services would be severely curtailed due to staff shortages. While the depopulation of the neighborhood slightly reversed, the demographic makeup of the neighborhood would shift, posing its own challenges to the branch as it grappled with the changing character of the neighborhood. While some longtime services (such as the Mothers Club) would discontinue during this period, the film programs and discussion programs were the most popular vehicles of educational services for adults, particularly programs which celebrated the Jewish heritage of the neighborhood. Documents also bore evidence of civic discussion programs. While no Great Books discussion programs were held before 1959, it should be pointed out that such a discussion program would begin after the period discussed, in the sixties. The amount of children's work would fluctuate. Due to staff shortages, children's staff would often have to prioritize which classes they performed school work with. High performing parochial schools were given priority over low-performing public school classes. While storytimes would still be scheduled regularly and receive a good amount of attendance from patrons, no prominent club work was performed during this period. Reference work was also heavily emphasized, particularly during the fifties. Exhibition work was particularly interesting and informative. Outreach during this period would be minimal. In terms of general character of service, perhaps it can be safely leveled that whether from fatigue, lack of resources, or lack of will to rise to the unique challenges during this period, the branch's attempts to cater to patrons not among the "initiated" users of educational services in the library during the postwar years were not overwhelming. Patron attendance at educational programming events seemed to

vary greatly in the postwar era. Circulation would increase; this may have occurred less as the result of increased use by the neighborhood, but of incidental circumstances like neighboring branch closures in the late fifties.

Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations

Summary of Coverage

The above research sought to gain an understanding of how a public library branch (Seward Park) of a major library system (The New York Public Library) was able to fulfill an educative purpose for children and adults in its first fifty years of operation. The analysis of the branch and its educational purpose attempted to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What sorts of educational services were provided to adults at the Seward Park Library during its first fifty years?

RQ2: What sorts of educational services were provided to children at the Seward Park Library during its first fifty years?

RQ3: How were educational services used by patrons at the Seward Park branch?

In regards to the first research question, adult educational programming was evident in all three periods. Outreach efforts towards adult education were particularly apparent in the first period. While outreach efforts slacken in the final period, the question remains as to what was the primary cause; whether or not this was due to an apathy of library staff or from lack of material resources to perform outreach. Most likely it was a mixture of the two. Classes, workshops, and educational services for immigrant adults were present in all periods analyzed. While English classes were provided in the first period, such work was rarely prioritized, as the Lower East Side was home to a number of social services organizations which already provided lessons in

English. Instead, adult educational services usually took the form of readers advisory or preparation of materials to assist in the study of English. Vocational work for adults was carried out in a similar way; more often the library served as a place where classes could find materials on job training rather than a place where people actually received training. Vocational work of this sort would begin in the Depression and continue on through the postwar years. Clubs and groups played a major role in the first two periods analyzed, the most notable example being the Mothers Club. Club work with adults would largely fall off in the early fifties. The Yiddish Forum provides an excellent early example of lecture work in the first period, while the civic discussions and film forums of the fifties demonstrate the branch's commitment to inciting intelligent discussion in the neighborhood in the final years covered by this study. Exhibition work was constant in all periods. Apart from rare infusions of cash from special funds, additions to collections were seen to have been largely at the mercy of what funds were allocated to the branch for the purchase of materials. With an initial rocky start, Seward Park aggressively rose to the challenge of providing its Yiddish readership with a rich collection of materials. Purchase of useful arts became more prominent in the Depression and War years. For the final period, purchase of reference materials for student and casual reference work seemed to take priority. While the further purchase of Yiddish, Hebrew, and Russian are cited in the final portion of the research, the commitment to Spanish materials was questionable.

In regards to the second research question, outreach would be a crucial component to library work with children in the first period, as many schools and organizations in the area were not at that point used to working with public libraries. Outreach continued to be performed for the purpose of school work, readers advisory, and storytimes with students in the neighborhood.

In general, outreach work would be consistent but varied when taking a longitudinal view of the fifty years in question. Club work would be a major part of educational services for children in the first period, with boys and girls reading clubs and other programming efforts which sought to inspire the love of serious literature. Club work of this sort would all but disappear in the latter two periods due to staff shortages. In their place, author and illustrator visits would become increasingly more common. Relationships with area schools was strong, particularly in the first two periods. The Depression and War Years began to see work with both parochial and public schools. While the postwar period would continue to see classes from public schools, this work would be frustrated by staff shortages and a lack of interest expressed by school faculty. Parochial classes were prioritized during this final period. Storytimes would remain constant in all periods analyzed, and would even take on interesting interpretations as is the case with the puppetry work of Ms. McCarrick in the thirties. Display work would be in evidence for all three periods. While collections and book stock patterns for children were not discernible from adult book stock patterns, it can be deduced that the final period saw concern for the purchase of reference materials appropriate for the junior high schoolers and high schoolers which would increasingly make up a larger portion of the library's clientele.

In regards to the third research question, patron reading habits often expressed an "educational" orientation insofar as non-fiction would sometimes outpace the use of fiction, particularly in the first twenty years. Even when this is not the case, as in the latter two periods, non-fiction usage is never far behind that of fiction. While sociology and literature would be the leading categories in all three periods, their lead drastically declined in the Depression era, leveling off in the postwar era. All other categories would remain remarkably constant, making

up a larger share of circulation as the decades rolled by. Circulation of foreign materials in any language would decline sharply after peaking early in the first period, seeing a slight recovery in the final period. That said, at no point would the circulation of foreign materials rival the number of units circulated in the period at and around the year 1924. Attendance of educational programming in the first period was strikingly high. Though the amount of educational programming was reduced in the Depression period, the programs offered nevertheless received a fair amount of attendance; in the final period, educational programs which were oriented towards the celebration of Jewish cultural heritage tended to receive the most attention from patrons. In children's programming, attendance could vary greatly. According to the Seward Park children's staff, program attendance was heavily contingent upon what surrounding neighborhood organizations had on offer. The way in which patrons used reference service was not deeply examined in early annual reports; the details of reference work is much more forthcoming in the later annual reports, perhaps indicating an emphasis placed on reference work in the Seward Park librarian's professional universe as the decades progressed. While the thirties saw vocationally oriented reference questions, the fifties would see a turn towards grade-school reference work, mostly with young adults.

Conclusions

From 1909-1959 the Seward Park branch offered a multitude of educational programming for adults and children, ranging from basic reference services to intellectually stimulating discussion forums, to storytimes and puppet shows. Educational programming was generally well-received during first two periods. In the third period, attendance could be high or low depending on what sort of program was being offered. Much of this had to do with the

repopulation of the Lower East Side with migrants who were to a much lesser extent from the Jewish Diaspora. Circulation would decrease during the entire period as a whole. Literature and sociology, while remaining the dominant categories of circulation for all three periods, would lose their strong lead as the decades progressed. Other major categories to receive significant decline were science and philology. When comparing these trends at the Seward Park branch with trends of the entire New York Public Library system as a whole, some insight can be gained into how unique the branch's patterns were.

While certain peaks can be identified in NYPL's line charts for the early thirties and late forties (the year after the war), the most obvious trend reflected in the NYPL's statistics above that is not shared at Seward Park is a general increase in total circulation. Indeed, the line charts for Seward Park's and the NYPL's total circulation almost have an inverse relationship to one another; the better the NYPL did, the worse Seward Park did in terms of circulation figures.

In the charts of classes, a few similarities exist: both sociology and literature retain strong leads at both Seward Park and the NYPL until the forties. Philology would also not remain a major category in the NYPL chart; most declines in classes are not as dramatic for the NYPL system as they are for Seward Park.

See the following four pages (figures 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4) for details on overall trends in major categories and non-fiction circulation at the Seward Park branch and The New York Public Library system from 1909-1959.

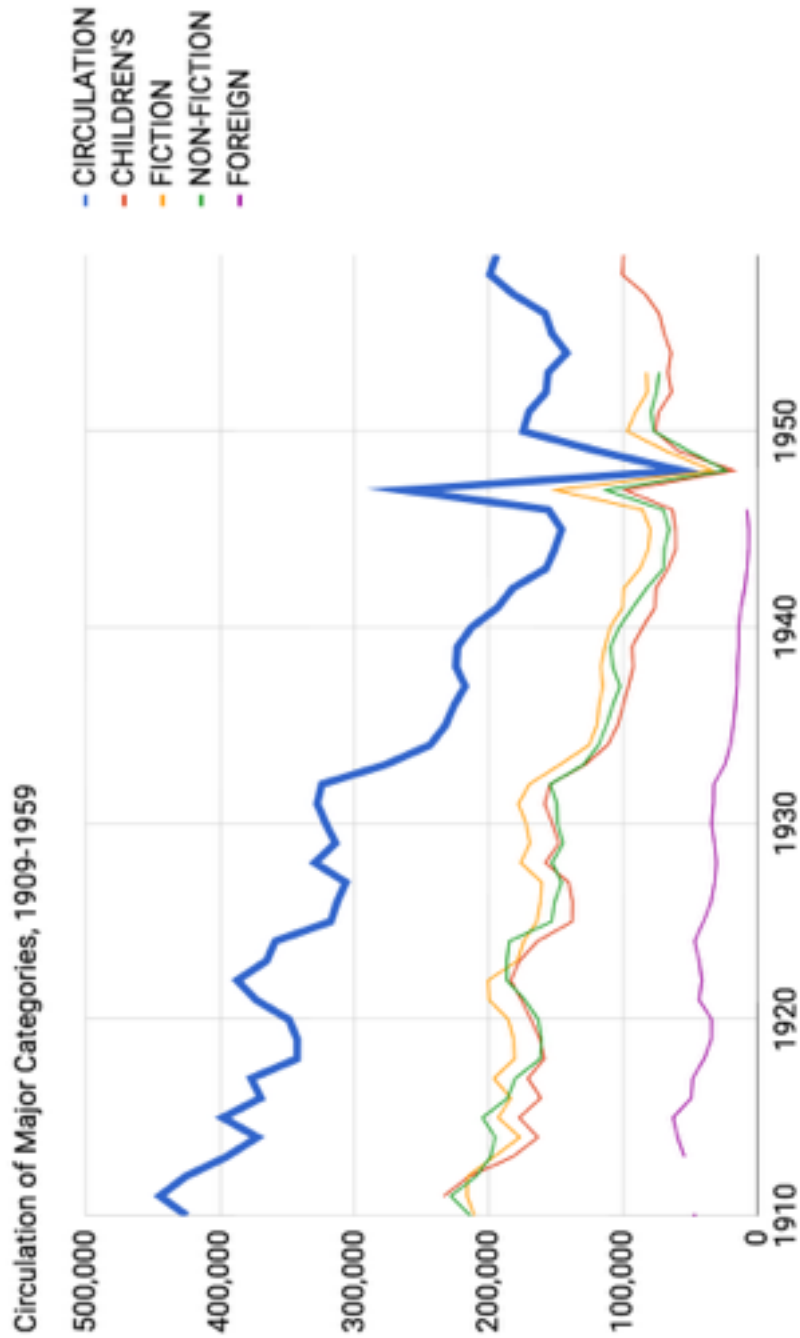


Figure 5.1. Seward Park branch - circulation of major categories between the years of 1909-1959. This figure illustrates which major categories were circulated by the branch from 1909-1959.

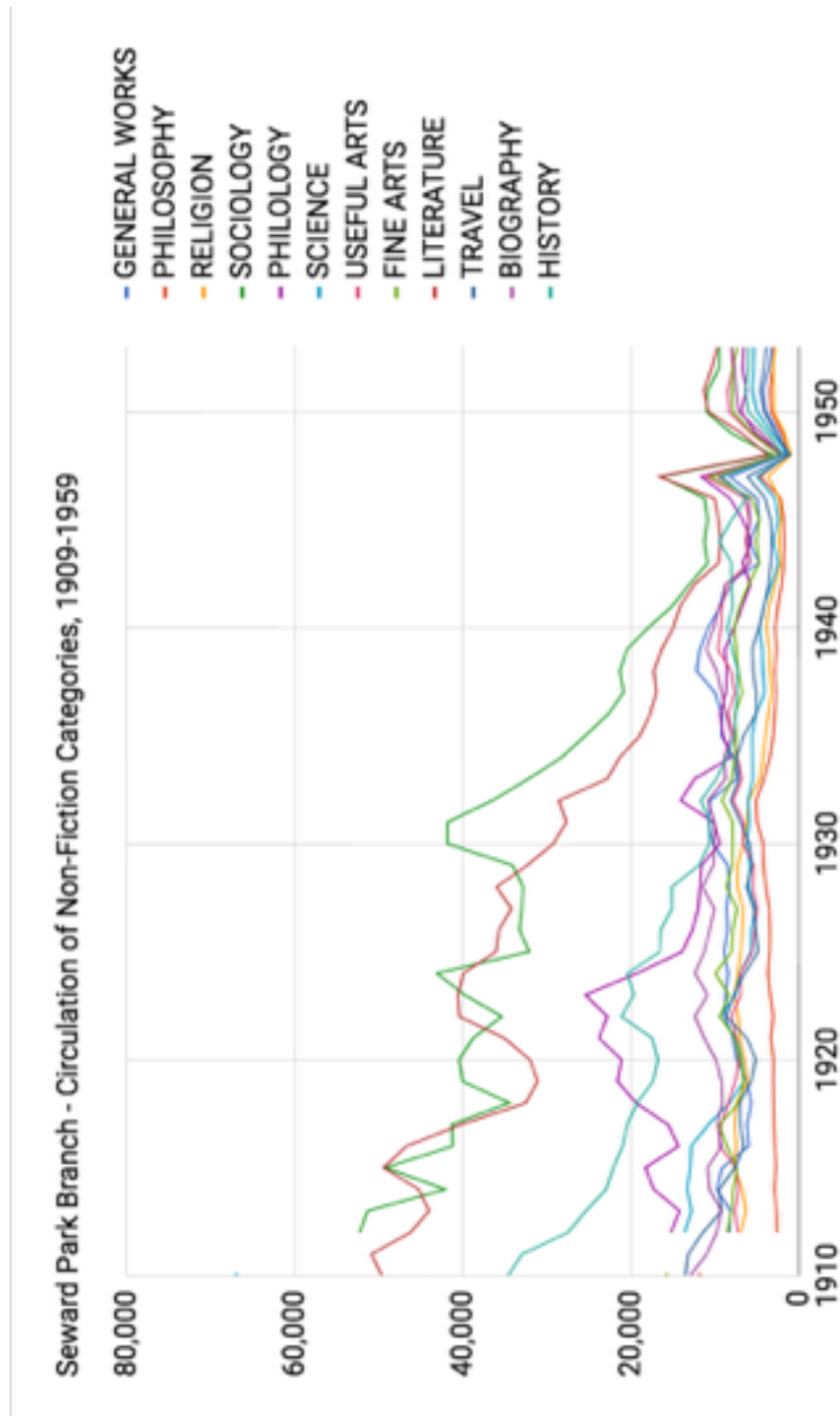


Figure 5.2. Seward Park branch - circulation of non-fiction categories between the years of 1909-1959. This figure illustrates which classes of Non-Fiction were circulated by the branch from 1909-1959.

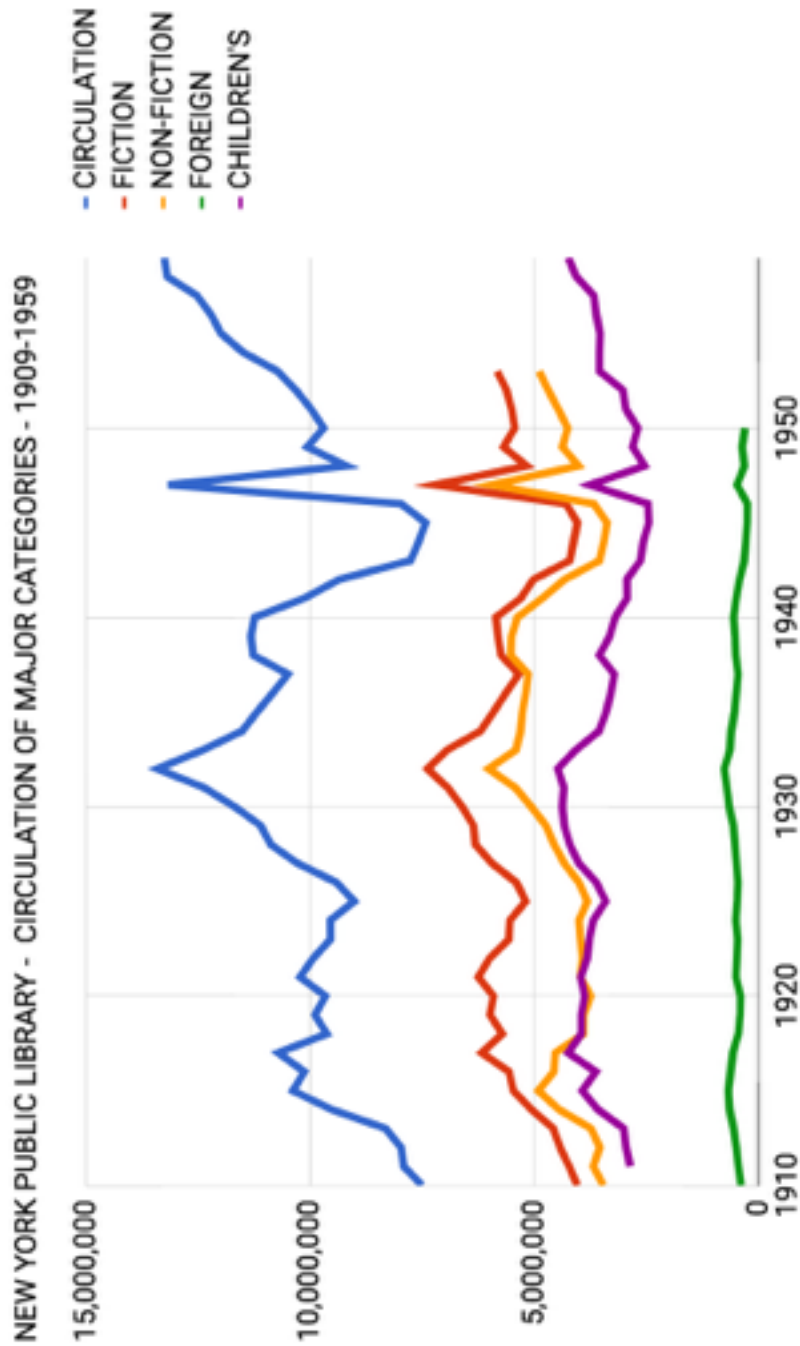


Figure 5.3. New York Public Library - circulation of major categories between the years of 1909-1959. This figure illustrates which major categories were circulated by the NYPL system from 1909-1959.

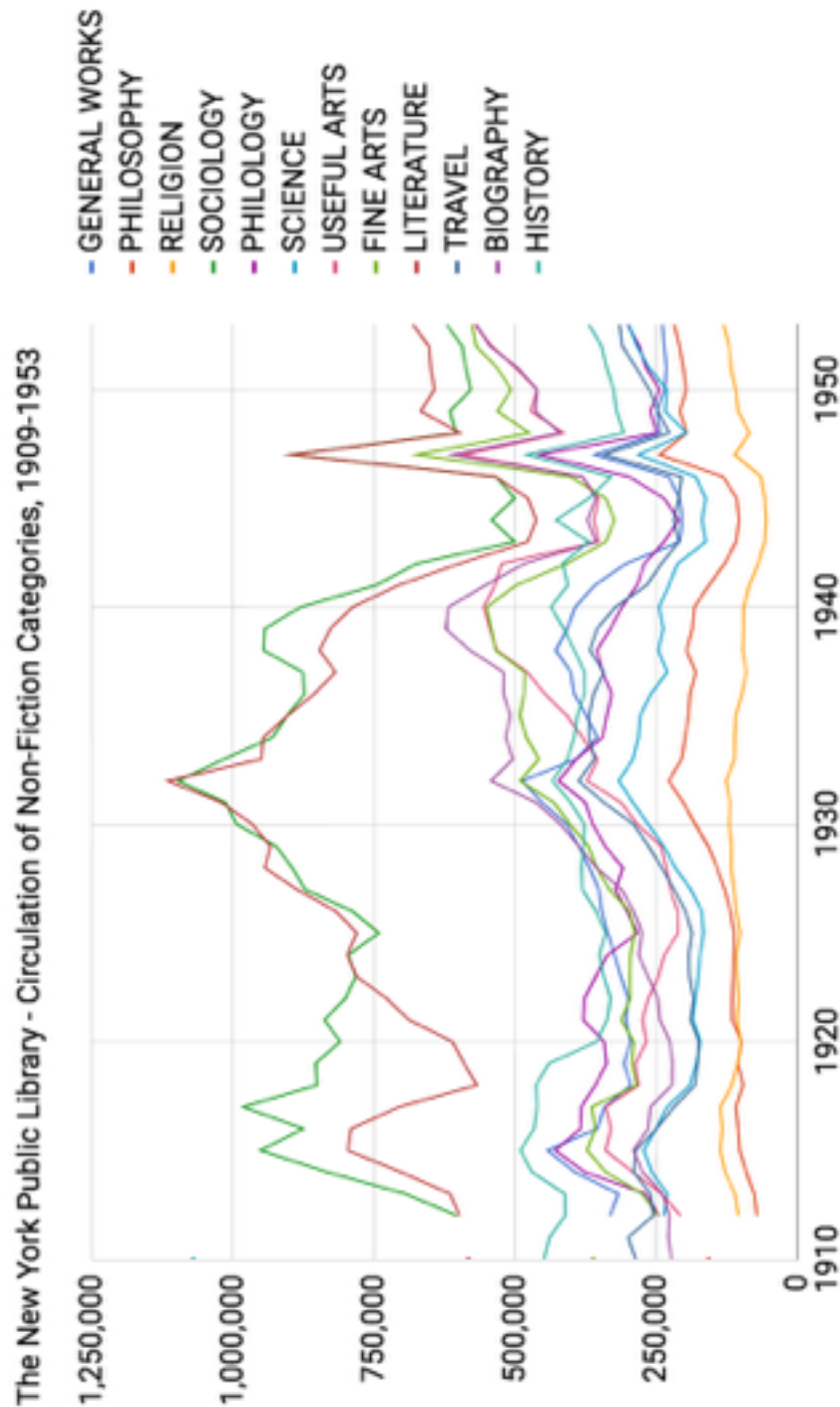


Figure 5.4. New York Public Library - circulation of non-fiction categories between the years of 1909-1959. This figure illustrates which classes of non-fiction were circulated by the NYPL system from 1909-1959.

Significance

Branch libraries, perhaps like no other unit of service in the profession, are at the whim of the consequences of decisions made by their constituency, consequences of decisions made by administration of the branch's system, and consequences of national and world events. As a result, a great deal of the problems branch libraries try to manage are out of their control. It is hoped that this study may be significant in as much as it is able to shed some light on this issue and its practical and theoretical implications.

The most ideal outcome of this research would be that the findings provide historians, researchers, and those within the library profession an understanding of factors which bring to light how public libraries, as a force for education, respond to change, and how these changes may, in turn, effect the way the public library unit provides educational services. In practical terms this would mean that the research above could help branch libraries orient themselves towards their educational mission in such a way that is informed by a detailed, longitudinal study. Understanding how a branch library historically responded to changes (such as cuts and neighborhood demographic shifts as well as international events) over a long period of time may provide insight as to which methods were effective, as well as make shortcomings in various philosophies of service more apparent. It also is hoped that this paper may make a significant contribution to literature surrounding library science, serving to confirm or complicate previous studies which have sought to identify macroscopic trends in the profession for the same time period and beyond. A broad knowledge of how libraries on an individual level cope with change in relation to their sense of educational purpose might, it is hoped, provoke the reader or future

researcher to ask similar questions of themselves when designing future studies of libraries and their ability to fulfill their educative purpose as they adapt to changes within their neighborhood.

Concluding Limitations

This proposal as a whole contains a number of practical and theoretical limitations. While it is hoped that the research above might be of use for future planning or decision making at the branch or system level, the conclusions of this research thus far can only rather dumbly gesture towards vague suggestions based on fifty-year patterns unique to a specific locale. Obviously, many of the challenges the Seward Park library faced were unique. Though there is a degree of overlap between challenges faced by many branches throughout the nation, it is difficult to ascertain how useful this study might be in understanding challenges which pertain, say, to suburban libraries of the mid-century, or rural libraries of today. That said, it is hoped that this research will be understood as significant insofar as a number of these studies, in aggregate, may begin to meaningfully illustrate how a branch's relationship to its educative purpose may evolve over long periods of time due to external and internal material and ideological circumstances.

Another practical limitation is the time period which this study seeks to understand. After all, while the library of today shares many goals and habits with the library of the early twentieth century, the way in which service is provided has changed significantly. In short, communicative technology has allowed the public library of today to reorient itself towards meeting challenges that the library of yesteryear could seldom fathom. That said, technology in-itself is not a culture per se but an amplifier of values which come with a culture. With this in mind, it is hoped that

any implications developed from this study may remain relevant to libraries of today despite the revolutions in communicative technologies witnessed in the past thirty or forty years.

Finally, a number of questions this research poses remain unanswered. Could the movement of an intellectual Jewish class to the outer boroughs, being largely replaced by a constituency characterized by Ennis as the urban library “non-user” (Ennis, 1964, p.165) be the culprit for declining circulation in the thirties? To what degree was depopulation to blame for the decrease in circulation? To what extent could the library have done more to better resuscitate its circulation figures, particularly during the fifties, a decade which saw more people moving to the Lower East Side for the first time in a generation? To what extent did circulation figures merely reflect population totals of the neighborhood? It is felt by the researcher that the current research is not sufficiently robust enough at this stage to answer such questions.

Recommendations

In regards to limitations acknowledged in the previous section, it is hoped that the research in this piece may serve as a prolegomenon for further research into educational services at the Seward Park branch, as well as branches of public libraries across the country. Further research may provide a more complete picture of the/a branch’s relationship with its educational purpose, particularly in regards to the neighborhood it served (or serves). In particular, the research above does not yet significantly embark upon an evaluation of the Seward Park branch’s performance of educational services from 1909-1959; further data collection and analysis may be able to begin to assess branch activities.

To this end, a major recommendation for further research includes a deeper look into neighborhood statistics to determine whether or not the library could have done more to reach out to its constituency, particularly in the fifties when services to Puerto Rican adults, while consistently cited as a trouble-area by library staff, did not strike the researcher as an issue which the staff was, at best, able, or, at worst, willing to take to task. A more subtle analysis of neighborhood statistics may be able to understand the nature of this shortcoming. If library service in the sixties would be distinct insofar as it would attempt to reach out to the “library non-user”, further research might expand the chronological domain of the research above to understand the approaches cited in Bloom’s and Ennis’ pieces regarding the difference between “educational services” and “informational services” that would propel the thrust of library services into the latter half of the twentieth century.

Furthermore, future research might seek to better assess educational services rendered and used during this period by going beyond annual reports, branch documents, and circulation statistics. As has been noted in previous chapters, a weakness of the research above is its over-reliance on documents which represent the librarian’s point of view. For the most part this point of view comes with the intellectual trappings and assumptions of an Anglo-Saxon middle class tradition with which the library’s institutional ideals were closely aligned. Not surprisingly, to more deeply understand the relationship the branch had with its constituency, it might be useful to better understand the constituency and how their own cultural persuasions might have encouraged or dampened their relationship to these educational ideals.

While claims about staff shortages are made, particularly in the fifties, clear staff profiles are lacking in this research. A deeper look into staffing summaries and manning tables across the three periods might do much to validate or complicate grievances exhibited by Seward Park staff members during this period. It would also be useful to find data on branch hours. Another claim made on multiple occasions by Seward Park staff was that there were many educational services already being provided in the area by various educational and cultural social institutions, thus undercutting the branch's ability to provide educational services unique to the neighborhood. An analysis of settlement house and social service programming in the neighborhood during this period would provide key insight towards the evaluation of services during this period.

An avenue of research only lightly considered in this piece was the way in which other modes of information had an effect on branch library services. Further research might seek to better understand the effect that the local newspaper industry, the radio, paperbacks, and the home television set had on the neighborhood and its information seeking behavior.

A deeper examination of demographic trends in the neighborhood would be extremely revealing in terms of understanding the relationship the Seward Park branch had with its patrons. Some interesting areas still unbroached by the research might try to chart the neighborhood's population alongside circulation statistics in order to figure out how closely circulation figures matched demographic figures. This process would do much towards understanding whether or not branch activities had a direct effect on the amount and type of circulation in the neighborhood. A broader materialist analysis of the immediate Seward Park neighborhood would do much to trace why patrons made certain choices in relation to educational services provided by the Seward Park library from 1909-1959.

Finally, it is recommended that more of these hyper-local studies be performed for branches throughout the country which analyze habits within a variety of time periods and locales. As mentioned previously, these hyper-local studies can better shape policy decisions when observed in aggregate. Certainly, the more richer and multifaceted the network of local studies in branch behavior in view of their educational purpose, the more soundly conclusions can be reached about branch libraries and their role in educating their constituency.

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