



The New York Public Library New York Public Library Archives

Guide to the

Kingsbridge Branch records

1909-1999

MssArc 5827

Compiled by Jim Moske; machine readable finding aid created by FAKER.

Summary

Creator: New York Public Library. Kingsbridge Branch

Title: Kingsbridge Branch records

Date: 1909-1999

Size: 2 linear feet (4 boxes)

Source: Transferred from Kingsbridge Branch Library

Abstract: Reports, brochures, news clippings and administrative files from the Kingsbridge Branch of The New York Public Library.

Physical Location: RG 8

Conditions Governing Access:

Box 4 is closed until 2043.

Conditions Governing Use: Box 4 is closed to research until 2043

Preferred citation: Kingsbridge Branch Records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Language of the Material: English

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Creator History

The Kingsbridge Branch of The New York Public Library traces its origins to the Kingsbridge Free Library, established in June 1894 by Dr. James Douglas, a local resident who was a vestryman at the Church of the Mediator (Episcopal) and who worked at Phelps Dodge. The library was located above a drug store operated by a Mr. Heck on 230th Street, west of Kingsbridge Avenue. Marjorie Winn was the

librarian.

In 1902, James Douglas offered to donate land to the New York Public Library so that a branch of that institution could be built in the neighborhood, with funds contributed by Andrew Carnegie. The offer was accepted in May 1903, and construction of a McKim, Mead and White designed library began soon after. The library opened May 19, 1905 at 3041 Kingsbridge Avenue, and was the second NYPL Branch in the Bronx. The original collection numbered 3,500 volumes, 1,000 of which came from the Kingsbridge Free Library. The library was relatively small and the main floor served both adults and children. It was soon apparent that children should have a separate space, and the basement storeroom was converted to a Children's Room with its own side entrance.

By the late 1920s the Kingsbridge Branch was quite overcrowded. Consideration was given to plans to renovate or expand the building, but economic conditions prevented any of them from moving forward. In June 1958 the City of New York leased land at 280 W. 231st Street to build a replacement branch, and the original building was closed at the end of that year. A new glass-fronted, split-level library -- with nearly three times the floor space of the former building -- opened on January 23, 1959. In 1960 the original Carnegie building was sold to the Church of the Mediator.

Kingsbridge was for many years the only branch in a large neighborhood stretching from Marble Hill to Riverdale. The area served was reduced in 1938 when a Van Cortlandt sub-branch of NYPL was opened, and again in 1954 when the Riverdale Free Library (RFL) consolidated with NYPL. Kingsbridge had often provided the RFL with books for its patrons. The opening of the NYPL Spuyten Duyvil branch in 1971 further reduced the service area. But even as these new Branches began to serve former Kingsbridge patrons, the thriving Broadway shopping area drew new visitors to the library. During the 1940s-1960s the neighborhood entered a period of growth with the construction of rental and cooperative apartment buildings and the Marble Hill Houses public housing project.

The Kingsbridge Branch was always noted for its high number of adult users. During the 1940s and 1950s it developed programs that supplied books to patients at both Seton and Nazareth Hospitals. In the early 1950s the branch librarian explained a drop in circulation by noting that television had been slow to take hold in the neighborhood, but it had become a fixture recently. The lack of space in the original building hampered its use as a neighborhood center. This fact made the librarians emphasize individual attention as a substitute for their inability to do group work. Group programs for children were offered in the basement space and a Great Books Discussion Group, started in 1947, became very popular among adults. In 1986 Kingsbridge was chosen as the Bronx test site for NYPL's new Automated Circulation System (ACS), and in February 1988 Kingsbridge went on-line for the first time.

The following individuals have served as head librarian at Kingsbridge: Marjorie Winn (3/1905-2/1908), Nona E. Plummer (2/1908-6/1911), Elizabeth L. Foote (7/1911-7/1911), Alice Harris Brown (8/1911-3/1913), Julia C. Leonard (4/1913-1920), Theresa Blumberg (3/1920-1920), Florence Normile (4/1921-9/1921), Edna A. Dixon (11/1921-12/1923), Frances L. (Helen) Westover (1/1924-11/1924), Rachel H. Beall (11/1924-10/1943), Elizabeth Edwards (11/1943-3/1944), Sarah M. Galvan (4/1944-6/1947), Eileen F. P. Riols (6/1947-8/1970), Patricia F. Smith (1/1971-1978), Ruth R. Higgins (3/1978-12/1979), Miss Alexander (1/1980-4/1980), Leonard Viggiano (4/1980-1992).

Scope and Content Note

Kingsbridge Branch Records include brochures, news clippings and program information documenting branch activities from 1905-1999.

Key Terms

Subjects

Branch libraries

Libraries -- New York (State) -- New York

Public libraries -- New York (State) -- New York

Names

New York Public Library. Kingsbridge Branch

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