

The Municipal Arts Society's (MAS) Greenacre Reference Library is housed within the MAS' offices on the 16th floor at 111 West 57th Street, New York, NY. I visited the library on a Wednesday afternoon and was given a tour by Erin Butler, the project manager for the library. Access to the library is open to the public but a visit always requires an appointment, which can be made by contacting Ms. Butler by either phone or email. A self-described "invaluable resource to anyone interested in researching the development and future of¹" New York City, the collection is rather inaccessible and largely hidden.

The online presence of the Greenacre Reference Library is nearly zero. A single web page linked to from the MAS main website describes its collection as "books, newspaper clippings, files, pamphlets, magazines, letters, and testimony culled from the journalistic record" that covers "architecture and art, parks, open and public spaces, the waterfront, transportation and other infrastructure, urban planning, historic preservation, and New York City's history and its diversity of culture and neighborhoods."² That, unfortunately, is all one can learn about the collection without actually visiting the library or contacting Ms. Butler with a specific question. Searching or browsing the collection online is not possible, and other than saying that it was started in 1978 and contains over 5,000 paper and digitized clippings,³ the breadth, depth and overall size of the collection is impossible to know from its web page. The web page does inform one that the library is publicly accessible by appointment during office hours Monday through Friday and provides Ms. Butler's contact info. The web page also explains that materials may be copied or scanned and emailed at \$.25 per page and that internet service is available.

¹ <http://mas.org/aboutmas/researchlibrary/>

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

Physically visiting the Greenacre Reference Library is really the only way to learn much of anything about the collection. My visit on a Wednesday afternoon lasted about 90 minutes during which time Ms. Butler generously showed me through the entire space and answered my questions concerning the collection's accessibility, cataloging and history. All of the collection is contained in a room about 20'x60' that also doubles as a conference room. A large conference table sits in the center of the room with the collections holdings lining the walls. The conference table may also be used for research work while in the library. In 2010 the Municipal Arts Society moved from its long-time location at the Villard Houses on Madison Avenue at 51st street to its current location on 57th street. During the move, the electronic database of the Greenacre Reference Library was misplaced and lost. The database had been in Access and contained the three main components of the collection – books, news clippings, and internal MAS pamphlets and records⁴. The internal MAS database did survive and a printed version of the news clippings database is also still available. The database for the books was never found, but an old card catalog of the book collection is still available. (See Fig. 02)

The news clippings database printout is able to be viewed by visitors while in the library. The printout is organized by alphabetically by “Subject Headings” and each entry also contains a “Notes” column. (See Fig. 03) Each entry refers to a folder in the collection, which are also organized alphabetically in file cabinets around the library. (See Fig. 04) The news clipping collection is cataloged at the folder level, the individual clippings/pamphlets/letters/etc. within each folder can only be partially ascertained by reading the “Notes” field. Of course, a visitor could skip the printout database altogether and proceed directly to the file cabinets themselves.

⁴ The collection contains a small amount of audiovisual material, mostly on VHS. (See Fig. 01) According to Ms. Butler, this material has never been cataloged. There is also an unknown amount of 16mm films contained in an offsite storage area and there appears to be no institutional knowledge of the films other than that they exist in storage. The library facilities offer no playback of audiovisual material in any format.

Ms. Butler has entered the books into an online database called LibraryThing.com. Accessing the database requires a login and password that is not publicly available, but Ms. Butler will provide access to the database and guidance through it to researchers while in the library. The database is searchable and each item has its own entry containing Title, Author, LOC Classification Number, ISBN and several other metadata categories. (See Figs. 05 & 06) The books are organized on the wall according to subjects determined by Library of Congress classification numbers. The internal MAS database is essentially not available for public use. No items may be removed from the library except by MAS staff.

The second collection I will evaluate is the XFR STN (Transfer Station) collection on the Internet Archive.⁵ The Internet Archive hosts a large number of different collections largely submitted by individuals or organizations. The XFR STN collection was created through a partnership of the Internet Archive, The New Museum and the MWF Video Club, a NYC based video-artist collective and distribution group active during the 1980s and 90s. I was a technician for the XFR STN and helped in its creation during the summer of 2013. In many ways the XFR STN collection is the opposite of the MAS library collection. XFR STN exists only online, is fully accessible to the public, is easily searched and/or browsed and consists exclusively of audiovisual material.

Each video contained within the XFR STN collection has its own unique web page. The URL of this webpage is archive.org/details/xxxxx where xxxxx is the unique identifier assigned to each video when it was first digitized by one of the technicians at the New Museum. These unique webpages contain a streaming copy of the video as well as numerous options for downloading the video and several different types of metadata files. (See Fig. 07) There is

⁵ <http://archive.org/details/xfrstn>

technical as well as descriptive metadata of each video and the text contained within these metadata files is largely searchable and downloadable.

The Internet Archive has a powerful advanced search option that allows a visitor to search the collection in multiple different ways. It is quite easy to search the XFR STN collection. Searching can be done by title, author, date added, the name of the operator who digitized the video, or even the number of downloads a video has had. I would like to see the video able to be searched by their original format, but this does not appear possible. The description of each video was created at the time of its digitization, usually by the artist or creator of the video. Since there was no standard way for the artist to enter the description, the amount of information varies widely from video to video. I would also like to see it be possible to add or correct information in the video description, but again this does not appear currently possible.



Fig. 01



Fig. 02



Fig. 03



Fig. 04






Work: Title and author	LC Classification	ISBN	Subject	Date	Physical description	Entry date	Publication	Copies
 A region at risk : the third regional plan for the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut metropolitan area by Robert D. Yaro	HT392.5.T7Y37 1996	1559634928	Municipal powers and services beyond corporate limits New York Metropolitan Area Municipal services New York Metropolitan Area Regional planning New York Metropolitan Area Regional planning New York Metropolitan Area Environmental aspects	1996	xx, 265 p., 28 cm	2013-09-26	Washington, D.C. : Island Press, c1996.	1 12
 Arts and the States: A Report of the Arts Task Force National Conference of State Legislatures by Larry Briskin	NX730.N27 1981	094133600X	Art and state United States Arts United States	1981	96 p., 28 cm	2013-09-26	Denver, Colo. : NCSL, c1981.	1 2
 Our Government and the Arts: A Perspective from the Inside by Livingstone L. Biddle	NX735.B54 1988	0915400677		1988	xii, 539 p., 24 cm	2013-09-26	New York, N.Y. : ACA Books, c1988.	1 10
 Barcelona: The Gothic Route by Ajuntament de Barcelona		048334118 2		1999		2013-09-18	Barcelona: Editorial Mediterrania, S.L., First Edition, 1999	1 1
 Alan Colquhoun: Collected Essays in Architectural Criticism by Alan Colquhoun		978 1906155209		2009	352 p., 1.18 inches	2013-09-17	Black Dog Architecture (2008), Hardcover, 352 pages	1 2

Fig. 05

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by **Livingston Biddle (Author)**, **Isaac Stern (Foreword)**

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Our Government and the Arts : a perspective from the inside by Livingston Biddle (Author)
Other authors: Isaac Stern (Foreword)
New York, N.Y. : ACA Books, c1988.

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Fig. 06

B4U Heart was Heart Kiss was Kiss Eye was Lost A Video Love poem		
This movie is part of the collection: XFR_STN Project		
Producer: Terry Mohre Audio/Visual: Color		
Individual Files		
Movie Files	QuickTime	h.264
XFR_2013-07-20_1A_08.mov	5.8 GB	21.9 MB
		15.7 MB
Image Files	Animated GIF	Thumbnail
XFR_2013-07-20_1A_08.mov	68.3 KB	5.1 KB
Information	Format	Size
XFR_2013-07-20_1A_08.xml	Metadata	5.2 KB
XFR_2013-07-20_1A_08_files.xml	Metadata	[file]
XFR_2013-07-20_1A_08_meta.sqlite	Metadata	10.0 KB
XFR_2013-07-20_1A_08_meta.xml	Metadata	5.5 KB
XFR_2013-07-20_1A_08_techMD.xml	Metadata	20.9 KB
Other Files	Archive BitTorrent	Text
XFR_2013-07-20_1A_08_archive.torrent	62.8 KB	
bag-info.txt		69.0 B
bagit.txt		55.0 B
manifest-md5.txt		135.0 B
tagmanifest-md5.txt		245.0 B

Fig. 07