



New York City Council
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

**Oversight Hearing: Culture Pass and Other Partnerships between New York City's
Cultural Organizations and Public Libraries**

Thursday, September 27, 2018, 1:00PM

Testimony Presented by NYC Department of Cultural Affairs
Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl

Good afternoon, Chair Van Bramer and members of the committee. I am Tom Finkelpearl, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs. I am here today to testify in regards to Culture Pass and other partnerships between our city's cultural organizations and the public library systems.

I have stated this publicly before, but it bears repeating here: I firmly believe that our public libraries are great open, democratic institutions. With a footprint that reaches every neighborhood across the five boroughs, they are central to making New York fairer and more vibrant. Branches serve every community in our city, providing a range of programs and services – including culture. My mother was a librarian, and I know that Chair Van Bramer is a proud Queens Library alum himself. So I'm excited for the opportunity today to explore the connections between libraries and culture in greater depth.

The CreateNYC cultural plan, released in July of 2017, laid out recommendations related to cultural programming in libraries. The library systems were also critical to the public outreach for the cultural plan. In March 2017, we worked with the three systems to place public feedback materials in six languages at 31 high traffic library branches, yielding more than 1,200 survey responses.

So perhaps it's no surprise that the importance of local libraries to residents infuses the cultural plan. Residents see them as vital sources of information both local and global, spaces for programming and social connection, and community hubs. For our millions of neighbors who speak a language other than English at home, libraries provide a way to receive services and stay engaged. One piece of feedback cited in the plan – originally in Polish – reads "More arts programs for children in libraries—they are cultural centers!" Such universal support is hard to come by these days, and it speaks to how libraries have evolved beyond being book repositories to remain central to the lives of New Yorkers.

With such a clear mandate in the cultural plan to support more partnerships between libraries and cultural organizations, we wanted to move quickly to do just that. So last year, we provided over \$250K to the three library systems to support new cultural programming:

- At BPL, this funding supported "Traditions in Transition." This was a partnership with the Brooklyn Arts Council to document folk and traditional artists performing and demonstrating important traditional art forms from underrepresented cultural communities.
- At NYPL, this funding supported "Notes from the Reading Life." For this partnership with the National Book Foundation, NYPL hosted a new discussion series featuring "non-literary" celebrities including athletes, chefs, and actors who discussed their connection to reading and identified a book they recommend to neighborhood residents, copies of which were provided to attendees.
- At Queens Library, this funding supported "What a Wonderful World." In partnership with the Louis Armstrong House Museum, the library brought Louis Armstrong's legacy to library branches throughout the borough through a series of cultural events surrounding the 50th anniversary of Armstrong's recording of the song *What a Wonderful World*.

In addition to creating new linkages between programming and audiences, cultural groups and libraries are also establishing physical connections. Some of these are long standing, some are in the works. These unique partnerships build on the respective strengths and expertise of each institution and their mutual commitment to public service and free exchange of ideas:

- The oldest of these is the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, located on the Lincoln Center campus. Its collections include historic recordings, videotapes, autograph manuscripts, correspondence, sheet music, stage designs, press clippings, programs, posters and photographs. Its programming brings these materials to life for library visitors.
- Last year, we announced new capital funding for a unique partnership between the Brooklyn Children's Museum and Brooklyn Public Library. BPL's Brower Park Library will be relocated inside of the museum. The project will enable the Brower Park Library, currently located on St. Marks Avenue in Crown Heights, to move into a modern, family-oriented facility on the premises of BCM, while saving BPL \$8 million in repair expenses for the branch's current home. It will also allow the museum to resume its tradition of lending items from its 30,000-object collection.
- Queens Museum, in a plan originally developed during my time at the institution and Chair Van Bramer's time at the library, will house a branch of the Queens Library inside of its building. This will build on the institution's long standing collaboration with the library system, centered on the New New Yorkers program.
- This can also work the other way around, with cultural organizations taking up residence inside of a library. The affordable art space development group Spaceworks is one good example that we've funded through DCLA. They developed the underutilized second floor of the Williamsburgh branch of Brooklyn Public Library into affordable rehearsal and visual art studio space. The space is used heavily by local dance groups, musicians, and artists in other disciplines. They also provide regular community programming that activates the space for local residents.

DCLA often works directly with the libraries. Earlier this month, DCLA's Disability Inclusion Associate led a public workshop on creating and facilitating tactile experiences for cultural audiences at NYPL's Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library. The workshop, which

trained attendees on creating and facilitating tactile experiences for audiences, was attended by reps from cultural groups around the city. This great partnership with NYPL is one way we're delivering on our commitment to better engage people with disabilities as audience members, artists, and cultural workers. We hope to provide our constituent organizations more of such opportunities in the future.

DCLA's Public Artists in Residence –or PAIR – program has also tapped into the library networks. With funding from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, DCLA partnered with BPL to name Bryan Doerries NYC Public Artists in Residence with the Department of Veterans Services. For the last year, Doerries and his company Theater of War have produced staged readings of Greek plays in library branches and other venues citywide. These productions include community discussion that explore trauma and build connections.

The many connections between culture and libraries are well established. Among the organizations funded by DCLA's Cultural Development Fund last fiscal year, nearly 100 applicants identified over 180 different library branches where their programming would take place. Here's a small sampling of these programs:

- Willie Mae Rock Camp for Girls conducted a songwriting workshop at BPL's Central Branch;
- Chinese Theatre Works performed original productions and traditional works at a number of Queens Library locations, including Elmhurst, Flushing, Glen Oaks, and Jackson Heights;
- New York Council on the Humanities hosted one of its Community Conversations series at Parkchester NYPL branch in the Bronx
- Sandy Ground Historical Society partnered with the St. George Library Center in Staten Island for an oral history project;
- The Aperture Foundation held an artist lecture at the Schomburg Center in connection with their exhibition "The Black Dandy and Resistance."

There are dozens more examples of such partnerships. Clearly, cultural organizations understand that libraries are ideal spaces to connect with New Yorkers.

My agency's Percent for Art program has also been commissioning permanent public artwork for library branches. From Allan McCollum's installation at the recently-completed Elmhurst Library, to the conservation of the monumental doors at BPL's Central Branch by Thomas Jones, these commissions enrich and engage with the built environment of libraries in all five boroughs. In addition to 17 completed projects in libraries, there are another 14 commissions currently in progress.

Culture Pass is another exemplary partnership between cultural community and library systems. The program allows library patrons to check out a limited number of free passes to participating cultural institutions. It joins a range of truly innovative new ways that libraries are engaging residents in 2018 – from free streaming on services like Kanopy, to the range of programs we've discussed here today.

The library systems themselves conceived of this exciting new model to open up doors to cultural institutions. It aligns with the plans and vision of the cultural plan to leverage public libraries as neighborhood hubs for social and cultural activity. As we've seen with IDNYC cultural benefits, New Yorkers are eager for new ways to connect with cultural groups. Culture Pass provides one more point of entry that demonstrates what it means to foster spaces that are truly for everyone. Since it launched this summer, Culture Pass has been used by 70,000 visitors. I applaud my colleagues in the library systems and cultural organizations for this exciting achievement.

And I believe that it's not enough to simply "open a door." You have to actively invite people in. To that end, we worked with NYC & Company and the libraries to promote Culture Pass on LinkNYC kiosks and bus shelters, with an emphasis on underserved neighborhoods. We're also promoting on social media and other channels. We look forward to continuing to spread the word about Culture Pass and other programs that expand access to culture for all New Yorkers.

Thank you for the opportunity to highlight the important linkages between the cultural sector and public libraries.



Testimony: Partnerships Between the American Museum of Natural History and Libraries

*New York New York City Council
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, & International Intergroup Relations*

Wednesday, September 27, 2018

Good afternoon, my name is Melissa Diaz, on behalf of the American Museum of Natural History, I would like to thank Chairman Van Bramer and the Committee for the opportunity to discuss the *Culture Pass* program and the Museum's collaboration with the City's libraries.

The American Museum of Natural History is one of the world's foremost centers for scientific research and scientific education. Since its founding in 1869, our mission has been to discover knowledge about human cultures, the natural world, and the universe. The Museum continues to uphold its commitment to education through the rich array of programs offered to the public. All these programs are structured to align with City and State educational standards and benchmarks – dedicated to increasing scientific literacy, to encouraging students to pursue science-related careers, and to providing a forum for exploring the world's cultures.

Throughout its history, the Museum has also been dedicated to examining critical scientific issues and it continues to pursue its mission into the 21st century with cutting edge technology, world class resources and a renowned scientific staff. The Museum houses 34 million specimens and artifacts and is one of the largest natural history libraries in the world and is the only Museum in the country authorized to grant a Ph.D. The Museum's collections and exhibits are a national treasure and provide an irreplaceable record of life on Earth.

The Museum is as committed to affordability as it provides quality programming. Admission to the permanent halls of the Museum is "suggested" not mandatory. Roughly half of all participants in our education programs receive financial assistance. The Museum welcomes millions of visitors each year, including approximately 500,000 New York City schoolchildren, who visit us through school and camp groups. While at the Museum, they have the opportunity to participate in hands-on activities with trained education volunteers and receive Museum-prepared materials to enhance their experience – all free of charge. We offer several programs, one of which is *Check out the Universe*, and now we are pleased to add *Culture Pass*. *Culture Pass* allows NYC library holders to receive free admission to several NYC cultural institutions, including Museums, historical societies, heritage centers, public gardens and more. The Museum will make 250 passes available every month which will provide visitors general admission and tickets to the LeFrak Theater for up to four people per pass. Since the program's inception in the beginning of September at the Museum, 206 passes have been redeemed.



Check out the Universe is one of the programs which exemplifies the AMNH's working relationship with the public. Since May of 2000, the Museum has provided over 12,000 vouchers annually. Each voucher admits a family of 5 or less to the Museum to either a Space Show or a special exhibit. In FY18 there were more than 7,600 visitors to the Museum through the *Check out the Universe* program.

By collaborating and utilizing all the assets of the City we can remain committed to our founding principles through public works. Thank you, Chairman Van Bramer and Members of the Committee, for the opportunity to appear before you.

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Good afternoon. I'm Michael Glickman, President and CEO of the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust.

At the Museum, our crucial mission is to educate diverse visitors about life before, during, and after the Holocaust. Through this, we honor the humanity and dignity of those slain, and mobilize that memory in our shared fight against hate and apathy.

Today I wish to speak to the significance of our Museum in New York's cultural landscape, and to the ways in which Culture Pass is an asset toward positive change and communal engagement.

The Museum is honored and pleased to be a part of Culture Pass, an important program in the city of New York.

We signed on to partner with Culture Pass soon after it was envisioned, and have seen remarkable results. In just over two months, we've had nearly 1000 participants. Of the Culture Pass visitors, 23% have come from Manhattan, 17% have come from Brooklyn, 10% have come from Queens, and 10% have come from the Bronx and Staten Island.

We are an institution committed to being a productive member of the community.

The Museum of Jewish Heritage has successfully partnered with different New York City organizations, to share resources and to generate ideas on how best to serve New Yorkers. Proudly collaborative, we've cultivated partners from HBO to the New York City Department of Education, as well as cultural institutions, libraries, and museums from across our great city. Partnering with Culture Pass is another way in which we help a wider range of New Yorkers access and explore our collection—comprising 40,000 artifacts, photographs, documentary film, and survivor testimonies.

The Museum of Jewish Heritage is committed to being accessible to all visitors.

All our audio tours are available for free, including our award-winning English tour (featuring Meryl Streep), as well as Spanish, French, Hebrew, German, Russian, and Japanese audio tours.

The Museum offers multiple opportunities for free admission, in addition to the opportunities provided through Culture Pass. We offer free admission hours every Wednesday and Thursday evening; Cool Culture Pass, which provides historically marginalized families with free admission; complimentary admission on commemoration days and periods throughout the year; and free admission for families during various school breaks. In addition, the majority of the Museum's public programs are free of charge.

The work that we do is a central part of promoting tolerance in the region's communities.

In the past 20 years, the Museum has welcomed more than two million visitors, and helped to educate over 800,000 children. We have emerged as the primary resource in the tri-state area for teaching and learning about the Holocaust, and have become the third-largest Holocaust museum in the world.

Seventeen years after 9/11, the transformation and resurgence of Lower Manhattan is truly astounding. Part of what makes this area of New York City so attractive is the wealth of cultural institutions—one of the most diverse and concentrated groups of museums and historical sites in the world.

Anchoring the southernmost tip of Manhattan, the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust completes the historic landscape it shares with the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. Our vision, reflected in our name, has always been to be a *living* memorial: not simply a monument, but an institution of learning, understanding, and community-building. Through vital tools like Culture Pass, we can further this mission and make New York City's remarkable cultural and educational opportunities available to all.

Michael S. Glickman
President & CEO
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A Living Memorial to the Holocaust



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The comments below were prepared for delivery by Leslie Bushara, Deputy Director of Education and Guest Services at the Children's Museum of Manhattan as part of an oversight hearing by the New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations convened on September 27, 2018. The stated meeting topic was *Culture Pass and Other Partnerships between New York City's Cultural Organizations and Public Libraries*.

Culture Pass and Other Partnerships between New York City's Cultural Organizations and Public Libraries.

Hello, I'm Leslie Bushara, Deputy Director of Education and Guest Services at the Children's Museum of Manhattan. Thank you, Chairman Van Bramer and Committee Members Borelli, Cumbo, Koslowitz, and Moya for the opportunity to speak today. I'm honored to be here today.

For more than 30 years, the Children's Museum has partnered with the City's libraries. We know that supporting literacy—helping someone to read and write effectively—is vital to the future of both the individual (child) and to everyone in our society. Or, to paraphrase the founding fathers, the success of our democracy rests on the literacy of our citizens.

Libraries are essential partners with the Museum in this work. They offer welcoming venues and new audiences with which we can share our cultural, art, science, health and literacy programs. In fiscal year 2018, we provided 116 programs in 22 different branches of the New York Public Library. This past year at the Fort Hamilton branch of the Brooklyn Public Library, we ran a diverse range of programs from modern art to the solar system.

Libraries serve as informal "town halls" for many neighborhoods, serving as safe learning environments for all families. We appreciate their willingness to open their doors to our work, so much so that we raised private funds in order to bring free programs based on our *America to Zanzibar: Muslim Cultures Near and Far* exhibition to libraries. During that exhibit, we expanded our services to include Queens Public Library and delivered programs in the Astoria, Jackson Heights, Corona, Central, and Long Island City branches.

Our work at the Museum and in the community has taught us that children, parents and caregivers enjoy learning in informal, fun ways. Librarians and library visitors have embraced our teaching approach that supports and encourages diverse learning styles. It's also clear that funding is needed to sustain these programs both at libraries and back at the Museum.

To that end, we were thrilled that the Revson Foundation, Stavros Niarchos Foundation, and the New York Community Trust have invested in Culture Pass, and are proud to be part of the inaugural cohort of organizations. Since the program launched in mid-July, we've welcomed 1,819 Culture Pass visitors...and counting!

Offering free, low-cost, and reduced admissions remains a critical component of our work at the Children's Museum of Manhattan. We fundraise aggressively to make our programs available to as many children and families as possible and will continue to do so. We remain grateful to our partners, especially the City's public libraries, city agencies, visionary funders and our elected officials. Thank you for your support.

Leslie Bushara may be reached at lbushara@cmom.org or 212-721-1223 x. 250.

The ever popular *Bug Out* program
at the 53rd Street NYPL branch



Partnering with libraries to combat
summer reading loss through free
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A SUMMER READING PROGRAM

*Come enjoy Summer Reading and get
everything you need to make reading rock!*



Children's Museum of Manhattan



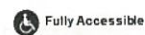
Inside Art

Presented by *Children's Museum of Manhattan*

Thursdays, July 5, 12, 19 & 26, 3 PM

Find out how chalk is created, paper is formed and paints are mixed to better understand what materials artists use and what they can do with them. Inside Art introduces students to a variety of artistic media through their senses. Students will make each medium from scratch, then make their own work and explore how the medium's unique qualities affect the style of the art. This program meets performance standards in applied learning, visual arts and communication skills and techniques. *Best for PreK-1st grade.*
Limited to 30 participants only. Tickets Required.

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127 Amsterdam Avenue
New York, NY 10023, 212-870-1810



nypl.org/summerreading



The New York Public Library Summer Reading Program is generously funded by the New York State Office of Cultural Affairs, the New York City Department of Education, and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. The program is also supported by the New York City Department of Social Services, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the New York City Department of Social Services.

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Charlotte Cohen, Executive Director
Brooklyn Arts Council
September 27, 2018

Good afternoon. My name is Charlotte Cohen and I'm the Executive Director of Brooklyn Arts Council, the leading nonprofit organization supporting Brooklyn's artists and small arts organizations. I'm very happy to be here today to report on our recent successful collaborations with the Brooklyn Public Library system.

In our partnerships with the Brooklyn Public Library, BAC connects artists to communities throughout the borough, in alignment with BAC's mission to serve and support artists. This spring, with new funding from the Department of Cultural Affairs, we presented the **Folk Arts & Artists Series** in partnership with the Library. Taking place at local library branches across Brooklyn—including Midwood, Brighton Beach, New Lots, and Sheepshead Bay—the series gave traditional and folk artists a presenting platform to share their talent and expertise with our Brooklyn communities. Over the course of 6 weeks, we presented 10 folk arts programs at 9 branches.

In addition to sharing their work with the public, artists were paired with documentary professionals who captured their presentations at each library, providing the artists with high-quality work samples to support their future professional development and promotional efforts. These programs were positively received by both library patrons and partners alike. The branch supervisor of the **Sheepshead Bay Library**, **Svetlana Negrimovskaya** shared with us:

"Thank you for bringing to our neighborhood an amazing cultural show and atmosphere. Our audience got a rare and unique opportunity to explore traditions of Mongolian, Pakistani, Georgian, and Bukharan Jewish cultures. Many audience members were

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Charlotte Cohen, Executive Director
Brooklyn Arts Council
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encountering the beauty of these cultures for the first time. I still get asked for future similar programs and meetings."

We were so thankful for this funding opportunity as it gave us a new way to collaborate on an innovative program to support Brooklyn's traditional artist community.

As part of our ongoing programming, BAC also partners with local library branches through our **Community Arts Grants program**, which distributes hundreds of grants to individual artists and arts organizations every year. This summer, we held **Info Sessions** for our grants program in community centers across the borough, including at local library branches in Canarsie, Midwood, Bushwick, Sunset Park, Williamsburg, and East Flatbush. Being able to partner with our local branches helps ensure that artists all over Brooklyn have access to resources and funding to support their work. Additionally, our Creative Coalitions program regularly partners with library branches in Canarsie and East Flatbush to provide much-needed networking opportunities for artists and community members to convene and dialogue. Without these partnerships, our work of serving artists would not be as far-reaching as it is.

Serving artists is at the core of what we do at BAC. These collaborative partnerships with peers like the Brooklyn Public Library help us to realize that goal, which aligns with one of the priorities set forth by the CreateNYC cultural plan which stresses increased support to individual artists.

BAC is proud to have these collaborative relationships with our library partners and we hope to see continued funding and support, so we can sustain and expand on this necessary programming for the future. Thank you so much for your time.

TESTIMONY OF BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY

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City's Cultural Organizations and Public Libraries
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries & International Intergroup Relations
September 27, 2018

Thank you, Chair Van Bramer and members of the committee; I am Linda Johnson, President and CEO of Brooklyn Public Library. I appreciate this opportunity to share information, and frankly my excitement, about Culture Pass. Libraries are society's most democratic institutions – and Culture Pass, simply put, democratizes access to arts and culture.

Just two months ago, we announced a new library-led initiative that offers New Yorkers free admission to a variety of cultural institutions across the city. Culture Pass allows library card holders to reserve day passes for any of 43 participating cultural institutions in the 5 boroughs. From the Botanic Gardens in Brooklyn to Wave Hill in the Bronx, and the Noguchi Museum in Queens, library patrons can now explore even more of the cultural treasures our city has to offer – for free.

Here's how it works. Library cardholders go to culturepass.nyc and log in with their library card, browse by date or venue and reserve passes online. A patron can reserve a pass good for up to 2 people, though some institutions will allow up to 4 people. Every month, 7,300 passes are available to be checked out. Library patrons can have up to 2 concurrent reservations at any time, and may reserve 1 pass per institution per year.

The success of the program far exceeded the expectations of the libraries and the participating institutions. When the website went live, we were surprised at just how quickly our patrons dove in. One couple wrote us with this heartening feedback: *"Thank you for establishing Culture Pass!! It's so inspiring and reminds us of the beauty this City provides its people. We are such a gem on the map because of programs like this."*

Culture Pass currently has more than 28,000 active reservations, which means to date 70,000 people will be visiting cultural institutions thanks to this program. We are continually adding new partners -- since the program launched it has quickly grown from 33 to 43 participating institutions, recently adding new marquee destinations including the Museum of Natural History, the Museum of Art and Design and the New York Botanical Gardens. We will loan 87,600 free passes for an extraordinary 248,400 individual visits this year alone, and expect the number to grow as we continue bringing new partners on board.

Culture Pass furthers the Libraries' mission of providing free information and access to all people while also helping cultural institutions attract new visitors from every corner of the city. It allows libraries to act as a bridge to the cultural resources that are critical to the community discourse we help cultivate every day. We plan to host new educational programs at our libraries, in collaboration with our Culture Pass partners to further enhance the program experience.

Funding from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Charles H. Revson Foundation, and the New York Community Trust's Thriving Communities Program enabled us to develop the

program, build the online system, and staff the program. What is truly extraordinary is the generosity of the participating cultural institutions, which at current levels amounts to \$3.4 million a year. Culture Pass has grant funding for three years. We expect to operate the program beyond that, expanding to include even more diverse offerings for patrons in the years ahead.

Brooklyn Public Library is not new to cultural programming or partnerships. We host approximately 70,000 free programs a year, including *BPL Presents* featuring authors, musicians, visual and performing artists from around the world.

In 2016, we began a partnership with Bryan Doerries, and Theatre of War to bring renowned actors to Brooklyn to perform dramatic readings of ancient Greek works, followed by a community conversation relating the text to social issues of the day. This project is now city-wide, and Bryan is one of the city's Public Artists in Residence. BPL is proud to be a co-producer of the residency and to have hosted many stirring performances in our libraries.

Last year, funding from the Department of Cultural Affairs allowed BPL to partner with the Brooklyn Arts Council to present the Brooklyn Folk Arts & Artists Series highlighting Brooklyn's immigrant communities. Performances by 20 folk and traditional artists were held in a dozen Brooklyn neighborhood libraries, bringing attention to art forms in need of preservation.

Brooklyn Public Library is also embarking on other exciting cultural partnerships. Next year, BPL will move the Brower Park Library to the ground floor of the Brooklyn Children's Museum, a city-owned building a few blocks from the current library a branch that we rent which has significant deferred maintenance. The new branch will be a unique cultural resource for families in Central Brooklyn: visitors will be able to check out books from the Library and borrow items from the Museum's collection, as well as enjoy collaborative programs. A strong partner, the Brooklyn Children's Museum is beloved by the community—currently they are the most popular Culture Pass reservation in the city and very generous participants in the program.

Finally, BPL will open a new library at 300 Ashland Place, in the Brooklyn Cultural District; intended to serve the needs of a thriving community that boasts more than 70 cultural organizations. The branch, housed in a cultural condominium at the foot of an Enrique Norten building, will focus on the diversity of arts and culture in Brooklyn and will offer curated collections of books, magazines and other media, as well as programming in collaboration with local groups, to complement the cultural calendar. This branch, like Culture Pass, will democratize access to the arts and culture for the community it serves and beyond.

It is extremely rewarding to join with world-class cultural institutions and partners in government, so committed to strengthening the cultural fabric of New York City. We are proud to be working with you to expand the ways we provide a democratic and welcoming space for all to engage in learning and enrichment of the highest quality. Thank you for the opportunity to highlight our recent success.



Statement by Dennis M. Walcott, President and CEO, Queens Library

New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

Oversight - Culture Pass and Other Partnerships between New York City's Cultural Organizations and Public Libraries

September 27, 2018

Good afternoon. I am Dennis Walcott, President and CEO of Queens Library. It is a pleasure to be here. Thank you, Chair Van Bramer, and the members of this distinguished Committee for the opportunity to testify today.

Cultural Pass is the latest in a plethora of initiatives offered by New York City's public libraries that reinforces the notion that our institutions are the center of community life and the greatest equalizer of people in a free, democratic society. Culture Pass connects everyday New Yorkers to dozens of NYC cultural institutions – museums, historical societies, heritage centers, public gardens and more – at no cost. It also provides people with greater exposure to cultural institutions that they might not be aware exist or would otherwise be outside of their means to attend.

Queens Library saw a 47% increase in library card applications during the week Culture Pass was launched this July, which is a testament to the popularity of this program. At our Forest Hills community library, we typically have 4 to 5 people apply for a new library card per day. Shortly after the launch, our branch manager indicated that an average of 16 to 17 people per day were seeking a new library card because of the added benefit of owning one. **Since its launch in July 2018, over 5,200 Queens Library cardholders have made reservations and secured their passes to take advantage of this initiative, accounting for about 19% of all total reservations made.**

Library cardholders can reserve passes to any participating cultural institution in New York City. Currently, there are seven (7) participating institutions located in Queens:

- Lewis H. Latimer House Museum;
- Louis Armstrong House;
- MoMA PS1;
- The Noguchi Museum;
- Queens Historical Society;
- Queens Museum;
- SculptureCenter.

We will continue to educate people on this initiative and work to recruit more cultural organizations to participate in the months ahead.

In addition to Culture Pass, Queens Library collaborates with the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) on other initiatives. One example is the Theatre of War program.

Theatre of War is a series of programs that revolve around the reading by actors of ancient Greek plays that focus on the enduring impact of war, followed by discussions with community members about the issues raised in the readings, such as domestic violence, mental health and addiction. The project was launched in conjunction with the departments of Cultural Affairs and Veteran Services as part of a Public Artist in Residence (PAIR) program. We offered this program at our Central, Flushing and Cambria Heights libraries. It was very popular, drawing about 500 customers to all sponsored programs.

Last fiscal year, DCLA awarded the Queens Library a grant for \$85,000 to do joint programming with Queens cultural organizations. The result of that grant was our “What a Wonderful World” initiative, which celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the popular Louis Armstrong song with programs at every single branch in our system, spanning from April to June 2018. Approximately 2,500 customers were able to participate in an array of programming and activities, which included:

- Four major concerts with David Ostwald's Louis Armstrong Eternity Band, one of the few traditional New Orleans Style bands on the contemporary jazz scene;
- Fifteen international band concerts with five different bands;
- Blue Pipa: The Pipa master, Min Xiao-fen, and her trio's reinterpreted music of American jazz and Chinese traditional music;
- Prasanna: A worldwide-praised guitarist performing ancient Carnatic music, blended with contemporary western music;
- The Akoko Nante Ensemble; a Pan African percussion and vocal group based in Queens;
- Radio Jarocho; which was a lively performance of Mexican Folk music and urban New York sounds;
- Conjunto Guantanamo; which featured Afro-Cuban music and the interpretation of Satchmo's songs;
- A Lecture on the Life and Times of Louis Armstrong;
- “What a Wonderful World” screening at 40 different locations across Queens;
- Flash mob pop-up concerts of the song, “What a Wonderful World”, in all 62 of our library locations.

Because last year's initiative was so successful and the collaborations positive, DCLA has decided to engage us again this fiscal year and will generously provide us with new funding to forge additional partnerships with cultural institutions in the borough. We look forward to getting to work and sharing the details of what we propose to do in the near future.

When DCLA was charged with creating New York's first-ever cultural plan, Create NYC, thanks to the vision and work of Chair Van Bramer, libraries shared their facilities and hosted community forums to facilitate the exchange of ideas and information. When the City needs us, libraries have always answered the call. We are proud of our record of service and look forward to continuing to work with the City to address the most important issues facing us today.

We are fortunate to have a strong partnership with the Queens Museum. We collaborate on a variety of projects, from rotating exhibits to the Queens Memory project, which collects personal histories, photographs and other records of contemporary life in Queens. The Museum partners with our Older Adults Department's Mail-a-Book program by bringing art history and art classes and projects to homebound Queens Library customers. We are collaborating with them on their Queens International exhibition starting November 2018, through which three of our libraries (Central, Flushing and Lefrak City) will have exhibits, workshops and Q&A sessions with participating artists through February 2019.

Queens Library's Culture Connection program is celebrating its fifth anniversary this year. This program brings world-class arts and culture that is available in NYC to the borough of Queens in intimate and accessible settings. Culture Connection provides celebrated programming from the world of music, publishing, theater, film and much more to Queens, displaying the work of emerging artists and renowned masters. To commemorate the program's five-year anniversary, the Library will be hosting five concerts at five different branches during the month of October.

NYC's public libraries play a vital role in supporting the arts within the neighborhoods we serve. In Fiscal Year 2018, Queens Library hosted over 1,100 cultural programs comprised of art exhibits, music concerts and more, at no cost to our customers. **Over 114,000 individuals attended our programs, an increase of 148% compared to the previous year.** Our attendance rates highlight how our community libraries can serve as extensions of the City's other cultural institutions.

Our Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center is home to the Black Heritage Reference Center of Queens County, serving historians, scholars, researchers, students, educators and regular customers with a comprehensive reference and circulating collection, totaling approximately 40,000 volumes of material written about and related to Black culture. The Library boasts the largest circulating Black Heritage collection in New York City. The Center's collection includes books, periodicals, theses and dissertations, online databases, videos, DVDs, cassettes, compact discs, photographs, paintings and sculpture. Its Cultural Arts Program offers independent film video screenings, stage presentations, panel discussions, musical concerts, artist exhibitions and gallery openings, literature/poetry readings, open mic nights, an annual Langston Hughes Celebration in February and an annual Kwanzaa Celebration in December.

Queens Library's Hip Hop Programs & Culture initiative is dedicated to creating programs and events that examine the five core elements of hip hop (MC'ing, DJ'ing, Breaking, Graffiti, and Knowledge), while recognizing, documenting, and celebrating the positive evolution of Hip Hop culture. Spoken Word, DJ/Mixing Technology, Break Dance, panel discussions, lectures, art exhibitions and artist talks are just a few examples of the popular programs this initiative offers.

We have an impressive music score collection in the Central Library's Fine Arts & Recreation Division. It consists of over 80,000 pieces of sheet music and music-related books, ranging from ancient to contemporary music, from different genres and various countries, and over 44,000 volumes of music CDs and DVDs. We have one of the largest collections of musical scores in New York City, and our material is available to anyone in the country through interlibrary loans. With the closure of the last classical sheet music store in New York City in 2015, Queens Library has become increasingly important for musicians and music lovers alike to access such treasured music resources.

As you can see, libraries are dynamic, indispensable institutions. We are educational institutions. Moreover, not only do we connect people to cultural institutions – we are cultural institutions as well.

I sincerely thank all of you for your unwavering commitment to libraries, and for recognizing how extraordinarily valuable we are to every community in New York City. The people of this City rely on our services every day, and we stand ready to serve and meet their needs.

Thank you, Chair Van Bramer, for the opportunity to testify today.

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

**CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES & INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS
COMMITTEE**

**OVERSIGHT—CULTURE PASS AND OTHER PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN NEW
YORK CITY'S CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES**

Thursday, September 27, 2018

Good afternoon, I am Tony Marx, President and CEO of The New York Public Library (NYPL). I would like to thank Chair Jimmy Van Bramer and the Cultural Affairs and Libraries Committee for holding this hearing. I would also like to thank the entire City Council, Commissioner Finkelpearl, and Mayor de Blasio for their sustained support of libraries. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on the success of Culture Pass and all of our valuable partnerships with the city's cultural institutions and with the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA).

Introduction

Libraries have become the indispensable center of our communities across the city—offering free programs, classes, and safe spaces for all New Yorkers. Cultural programs across our 92 locations have undergone significant growth over the past three years at our branches and research libraries. As the longtime equalizers of this city, we saw an opportunity to expand our reach by partnering with the city's cultural institutions to provide equitable exposure to the city's cultural treasures and inspire more people to read more. We are thankful to our donors and our cultural partners for supporting our implementation of this new pilot program to use library cards to connect New Yorkers with cultural institutions in unprecedented ways.

Early Success & Impact

The Culture Pass program came up organically through our branches several years ago, in response to community need. The Revson Foundation generously funds NYPL's Innovation Project, which encourages our staff to think creatively and generate ideas beyond their day to day efforts. Funding is then provided to carry out the winning ideas. In 2014, the Ottendorfer Library on the Lower East Side submitted a winning project idea—a pilot with the Children's Museum of the Arts, Children's Museum of Manhattan, and the Guggenheim and had an overwhelmingly positive response from the community. It inspired us to think even bigger, but we couldn't have scaled the program so successfully without DCLA, generous private donors, (Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Charles H. Revson Foundation, and the New York Community Trust's Thriving Communities Program) and the 43 cultural institutions who are already participating. Culture Pass significantly outpaced our expectations, crashing the website for several hours the first day.

We've already heard dozens of anecdotal success stories about the program. A young mother from the Bronx shared that she can now afford educational playdates with other children at cultural institutions they couldn't previously afford. One college student said she is using the program to learn about the wide range of diverse programs offered at museums to enhance her coursework. A family of four shared that now they are able to consider museums and other cultural institutions as a viable option for weekend outings. For many young patrons, this was their first experience going to a museum, and their parents shared that they couldn't go in the past because of the admission prices. The doors of these cultural institutions have been opened wider to all of these individuals because of Culture Pass, and this demonstrates what is possible when the City, cultural institutions, and public libraries collaborate.

To have more New Yorkers visiting and using libraries is another very positive result of the Culture Pass program. Since its launch in July, NYPL has received 81,000 applications for new library cards, a 66% increase over the same time period last year. In an effort to reach those who previously may not have had the funds or exposure to visit these cultural institutions, the Culture Pass team created a robust marketing campaign in Spanish, Mandarin, Russian, Arabic, and English—and our branches are doing direct outreach in their respective communities. While all signs point to great success, the program launched less than 90 days ago, so we are still assessing our early results and working with the cultural institutions to determine how to improve. Looking forward, we are already laying the groundwork to ensure continued access and growth. Branches in every neighborhood are doing outreach, we will send targeted emails to patrons in the neighborhoods who rely most on our free programming, and we are planning a survey to elicit feedback from those who have already used their passes to ensure the process is as smooth as possible. We've also planned a "Culture Pass in a Box" to go out to all libraries this Fall with promotional displays, reading collections on the arts, and bookmarks for patrons. We will continue to seek ways to improve access to Culture Pass and all arts and culture opportunities for New Yorkers.

Additional Cultural Partnerships

NYPL has a long history of working with our partners in the City to connect all New Yorkers to new ideas and opportunities. Since our inception over a century ago, we have worked to even the playing field for all people. In Fiscal Year 2018, we offered more than 7,000 cultural programs, including film screenings with coordinated book discussions, performances, lectures,

author talks, and other special events. Some of these generously funded with help from the Department of Cultural Affairs.

The Culture Pass program is a continuation of that goal, but we offer many more programs to enrich New Yorkers lives and improve access. One of these partnerships allowed us to work with the vanguard Theater of War Productions. Theater of War uses performances to foster community conversations that address critical public health and social issues like reading *Hercules* to address violence at Mott Haven branch in the Bronx or *Long Day's Journey into Night* to discuss drug addiction and abuse in the St. George branch on Staten Island.

We've also worked with the National Book Foundation, with support from DCLA, to create "Notes from the Reading Life"—a discussion series that features some of our most well-known and well-read neighbors discussing the books that excite and inspire them—the books that guided them through their careers to who they are today.

Conclusion

Along with the robust and diverse arts programming offered by our world-class research institutions, like the Library for the Performing Arts and our Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, libraries continue to be on the front lines of the fight for the American mind. Preserving and making available knowledge at a time when facts and truth are arguably more important than ever is at the heart of The New York Public Library's mission. With the Commissioner's help, we look forward to adding even more cultural institutions to the Culture Pass program and connecting New Yorkers to all the invaluable resources libraries offer.

Thank you, Chair Van Bramer and the entire Council for your unwavering support of libraries and the opportunity to testify today.



Testimony to the New York City Council Regarding CulturePass
Stephanie Hill Wilchfort, President & CEO, Brooklyn Children's Museum
September 27, 2018

Good afternoon. I'm Stephanie Wilchfort, President & CEO of Brooklyn Children's Museum, a community museum in Crown Heights, Brooklyn and the world's first children's museum. We serve 285,000 children and caregivers annually, most of whom hail from our great borough.

I'm delighted to be here today as one of the inaugural partners for CulturePass. Being a part of this incredible collective impact effort has been a great gift for Brooklyn Children's Museum. Since we launched the program on July 1, nearly 3,000 people have come through our doors at no charge using CulturePasses that they've checked out at local libraries, including our dear friends at Brooklyn Public Library.

Of our CulturePass visitors, 60% are Brooklynites. The largest proportion, about 35%, come from our core communities in Central Brooklyn: Bedford Stuyvesant, Brownsville, Crown Heights, Flatbush, East New York and Prospect Lefferts Gardens. Another 14% come from South Brooklyn and 10% from North Brooklyn. We are delighted that 25% of our CulturePass visitors are our siblings in Queens, many of whom may not have previously visited our museum and our neighborhood.

These demographics are important, because they show that for BCM, the largest numbers of visitors through CulturePass are coming from communities with some of the highest child poverty rates in the City. These are places where our institution can have the most impact, providing first cultural experiences that are the building-blocks of curiosity, creativity, and life-long love of learning. There is excellent research showing that museum visits support both socio-emotional and academic success. This program gives parents and caregivers a joyful tool to promote learning for their families.

But this isn't only about what museums provide to families. It's also about what families provide to spaces like Brooklyn Children's Museum. It is the presence of people, their conversations, laughter, and cultural diversity that activate our institutions. CulturePass is one more way we make cultural institutions more accessible for all people in the City of New York, and more people of different backgrounds lead to richer and more delightful experiences in our museums.

I encourage everyone here to support this effort, and also to support the cultural institutions that are participating. For those of us in neighborhoods with less philanthropic support, public funding from the Department of Cultural Affairs and the City Council is critical to the continued strength of our exhibits and programs. We are stronger partners for collective impact initiatives like CulturePass and IDNYC when we have sustained and dependable public funding that accounts for inflation. I look forward to thinking together about how we might further contribute to CulturePass.

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Name: Leslie Bushara

Address: 212 West 83rd St. NYC 10024

I represent: Chadler's Museum of Manhattan

Address: 212 West 83rd St. NYC 10024

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