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Subject: Re: Articles submitted as testimony for library hearing.

Date: Mon, Aug 31, 2015 12:25 am

This is the fourth of a number of articles I am submitting as testimony in connection with the library hearing that are relevant and informative with respect to the proposal in obvious ways:

<http://noticingnewyork.blogspot.com/2015/06/selling-100-million-plus-library-for.html>

Sunday, June 14, 2015

Selling a \$100 Million Plus Library For What? A Pittance! More Transparency Please.

"PUBLIC VALUE UNDER THREAT"		
How when selling most of a \$100+ Million Plus Library the public winds up losing tremendously		
all figures below expressed in <i>millions</i> of dollars		
	Minimum Value	Higher (or above) Possible Value
\$ VALUE of BUILDING	\$ 30.00	\$ 60.00
plus		
\$ VALUE of LAND	\$ 65.00	\$ 100.00
TOTAL \$ VALUE		
BUILDING plus LAND	\$ 95.00	\$ 160.00
Minimum \$ VALUE of 2/3+ public property being SOLD	\$ 63.33	\$ 106.67
What the public gets for sale	ZERO or LESS?	ZERO or LESS?

Click to enlarge



"It's public land and public facilities and public value under threat. . . and once again we see, lurking right behind the curtain, real estate developers who are very anxious to get their hands on these valuable properties"

That's the mayor in 2013 as a candidate for election speaking about the tragedy of selling off and shrinking our public libraries, transforming them into real estate deals that benefit developers, not the public. One of the libraries about which Mr. de Blasio was speaking was the Brooklyn Heights library, Brooklyn's central destination library on Cadman Plaza West at the corner of Tillary and Clinton. The Brooklyn Public Library is pushing a proposal to turn it into a luxury condominium tower.



Brooklyn Heights library, Brooklyn's central destination library on Cadman Plaza West at the corner of [Tillary and Clinton](#). The proposal involves a vastly shrunken so-called "*replacement*" library of minimal size. The current library [is 63,000 square feet](#); the proposed "*replacement*" just one-third, 21,000 square feet. The current library [has about 38,000 square feet above ground](#), the proposed "*replacement*" just 15,000 square feet above ground.

This coming Wednesday, June 17th, a hearing will commence the process required to decide whether to sell and shrink the Brooklyn Heights Tillary Clinton Library. This will be the first ever hearing on such a sale because one was not required or held with respect to Donnell sold in 2007, or the now besieged 34th Street Science, Industry and Business library. Here's information about the 6:00 PM hearing:

[Brooklyn Community Board 2 Land Use Committee June 17, 2015: ULURP Hearing- First Hearing About Whether To Sell & Shrink Downtown's Brooklyn Heights Library \(Tillary & Clinton\)](#)

I urge everyone who cares about this city to be there. (This library is also intended to serve lower Manhattan.)

Probably because the sale does not make sense from the public's point of view and is proceeding as a boondoggle hand-off to a developer, the Brooklyn Public Library and EDC, the city real estate development corporation that serves developers, is proceeding with an extreme lack of transparency.

This extreme lack of transparency extends even to BPL's refusal to provide basic information about how much the public is losing and how little the BPL is selling this asset for, including all the costs that should be netted out of the sale.

There many things to consider about what is being lost if this essential amenity is transferred out to a developer looking to make millions, even including the park space and trees surrounding the building and the sale of the public's light and air. (Urban renewal was once used to bring this site to a lower density in order to have that light and air.) We have given some consideration to this before: Tuesday, October 7, 2014, [The Public Loss of Selling And Shrinking the Brooklyn Heights Library- How Great Will the Loss Be? Let's Calculate.](#)

And the BPL has already been asked to identify the costs of selling the library which they have refused to do: Thursday, October 9, 2014, [Open Letter To Brooklyn Public Library President Linda Johnson](#) and Friday, February 6, 2015, [Open Letter To Brooklyn Public Library Trustee Peter Aschenasy Re Commitment to Provide Information About Library Sale.](#)

Now, the weekend before the hearing, it is probably time to fill in the gap and supply, in basic bookkeeping terms, some fundamental calculations of the dollar value of the asset the BPL is selling and, in dollar terms, how that sale of this asset at a pittance, netting perhaps less than nothing, will be a loss to the public.

We also have a some new information to work with despite the BPL's efforts to be totally opaque.

The Dollar Value of Just the Library Building Itself

The Brooklyn Heights central destination library is 63,000 feet of extraordinarily serviceable (and adaptable) square

feet. That includes two half-floors of underground space that, similar to the 42nd Street Central Reference Library, were set up to hold books for easy on-the-spot retrieval. To say that the building is sturdy is an understatement: When it was built, it was built with space set aside for a bomb shelter with the thought that people could go there to be protected against a nuclear attack.

The building was built in 1962 (at a cost in today's dollars of about *\$20 million*) and opened with a collection of 90,000 volumes. In 1991 it was enlarged and upgraded (at a cost in today's dollars of about *\$10 million*). Then, additionally, a reclamation of the space people once thought might be used as a bomb shelter added even more space for books.



Downstairs space set up to hold books for easy on-the-spot retrieval

It is therefore relatively safe to say that based on these original costs the book value of the library building alone is in the approximate neighborhood of ***\$30 million***.

That's one starting figure. . .

What if a new library were reconstructed in the bottom of a luxury tower? The BPL tells us that reconstructing a new, much smaller library of only one-third size (21,000 square feet) to replace the library will cost *\$10 million*. But previously they said it would cost *\$12 million*. Making these low-ball costs all the more suspect and fanciful, the BPL is proposing to sell the library, locking in this extreme shrinkage to an exact footage, *without even bothering to design a new library first* (let alone engage the public in determining its [library size needs](#)).

Actually, putting this vastly shrunken 21,000 square foot library in the bottom of the luxury tower for which there are still no public designs either will probably cost *more than \$16 million*. Yes, ***\$16+ million***. That's based on the costs of "*replacing*" (and shrinking) the slightly larger Donnell Library. That construction has announced overruns although it still isn't complete and may not be complete until 2016.

That would mean that replacing the Brooklyn Heights Library full-scale in a luxury tower would cost the BPL (and the public) about ***\$48 million***. That would wipe out entirely what the BPL is being paid to sell the library. Why? Because the developer is only paying the BPL a gross price (before we calculate any losses) of *\$52 million*. And, if the library were being replaced full-scale, all of its 63,000 square feet in the bottom of a luxury tower, the developer would be paying the BPL substantially at lot less than that \$52 million gross figure. The developer would *pay less* because the developer would be buying less, a smaller balance of development rights, and because it would have to bear a higher cost to build the shell in which the library would build its new space. (According figures from the BPL's spokesperson, the developer may be spending about *\$10 million* now. Three times that amount would be substantial.)

It has long been known that the NYPL's sale of Donnell effectively amounted to a [loss of millions](#) of dollars of public library assets. The sale of this library is closely replicates the sale of Donnell with an [overlap](#) of people involved in the planning.

Selling public assets for the benefit of developers is more expensive than everyone might immediately suppose. Unless the BPL plays these shell games (and that involves having to *shrink* the library as part of the game) it quickly becomes apparent *how much the public is losing*.

The BPL refuses to give figures, but if the BPL were putting a full scale replacement library in the bottom of the luxury tower it would be costing the BPL around \$48 million just for the rebuilding costs . . . And the developer would also then probably be paying *far less than \$30 million gross price*. Result?: A very substantial loss.

There is a much better way to evaluate the public dollar value of the building that we are losing in this sale. That's to consider the cost of erecting a free-standing building on the site today. One reason that's important?: *Because, whatever size library is put in the bottom of a luxury condominium, that library can never be enlarged afterward*. The

current library is enlargeable: Owned by the city, the city can build on the site to enlarge the library or construct for other public uses as the city grows as it and the neighborhood is doing very fast now.

If the BPL erects a free-standing 21,000 square foot replacement library at the site of library, it would cost *\$20 million* according to library spokesperson David Woloch (at the 6/10/2015 Sunset Park Library redevelopment meeting). Constructing a full-scale, free-standing 63,000 square foot replacement library would cost **\$60 million**.

One might argue, as the BPL promoting the sale no doubt would, that such a library would be newer and "*state-of-the-art*" and that the dollar value involved would not yet be subject to any depreciation to reflect any aging of the building. On the other hand, one of the things that is thwarting the BPL in its arguments for selling its building to a developer is that the Brooklyn Heights library was built to last. It's a case of: *They don't build them like they used to*. As much as the BPL would like to neglect the building and drive it into the ground, fail to clean rest rooms, or make the aspects of the building superficially unappealing, the building frustrates them with its solidity. Crazy enough, it was meant to be still standing if there ever was a nuclear war.

The BPL has fallen all over itself in silly efforts to exaggerate the building's current needs. Principal among these efforts has been the BPL's refusal to repair the air conditioning and its exaggerations that fixing the air conditioning could cost almost \$5 million or that making the building pristine and new again could cost around \$10 million. But the BPL has refused to release the information that is available about previous assessments that *contradict* what they are saying about the air conditioning repair needs.

The BPL initiated plans to turn this (and [other](#) libraries) into a real estate deal with a decision that goes back to at least 2007. Its plan wasn't announced until January 2013, a year before Bloomberg left office. The air conditioning conveniently went out of commission *six months* before the planned announcement of sale where air conditioning problems would be cited as a reason for the sale.

\$30 million? \$48 million? \$60 million? Those are figures for the dollar value of the library building alone.

But you can't get a library just for the cost of building the building. You have to also buy the land and own the development rights.

The Dollar Value of the Land Under the Building

What is the value of the *land* under the library that we must *include* as *part* of the dollar value of the public's ownership of the library?

The developer is paying a *gross* price to the BPL of *\$52 million* so the value of the land and development rights that must be added to value of the building is surely *at least that*. But the developer isn't paying to buy *all* the land or *all* the development rights so the actual figure is *higher* than that. *How much then to the \$52 million should we add for this?*

In addition, what the developer is paying includes a discount for other costs like the cost of demolition. The public won't incur any cost of demolition if it retains the library so that adds to the public value of land the public retains. *How much then to the \$52 million should we add for this?*

The developer is also incurring perhaps *\$10 million* in costs to build the shell for the shrunken replacement library, in effect an additional part of the purchase price paid to the library. *How much then to the \$52 million should we add for this? \$10 million?*

The developer must also rent space for a tiny temporary library (7,500 square feet) for the four years or so the BPL expects it may take to build a shrunken replacement. *How much then to the \$52 million should we add for this?* In the case of Donnell, rent for the tiny cramped interim library beginning when Donnell closed in spring 2008 was pursuant to rental lease terms [calling for](#) "*payment of \$850,000 for the first year (with possible increases thereafter)*." - *How much then to the \$52 million should we add for this?*

In the case of Donnell, outfitting that tiny cramped temporary library [cost the NYPL](#), "*nearly \$5 million*." One thing that is not yet clear at the moment is whether this outfitting expense would be a cost borne by the BPL (i.e. public), thus an additional *public* cost of the transaction, or by the developer, in which case it would be an extra factor raising the value of the land and development rights.

The developer is also incurring other costs in buying this land. Contributions to politicians and elected officials including [Mayor di Blasio](#) should properly be considered an additional cost to buy the land and development rights. When the developer pays his architect more so that his architect can [send money](#) in the mayor's direction, that too should properly be considered an additional cost to buy the land and development rights. *How much then to the \$52 million should we add for this?*

In fact, it should *not* be considered that the developer is buying this as *unencumbered* land in the normal sense. Because it is a library that the public values and because this deal will properly arouse anger and suspicion with the public it comes with many hurdles, many toll booths that have to be passed through paying fees to *high-priced lobbyists and lawyers* to sell a narrative skewed to and paving the road for the public and their elected officials to ignore the obvious math problems associated with this shortchanging of the public. Among other things the sale will have to go through a multi-year process where the question must be evaluated whether it is absurd to sell this public assets netting virtually nothing. *How much then to the \$52 million should we add for this?*

How much then is the value of the land and the development rights to the public? The value of the land that will appreciate in the future? The development rights that can be used for future expansion and public good?

Somewhere between **\$65 million and \$100 million?** More?

Value of the Library Building PLUS The Library Land

The math above means that the dollar value to the public of the library plus the land it sits on with all accompanying rights is somewhere between a minimum of **\$95 million** and a much higher figure? That higher dollar value to the public figure could easily be **\$160 million** or could be *higher*. A higher figure won't seem at all preposterous when you see the aggregate value for which luxury condominiums will sell. In the case of Donnell the penthouse apartment in the 50-story luxury tower replacing Donnell is on the market for [\\$60 million](#). Several weeks ago another single lower-level condo unit in the building, 43A, sold for [\\$20,110,437.50](#). There is also a 114 guest room luxury hotel in the tower and earlier this year Chinese investors made that hotel, according to the Wall Street Journal, "*the most highly valued hotel in the U.S.*" after agreeing to buy it for "*more than \$230 million. . . . more than \$2 million a room.*"

The design for the Brooklyn Heights luxury tower has yet to be released and various statements about its final true height have been misleading but one figure given in the New York Times says it will be a *38-story tower*. The developer has spoken of having extra tall ceilings to make it seem taller and give the apartments more luxurious views.

Netting the Costs Out of The Paltry Amount the Library Is getting for selling Off a \$100+ Million Asset

The BPL states that it is getting a *gross* price of \$52 million for selling and shrinking the library. Out of this must be netted certain costs, most immediately the **\$16+ million** to build the as-yet-undesigned "*replacement*" library, bring the net cash figure for selling the library down to *less than \$36 million*.

From than **\$36 million** much more must be *subtracted*.

The reduction in space will supposedly be associated with shifting the functions of the library, business and career functions that ought better to remain in growing Downtown Brooklyn, to cram them into the Grand Army Plaza library. Will some/all of these functions actually just disappear? No additional space will be built at the changed location so sacrifices will have to result. It is not that many years ago a space expansion was required at the Grand Army Plaza library. The BPL has acknowledged that cramming the functions in will entail substantial construction costs but refuses to furnish these cost to the public. At one time the BPL president Johnson said they were irrelevant and should be ignored and another time BPL spokesperson Davis Woloch said the BPL simply doesn't know what those costs will be. Shrinking a library before designing it? Selling a library before knowing the costs of doing so? Is this lack of transparency or total stupidity?

Some of the reductions at the Brooklyn Heights [Tillary Clinton](#) Library will also have to be taken up by *other* BPL facilities. Are those costs and sacrifices similarly unknown and unevaluated?

There is the cost both to the public and to the BPL of keeping books off-site and moving them around and these costs can be far heftier than the BPL acknowledges. There is the cost of moving to a temporary library. The cost of moving back. The possible cost of outfitting the temporary library (\$5 million like Donnell?).

There is the cost to the community of going without any sort of library for a projected four years and associated disruptions. (Donnell has turned into possibly eight years.)

These figures which the BPL will *not* furnish or account for could easily wipe out the paltry \$36 million remaining. It could readily adjust the miniscule "*net cash*" situation taking it into *deep negative territory*. That's a problem for the BPL, which is trying a divide-and-conquer, smoke-and-mirrors strategy, trying to convince other communities that they will be benefitted by the squandering of these library assets. The BPL is trying to convince these other communities that if a library is handed out as a prize to a developer this *first* time with the central destination library in Downtown Brooklyn that [their own neighborhood libraries](#) won't similarly come up somewhere, next in a public-be-damned transaction as the BPL moves down the list in its plan that we know looks at "*leveraging*" all its *real estate assets*.

Factoring In the Smaller Library In Calculating the Loss

But to be fair, the BPL is *not* selling off the *entirety* of its assets at this site when it sells the library for this shrinkage plan. With a new library one-third the size of what exists now it may be thought of as selling off *somewhere in excess of two-thirds of its assets*, not the entire asset. In *excess* of two-thirds because, with the development rights transferred, this library can never be enlarged again if the community grows or if the shrinkage turns out to be the mistake that most people have judged it to be.

Math-wise, in dollar value terms, selling off more that two-thirds of the library amounts, based on the previous figures, to selling off **\$63+ million** to **\$106.7+ million** in assets ($2/3 \times \$95$ million to \$160+ million, plus an adjustment up for selling the development rights). For this sale the library will get perhaps zero or less.

The smaller, shrunken library, forever to be a depressing reminder of this era of rampaging privatization and plunder would, albeit, have a value. At the high end, the building's value would be maybe the *\$20 million* the BPL would spend if it were building a free-standing enlargeable building. Since that's not what the BPL is getting maybe we should *subtract* from that.

Added to that \$20 (*or less*) million building value we must add some associated dollar value for part of the land. Using the earlier figures that would come to less than *\$21.7 million* to *\$33.3 million* ($1/3 \times \$65$ million and \$100 million, from which must be subtracted a substantial figure for the extraction of all the development rights).

In other words we would go from having a library with a dollar value to the public of between **\$95 million** to **\$160+ million**, to having a much smaller library with a dollar value to the public of *substantially less than*, at best, **\$41.7 million*** to **\$53.3 million** . . .

(* This figure may seem disproportionally high because it only uses the top-end figure for new construction. Those who care about historical and landmark value are likely to view it as coming out too relatively high in the comparisons.)

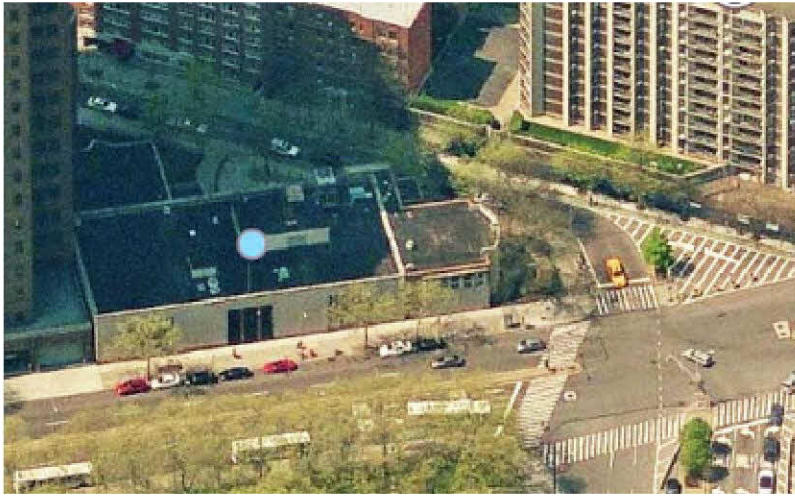
. . . The bottom line is that we would have sold off **\$63+ million** to **\$160+ million** in assets either at a public loss or netting virtually nothing. . . Bottom line, in a time of increasing wealth, income and power disparities, this proposal will amount to a huge transfer of capital assets from the *public* realm to the *private*.

I believe I have not been unfair in supplying any of these numbers. I think the unfairness is that the BPL has refused to provide such numbers.



Book ends?: Brooklyn's two central destination libraries, the Downtown Brooklyn Heights Library and the Grand Army Plaza Library, were both designed by the same famed architect, Francis Keally.

Affordable Public Housing?



The library location of the proposed new luxury tower- Downtown and on the edge of fashionable, historic Brooklyn Heights- Beside a park and near the Promenade

One last factor in the mix? Like the building of many other luxury towers the developer will seek to build a bigger, taller luxury tower by building, “*poor door*” fashion, a few “*affordable*” housing units (114 altogether) in very different locations in the Community Board 2 district. It is another example of using people’s desperation for affordable housing as bait to strip communities of their assets and drive wedges between different groups. In doing the calculus, what sort of value should be given to these units? *Good question*. But, if you want to ask that question, then you need to ask another question: *Should our libraries be sold off to produce a few units of “affordable” housing?* Because, if so, there is enough need for affordable housing to start selling off all our public assets and libraries would wind up being only a small part of the total inventory of public assets that would be seized and privatized before that need was ever satisfied



“*Poor Door*”: One location where a few “*affordable*” units would be built resulting in. . .



Another location where a few “*affordable*” units would be built

Meanwhile, in other privatizing plans very reminiscent of these attacks on libraries, the Mayor is looking to sell our public housing assets. That includes proposing to shed 14,000 units of public housing from the inventory. Well after we loose all those units we could pick up few again by selling *all* the libraries?

Who benefits from these shell games in the end? Surely not the public.

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<http://noticingnewyork.blogspot.com/2015/06/municipal-art-society-once-venerable.html>

Monday, June 15, 2015

Municipal Art Society, Once Venerable, Becomes Platform For Disseminating Misinformation Promoting Development, In this Case Backing Library Sales and Shrinkage



Linda Johnson speaking to her MAS audience about libraries as real estate- Pictures of the event are up on [Flickr](#). I used to be a member of the Municipal Art Society. I used to routinely encourage others to become members as well. But now, . . .

I actually had a sort of extra-special identification with the Municipal Art Society, a "born under the same star" thing. The Municipal Art Society, with a long venerable history, [was given birth to](#) "in the wake of the World's Columbian Exposition, when the Great White City in Chicago ushered in" a new era of expecting more and better for New York in terms of its urban design. Those are interests of mine. My father's paternal grand parents, Mr and Mrs. Peter White, were key in establishing and running the Irish Village that was part of that same 1893 Columbian Exposition, and their coming to the United State to do so is how the White family arrived here from Ireland.



Mr. and Mrs. (Annie) Peter White and the Irish Village at the Colombian Exposition

I don't know that this gives me greater or lesser rights to be irked with what the Municipal Arts Society has become, but , like many others, I am mightily riled. As it happens, a MAS board member [told me](#) ahead of time about the 180 degree turn around that for MAS that was intended. Not everyone has perceived it yet, but people are fast catching on to [what's happened](#): Once part of the fight against such abominations as Atlantic Yards, (*"the poster child for what goes wrong when process is ignored. . . a poorly designed project that has polarized the community and that squanders both opportunity and public trust"*), MAS now goes out of its way to give multiple bogus awards for such developer-driven blighting of the city.

MAS Puts Its Weight Behind Library Sales and Shrinkage- Somewhat *Deceptively*



The 63,000 square foot Brooklyn Heights central destination library in Downtown Brooklyn. The admired bas-relief murals are by C Spampinato.

At MAS's February 26, 2015, [Annual Members Meeting](#), MAS has continued to adulterate its its brand promoting, rather than holding to account, unbridled development, this time giving Brooklyn Public Library President Linda Johnson a platform to pitch unchallenged for another prize currently being eyed by the development community: sale and shrinkage of libraries to transform them into real estate deals. These deals benefit the developers they are handed out to, not the public.



administrators are creating new open space through public-private partnerships.



Brooklyn Public Library

BPL has partnered with Hudson Companies to build a 20-story condo building on the site of the current branch library at Cadman Plaza. This joint venture will provide BPL with a more modern library on the ground floor, as well as an additional \$40 million to be put towards maintaining and restoring other libraries in the borough. This innovative project is part of broader trend of leveraging development to pay for civic assets.



American Museum of Natural History

As BPL President Linda Johnson spoke at the annual meeting MAS already had the Brooklyn Heights Library sale up and prominently featured on its website "[Watchlist](#)." There the proposed sale was advertised, *not accurately*, but as a developer would probably prefer to have things described to stay low on the radar screen and sidestep public opprobrium.

- The description says that BPL is 'partnering' with a developer to build a **20-story condo** building on the site of the Brooklyn Heights Library.' Was that correct? No, not really. Although something of a black box with the developer saying he is ['starting from scratch'](#) on the design and with no rendering furnished to the public showing all the available development rights being used, this building was last stated in the New York Times to be **38 stories tall**, not "20-stories." (The release of this non applicable but apparently very [multi-purpose rendering](#) accompanied earlier statements by the Times that the building was going to be 30 stories.)

- *The description* said this joint venture will provide BPL with a more modern library “on the ground floor.” It doesn't say that it will be a vastly shrunken library providing fewer functions, only 21,000 square feet (of which only 15,000 will be above ground- “on the ground floor” per the description) vs. the existing 63,000 square feet. The Business and Career functions of the library will be banished from it. Books will be exiled.

- *The description* said that the sale will provide the BPL with “an *additional \$40 million*,” a figure only achieved by deliberately low-balling and not disclosing all the costs and public losses that need to be netted out. In actuality, in selling the library and shrinking down this \$100+ million asset to one-third size to benefit the developer, the BPL is likely even losing money when all is considered.

- *The description* said that the money netted from the sale will be “*put towards maintaining and restoring other libraries in the borough*.” In actuality, the money from the sale goes to the city and there is no assurance that it would ever be returned to maintain and restore other libraries. The only obligation to do so would be a *moral* one, and since the city's current unprecedentedly low funding of the libraries is already *immorally* low there is no assurance such *moral* suasion would work. Quite the contrary, since the current low funding levels go back to the introduction of plans for low funding to justify such self-cannibalizing funding schemes, if low funding leads successfully to the sales that real estate industry salivates for there will actually be an inducement to continue such low funding level to provoke more such sales in the future.

Here is the complete language of the MAS-published pitch for the project:

Brooklyn Public Library

BPL has partnered with Hudson Companies to build a 20-story condo building on the site of the current branch library at Cadman Plaza. This joint venture will provide BPL with a more modern library on the ground floor, as well as an additional \$40 million to be put towards maintaining and restoring other libraries in the borough. This innovative project is part of broader trend of leveraging development to pay for civic assets.

BPL Linda Johnson Presumes When Speaking To the MAS Audience She Should Be Talking *Real Estate*

Johnson, in her calibrated pitch to the MAS meetings audience began, right off the bat, with an assumption that real estate was the most important part of what she was going speak to them about:

I am pleased to be here. I feel sometimes that I'm speaking more about real estate these days than I am about literacy, . . .

And was careful, continuing, to assure that other concerns were driving her focus on real estate (announced to her board as her top priority when she started at the BPL):

. . . but we need to actually address the real estate issues in order to deliver the services that the library is striving to do.

Attentive to the Fact That Size Matters

Ms. Johnson later similarly soothed the audience about how she cares about adequate library size when she explains that libraries built during the Lindsay era that are “*on average 7500 square feet which is woefully small*.” Ms. Johnson doesn't tip her hand to the audience to say that one of contradictory priorities was to shrink such a “*woefully small*” 7500 square foot library in Red Hook down to just 5,000 square feet in a privatizing handing off 2000 square feet of the library to Spaceworks in a scheme that deserved and got a lot more scrutiny from the local community than Ms. Johnson wanted.

Ms. Johnson indicated that she is attentive to the concept that “*because of the way neighborhoods have changed*” there are “*libraries that are over-served and under-served*” as a result. That principle enunciated in the abstract may have lulled the her hearers when she got around to saying that she was going to be shrinking down to one-third size a key destination library, the downtown Brooklyn Heights Library in one of the fastest growing neighborhoods and business districts of the city's fasted growing borough.

A Plan For One Million Square Feet of Real Estate

Before she actually tells the gathering about the Brooklyn Heights library deal she acknowledges something ominous: That the BPL made a deal with the Bloomberg administration (now being carried out by the de Blasio administration) with respect to "over 1,000,000 square feet of real estate" used by the library ("It's actually owned by the city of New York The library is its custodian"). She says:

We said to the city if you give us this kind of money [capital funding] , this kind of funding, we'll do our part as well. And we will do the best that we can to use the assets that have been entrusted to us to take care to take care of them, in other words, try and leverage the properties that we have to the full extent.

Of All Things To Tell a Municipal Art Society Audience!

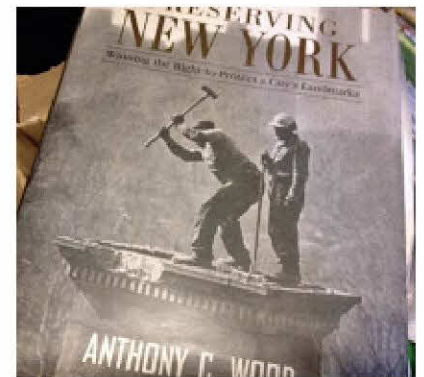


Book ends?: Brooklyn's two central destination libraries, the Downtown Brooklyn Heights Library and the Grand Army Plaza Library, were both designed by the same famed architect, Francis Keally. That's when she progresses to the subject of selling the Brooklyn Heights Library and progresses to an assertion quite ironic for her to state before an assembly of Municipal, Art Society patrons:

The Brooklyn Heights library which has been in the press a fair amount recently . . . was built in the early 1960s and it's an aging library that's no longer really doing the kind of job that it should be. There is nobody that I have heard yet who has argued that this is a building which is architecturally important or historically significant.

No one has argued that " *this is a building which is architecturally important or historically significant*"? The Library was designed by Francis Keally, who designed the borough's other esteemed central destination library at Grand Army Plaza. Francis Keally was also, in his time, the *president of the Municipal Art Society*. Keally was not only an admired architect; he fought for preservation of valuable, beautiful older buildings and their neighborhoods. As MAS president, he fought for the passage of the laws that eventually would protect them. Landmarks historian Anthony C. Wood writes in his 2008 book, "Preserving New York":

Francis Keally stressed that what was at stake "goes far beyond Washington Square and the Village." He asked his audiences to imagine a New York where a skyscraper had been substituted for the Church of the Ascension, or where the south side of Gramercy Square was built up "to smother the sky." Noting the loss of the Collegiate Church of St. Nicholas, he paints a picture of a New York where Trinity, St. Paul's, St. Bartholomew's, St. Patrick's, and St. Mark's-in-the-Bouwerie have all gone "the same way."



Keally's concern about building up on the "south side of Gramercy Square . . . to smother the sky" makes one think of Ms. Johnson's assertion that one good reason to tear down Keally's library to build a tower (perhaps 38 stories) that will loom over Brooklyn Heights from its edge is to "improve the skyline." When the first Landmarks Commission was appointed pursuant to the law that Keally had been instrumental in passing, Keally was on Mayor Wagner's nominating committee to suggest the appointments. The commission was appointed in 1962 the same year the library opened.



Ms. Johnson posing at the MAS event with Vin Cipolla, a successor as MAS president to Francis Keally, who helped usher in era of preservation. Cipolla that night gave Johnson a platform to advocate for the destruction of Keally's library.

Landmarks and Libraries

Contrary to Ms. Johnson's dismissiveness of Keally's architecture for the design of his second destination library in Brooklyn, both the New York Times and the New York Herald instantly pronounced the library as "*handsome*" when it opened, the Times saying it was a "*clean-lined limestone building of two stories, with book sacks below ground*" and the Herald describing it as "*limestone-and-red granite*." The admired "*sculptured figures at the glass-panned entrance*" are "*the work of C Spampinato*."

Further, although Ms. Johnson ventured to quickly tell the MAS assembly the building was not "*historically significant*," a good precaution if you suspected that any of the MAS old-timers might be around, behind the scenes the BPL had already engaged in measures to prevent the Landmarks Commission from recognizing as historic any libraries it wanted to transform into real estate projects and this library was a top such target on the BPL's and Johnson's list. According to BPL [minutes from February 2009](#), in a rather frank acknowledgement that the system works in ways we often pretend it doesn't:

Landmarks informed BPL that they had completed their survey of our branches and found that we have 8 branches that are potentially eligible for designations as landmarks. The Committee [Capital Planning & Oversight Committee, co-chaired by [Sharon L. Greenberger](#) and Alice Fisher Rubin] recommended that in response to Landmark's request to prioritize these branches, the Library will respond that we are conducting a comprehensive analysis of our real estate portfolio and would like to wait on any decisions on landmarking individual sites until the Board has reviewed and approved the findings of the analysis.

Ms. Johnson, the BPL and Landmarks have been less than transparent about this. [Citizens Defending Libraries](#) (of which I am a co-founder) [have requested](#) via Freedom of Information (and basic transparency precepts) the communications between the BPL and Landmarks about these libraries: It is just one of many things the Johnson and the BPL have refused to make public.

A Sturdy Library With a History



The Keally library is 63,000 feet of extraordinarily serviceable (and adaptable) square feet. That includes two half-floors of underground space that, similar to the 42nd Street Central Reference Library, were set up to hold books for easy on-the-spot retrieval. Echoing the 42nd Street library, an "automatic conveyor belt" helped deliver books more efficiently. To say that the building is sturdy is an understatement: When it was built, it was built with space set aside for a bomb shelter with the thought that people could go there to be protected against a nuclear attack.

The air-conditioned building was built in 1962 (at a cost in today's dollars of about \$20 million) and opened with a collection of 90,000 volumes. In 1991 (completion in [October 1993](#)) it was enlarged and upgraded (at a cost in today's dollars of about \$10 million). Then, additionally, a reclamation of the space people once thought might be used as a bomb shelter added even more space for books. (The book count was [130,000 by 1992](#).)

The library was built intending to serve all of Brooklyn and, being the only library addressing certain business needs and functions ("the only library in the city" for such needs), was intended to draw patrons not only from all of Brooklyn but Manhattan, including lower Manhattan's Wall Street right "*across the river*." As well as accommodating staff according to earlier, kinder standards the BPL does not now want to meet, the building has rooms used as conference rooms and more rooms that could be similarly used. Its construction involved "*special workrooms for business researchers*," including cubicles. Wanting to give the library over to development (secretly since about 2007) the BPL has not adapted or made these spaces available for the kinds of uses the public would likely appreciate.



When it opened, the library's "*collection in depth*" included books "*dating from 1786*." In one irony- I'll explain below- one of the antecedent libraries that was combined to become this library opened "*in 1823 with a wheelbarrow load of books*" and when "*General Lafayette laid the cornerstone of the building*" Brooklyn resident Walt Whitman, a child then, "*was present and was kissed by the general*."

To read more of the articles from which the above quotes come, see New York Times, [Brooklyn Library, Open Today Is rich In Business Information](#), by Sanka Knox, June 1, 1962 and New York Herald Tribune, *In handsome New Home- Brooklyn Business Library Opening*, by William G. Wing, June 1, 1962.

Urban Renewal and Some Unfortunate Ironies

The 1962 library was built using urban renewal to lower the density of this area of Brooklyn Heights and the border of Downtown Brooklyn. That same urban renewal bull-dozing destroyed Walt Whitman's print shop on Cranberry Street. What remains now is the vague attachment of a name, "*Whitman Close*," to some urban renewal townhouses near that spot. While it's strange the way these untethered names can float away from history, there is another example: Johnson

told her captive MAS listeners that by selling off the **\$100+ million*** Keally library the BPL hoped to have just a few dollars to spend on other libraries in its system, naming as one of them, the “*Walt Whitman Library*,” less than a mile’s walk of about 15 minutes away.

(* Johnson told the audience that “*The value of the property was not clear to us at the time, but through an RFP process we determined that it was worth over \$50 million.*” The problem is that out of that \$50 million the BPL is likely to net virtually nothing or less, and what price a developer will pay for the land in this kind of process in not representative of what the value of the *building and the land* is to the public.)

This citing of other libraries that will supposedly benefit is a divide-and-conquer strategy on the part of the BPL as it tries to push through its destruction of the Keally library.

The “*Walt Whitman Library*,” which is near the Navy Yard serves those living in the surrounding projects who also regularly use the Brooklyn Heights Library to a very great extent. One of the insidious little secrets behind shrinking the Brooklyn Heights Library is that there are those who view the shrinkage as a way of making it a library just for the increasingly upper-crust Heights and disinviting visitors from other neighborhoods who are not desired. See: Tuesday, May 14, 2013, [A Consideration of Race, Equality, Opportunity and Democracy As NYC Libraries Are Sold And The Library System Shrunk And Deliberately Underfunded.](#)

Plan To Move On To Other Libraries

Part of the lack of transparency on the part of the BPL is its refusal to release the “*strategic real estate*” plan, the formulation of which involved hiring a former Forest City Ratner vice president, Karen Backus, who then prioritized for sale two libraries adjacent to Forest City Ratner property, the Pacific Branch and the Keally Brooklyn Heights Tillary Clinton Library. The plan deals with *all* the BPL real estate, which they say they want to “*leverage*” *all* of, but one thing its secrecy means is that, again in divide-and-conquer strategy, the public doesn’t know which libraries are next. Ms. Johnson frequently denies that there is a list of libraries to move down, the most valuable at the top. But she gave the MAS listeners (who probaly thought sale of the Keally library as she described sounded great) a clue that the BPL would be moving down the list, saying that the Heights Library sale and shrinkage is:

a model now that we are taking and looking at how we can tweak it to see if there are other examples in the borough which might benefit.

ULURP Starts Wednesday

She explained that the BPL was hopefully going to “*get to ULURP soon*” with the plan “*in the works.*” The start of ULURP is the commencement of process required for public review and to obtain approval if the library, owned by the city as public property, is to be sold and shrunk. She was speaking in February. ULURP (Uniform land use Review Procedure), likely an extended process, is now scheduled to begin for this proposal this Wednesday, the 17th. See:

[Brooklyn Community Board 2 Land Use Committee June 17, 2015: ULURP Hearing- First Hearing About Whether To Sell & Shrink Downtowns's Brooklyn Heights Library \(Tillary & Clinton\)](#)

Libraries as Spear Points To Push Development



Is there any extreme to development that MAS would still oppose? Some, maybe, it seems. In his presentation that night Justin Davidson asked about super-super tall towers: *Who owns the sky?* Meanwhile, in discussions, forums and reports that Ms. Johnson has praised as consistent with her aims, the provision of new or better libraries has been described as bait, or '*placation*,' to induce communities to accept upzonings to accommodate development. Consider [for example](#) the Clinton Hill Library.

One plan to convert a library into a mixed-use development opportunity that was flushed out after [I wrote about it](#) here last August in Noticing New York is a plan for the Sunset Park Library. Ms. Johnson spoke specifically about it next. The BPL plans to make the Sunset Park Library larger, in part because the community demanded it if there is to be any redevelopment. It is planning to make this library on the R Train line 20,600 square feet or bigger, close to the same 21,000 square feet that it wants to shrink the Brooklyn Heights Central Library down to.

I'd like to consider that this proposed larger size for the Sunset Park Library is also because of the sunlight and focus that Noticing New York and Citizens Defending Libraries brought to the process. As for what the original redevelopment plans for Sunset Parks were, going back to at least 2009, the BPL won't release them indicating some embarrassment.

Libraries That Can't Grow With the City

Unfortunately, part of what the BPL is doing is saying, divide-and-conquer fashion, that the Sunset Park enlargement will theoretically be paid for out of selling the valuable central downtown Keally library. Also, unfortunately, like the Brooklyn Heights Library, the proposed new Sunset Park Library will be in the base of a residential building and can never be enlarged afterward. Involving long closures both libraries are susceptible to *bait-and-switch* with the BPL already probably underestimating the cost of building the Sunset Park Library.

The need for future growth is one reason why, if libraries are ever provided in the future as part of a multi-use development program, they should be in the base of commercial buildings where (unlike residential buildings) the city publicly owns more of the building for future expansion.

Population in Sunset Park has recently surged 19%. Upzonings were pushed through not long ago, but building to take advantage of it has largely not yet occurred. There are new city proposals, essentially additional upzonings, whereby buildings permitted to be 8-stories on Fourth and Seventh Avenues could become ten stories tall if certain kinds of units being considered are provided in the process.

Bows to Mayor's Development Deputy



MAS president Vin Cipolla and Deputy Mayor for Development Alicia Glen at the event. Also featured at the MAS annual meeting was Alicia Glen, late of Goldman Sachs, New York City's Deputy Mayor for Development. Ms. Johnson made reference to Glen's presence and how redevelopment libraries would be part of the mayor's plan to provide "*affordable*" housing units. That's a stated reason for the BPL's redeveloping both the Sunset Park Library and the Heights Library for 50 units and 114 units respectively, the latter being done "poor door" fashion far away from fashionable, historic Brooklyn Heights. MAS president Vin Cipolla, interviewing Glen that night, similarly proclaimed that MAS was behind the mayor's focus on full steam development to produce "*affordable*" units although many others worry about how Mayor de Blasio assured the Real Estate Board of New York that virtually all the rules could be thrown out to make developers happy in the process. *That involves throwing out a lot of what MAS fought for in the past.*



Ms. Johnson had many captive ears to hear her unchallenged pitch for why selling and shrinking libraries is good. Ms. Johnson concluded her address circling back to the real estate-not real estate theme with which she started:

So libraries are, in fact, not only about real estate, but also mostly about the people, about the great work that our libraries do inside the buildings, and about literacy as it relates to our communities in the way we work today.

Unchallenged, Ms. Johnson left the appreciably-sized MAS audience with a very skewed view of what she and the BPI are up to. Let's hope that the MAS audience was far less gullible than Ms. Johnson would like to believe.

Addendum (added 6/18/2015): At the [Wednesday, June 17, 2015 hearing](#) referred to above, MAS sent a representative to testify *in favor* of this building (*below*- more images [here](#)) to replace and shrink the Brooklyn Heights Downtown Library made public in an information-dump, ULURP certification 48 hours before the hearing and being described as a 36-story tower in that information dump and the next day by the architect in the New York Times as a "[38-story](#) tower."



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Subject: Articles submitted as testimony for library hearing.

Date: Mon, Aug 31, 2015 12:32 am

This is the sixth of a number of articles I am submitting as testimony in connection with the library hearing that are relevant and informative with respect to the proposal in obvious ways:

<http://noticingnewyork.blogspot.com/2015/06/new-images-of-what-developers-luxury.html>

Tuesday, June 16, 2015

New Images of What Developer's Luxury Tower Would look Like When It Kicks Out Brooklyn's Central Destination Downtown Library, Stomps It Down To 1/3rd Size



Here are some new images, released in an information dump just before Wednesday's Hearing (the 17th) on whether the public should approve the sale and shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's central destination library in Downtown Brooklyn on Cadman Plaza West at Tillary and Clinton.

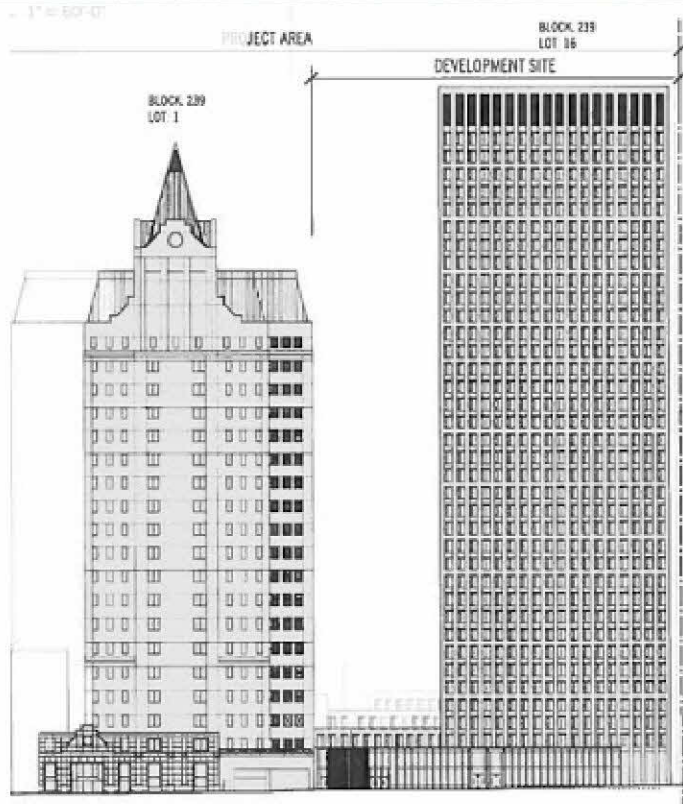
Guess what?: The new tower is *not* the 20-story tower or the 30-story tower previously reported about in the press. It seems to be 36 stories (perhaps, with super-high ceilings, the equivalent of a taller building) with leeway in its zoning envelope to grow.

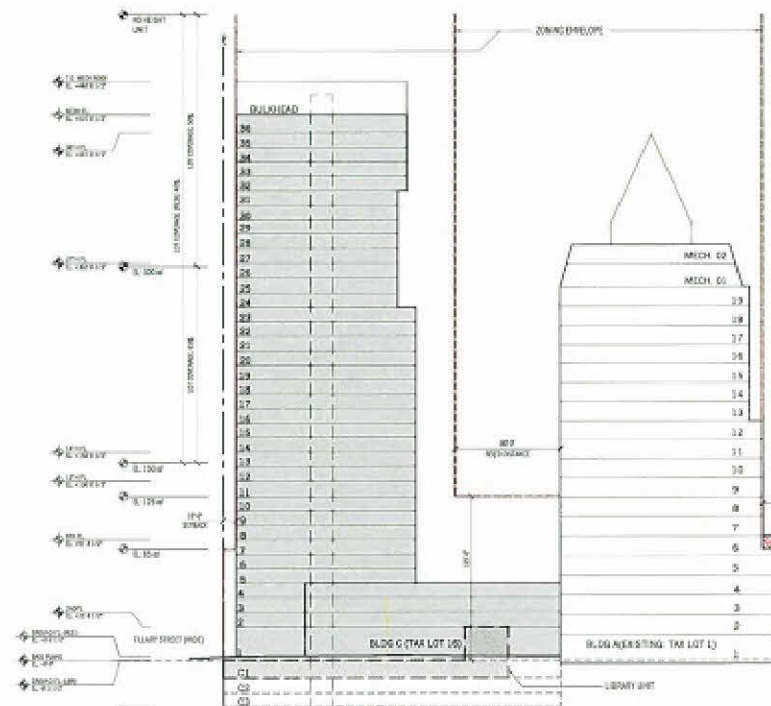
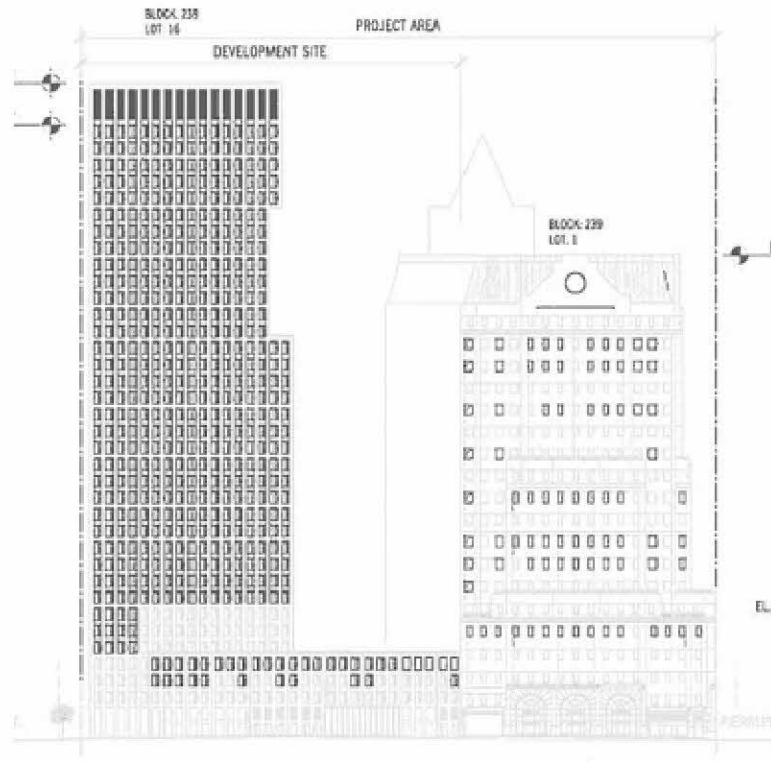
Here, below, from the slick developer presentation the Brooklyn Heights Association chose to, and waited to be, a conduit of:

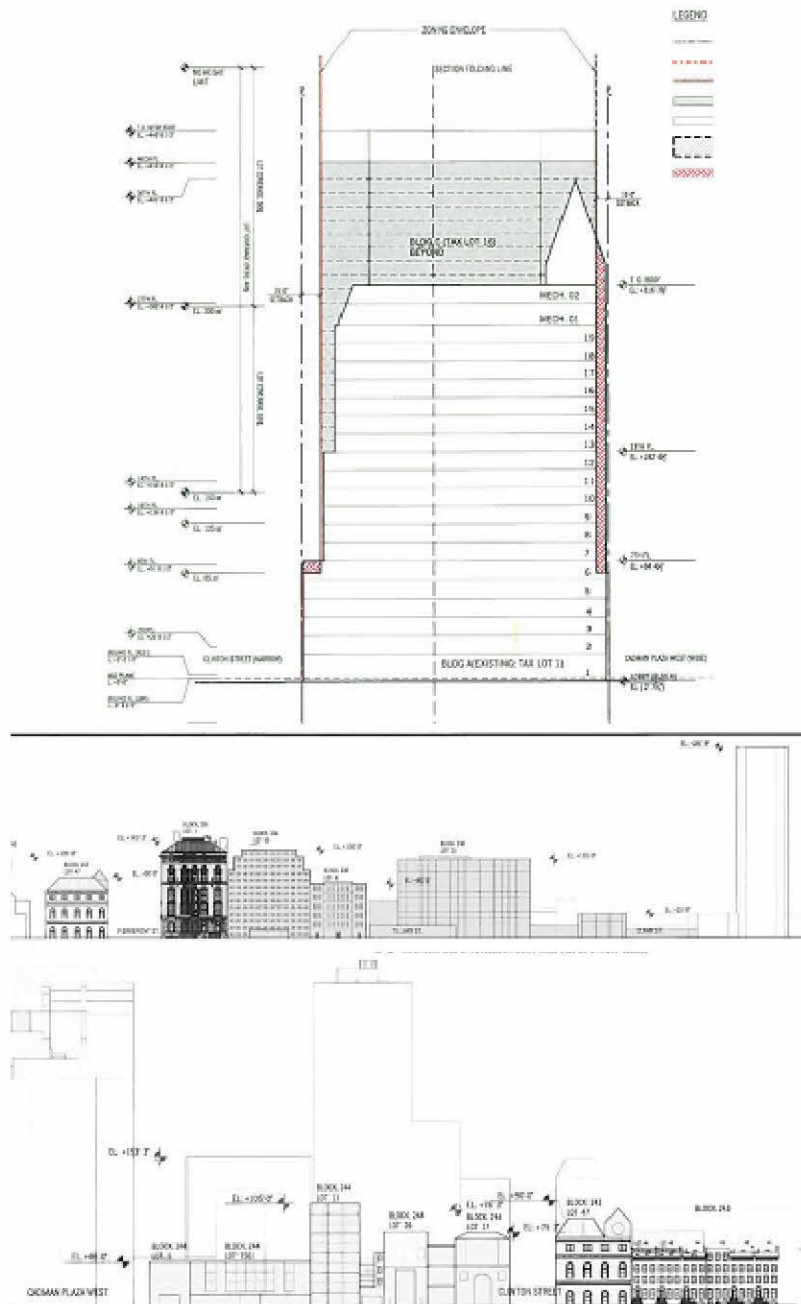


Here's a crop a little more in-between.









Here's more information about Wednesday's hearing. If you care about libraries and/or want to stand up to rapacious developers expecting our elected representatives to do *their* bidding, not *ours* you should come, because *you can make a difference*:

[Brooklyn Community Board 2 Land Use Committee June 17, 2015: ULURP Hearing- First Hearing About Whether To Sell & Shrink Downtown's Brooklyn Heights Library \(Tillary & Clinton\)](#)

Meanwhile, quite relevant to what's unfolding, there's [an article](#) in the Brooklyn Heights Blog about Saint Ann's, a private school, and its transfer of library development rights to this development. Saint Ann's is *taking cash* and no longer *taking any property* for its involvement in this transaction.

What is [reported](#) in the Blog does *NOT* mean that Saint Ann's won't be benefitting from the deal, or that the benefit to Saint Ann's won't continue to *HELP DRIVE* this deal: Saint Ann's, selling its development rights, will still be getting very substantial cash (with which it could even subsequently buy that cultural space condominium Mr. Kramer, the developer, offers in the Blog article)- This information comes out just days before *FIRST EVER* hearing this Wednesday. That hearing starts the process to decide whether public approval should be given to sell and shrink a major NYC library, this

one.

Previously it appeared Saint Ann's was getting *cash and property* for its development rights. That property could have been a *20,000 square foot student theater*. Based on [these calculations](#), that theater (of "*the an absurd public rip off*") might have had a value of about *\$41.7 million*. So what is Saint Ann's now getting?: That (*\$41.7 million*) plus more cash? ***Maybe \$50-\$55 million free and clear?*** While the Brooklyn Public Library nets considerably below \$30 million? ***Perhaps effectively less than ZERO?***

If these guesses about who is really getting the most benefit, a private school or the public, seem unfair, remember that this is information that [Citizens Defending Libraries](#) (of which I am a co-founder) has asked be disclosed by the BPL. The BPL devoted to its infinite lack of transparency has refused to provide the information.

Here is more recent relate NNY coverage of the library sale:

- Sunday, June 14, 2015, [Selling a \\$100 Million Plus Library For What? A Pittance! More Transparency Please.](#)
- Monday, June 15, 2015, [Municipal Art Society, Once Venerable, Becomes Platform For Disseminating Misinformation Promoting Development, In this Case Backing Library Sales and Shrinkage](#)
- Saturday, June 6, 2015, [WNYC Reports Mayor de Blasio's "Furiously Raising Funds"- Including From Developers "Lurking Behind The Curtain" of Library Real Estate Sales- And WNYC's Money?](#)
- Saturday, June 6, 2015, [Real Estate Deal Revelations In Scott Sherman's New "Patience and Fortitude" About NYPL Central Library Plan Fight: Observer-Ownng Kushner Family In At Outset of Donnell Sale](#)

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Subject: Re: Articles submitted as testimony for library hearing.

Date: Mon, Aug 31, 2015 12:34 am

This is the seventh of a number of articles I am submitting as testimony in connection with the library hearing that are relevant and informative with respect to the proposal in obvious ways:

<http://noticingnewyork.blogspot.com/2015/06/embarrassment-of-past-riches.html>

Friday, June 26, 2015

Embarrassment of Past Riches!: Augmentation of NYC Book Space At Two Business Libraries Simultaneously- Only Recently The Brooklyn Heights Association Fought For Larger, Not Smaller Libraries



the "Library-Squasher"

The Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's Downtown, central destination library will be shrunk from 61,000 square feet to just 21,000 square feet (about the same size as the 20,000 square feet for the Sunset Park Library)

How much is Saint Ann's School being paid in this "private" transaction driving a PUBLIC loss?:

Will Saint Ann's get MORE \$\$ than library administration/city officials are saving, getting virtually nothing...
... perhaps LESS THAN ZERO?

Click to enlarge if you dare- The Library-squashing tower that would benefit Saint Ann's private school and a developer if built, but not the public.

Do you know that in the 1990s, not so very long ago at all, New York City substantially augmented its library resources by spending to create *more library space* at *two* major central destination business libraries *simultaneously*? And, if you rewind the clock, looking at one of those libraries, the Brooklyn Heights Association was in the thick of things fighting for more library space. . .

. . . Now, as fate (or the real estate industry) would have it, *both* of those central destination business libraries are besieged by those who would sell them, hand them out as juicy deals.

. . . And, for reasons that seem suspicious, the Brooklyn Heights Association now finds itself on the other side, advocating to *shrink* the library it once fought to *enlarge*.

The First Ever Hearing On Selling and Shrinking a Public Library- Running Into the BHA

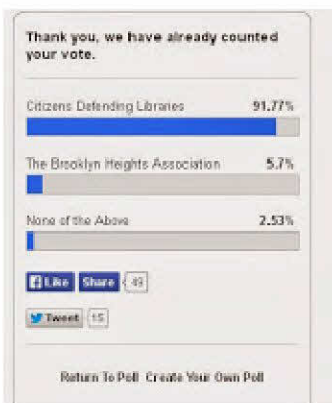
Wednesday June 17, 2015 was the [first ever hearing](#) about selling and shrinking a NYC library, the Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's central destination library in Downtown Brooklyn on Cadman Plaza West at [Tillary and Clinton](#), was held before the Land use Committee of Brooklyn's Community Board 2.



Patrick Killackey, president of the Brooklyn Heights Association now favoring the sale and shrinkage of Brooklyn's Brooklyn Heights Library.- From the Brooklyn Eagle

At the end of the hearing I approached Patrick Killackey, the new president of the board of the Brooklyn Heights Association, and told him the BHA was long overdue in following through to reconsider and change the position it took in favor of selling and shrinking the library, a reconsideration Killackey's predecessor, Alexandra Bowie, [said publicly](#) the BHA might be willing to entertain when I questioned her as a co-founder of [Citizens Defending Libraries](#) at the February 24, 2015 annual Brooklyn Heights Association meeting:

"I will take that up with our library committee, which is how we operate, and if the library committee feels that it wants to revisit the question, then I will take it to the full board," Bowie said.

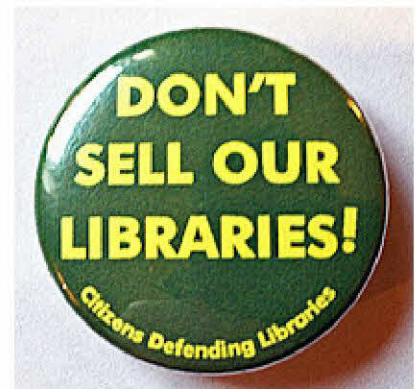


The BHA's [original decision](#) to support the sale and shrinkage of the library was rushed, secretive, lacking in public input and suspect in a number of ways. We have asked the BHA to change course from the start, [including at](#) the previous, 2014 BHA annual meeting. Back then, as well, it was [very clear](#) that public sentiment was strong on our side.

Bklyn Hts Blog: Who do you support?

The last time I approached Mr. Killackey entreating that the BHA finally reconsider its position was at the May 9, 2015 annual Brooklyn Heights Association house tour where a majority of those on the tour wore our Citizens Defending Libraries "Don't Sell Our Libraries" buttons. Mr. Killackey told me then he was "off duty."

I am sure Mr. Killackey believed I came on strong as I approached him after the hearing, and I probably did as I was very annoyed that at the hearing the BHA had just delivered [inane testimony](#) in favor of selling and shrinking the library Ms. Bowie herself standing to read it into the microphone. Mr. Killackey may also have felt beset upon under the circumstances, because the hearing that had just concluded was [packed with people](#). Setting aside those people whose salaries (via the real estate industry or closely analogous situations) depended upon the testimony being in favor of a library sale and shrinkage, the hearing testimony was virtually unanimously opposed to selling and shrinking the library, leaving the Brooklyn Heights Association an odd outlier.





People told me they left the hearing more passionately opposed to the library sale and shrinkages than when they arrived. This was after listening to Brooklyn Public Library president Linda Johnson protest to a groaning audience that *"the BPL is not in the real estate business."* And it was after hearing the developer refuse to say what Saint Ann's school is being paid as a result of the library's sale and shrinkage because, he averred, *"it's a private transaction"* . . . even though it is driving a public one!

I told Mr. Killackey that the BHA should be meeting with Citizens Defending Libraries and that we could educate the BHA about what was wrong with their position and the way that it had been reached. Mr. Killackey seemed insulted and told me that I didn't know anything about him or what he already knew about the library sale.

Fighting To Properly Fund Libraries

We then got into a discussion where Mr. Killackey made the point that NYC libraries have always been underfunded and have always had to fight for funds. I have had a number of discussions with various people recently and it seems to me that this is a talking point that people arguing for the sell-off and shrinkage of libraries are now using to contradict what we have made a point of saying: *NYC libraries are being underfunded at an unprecedentedly low level as an excuse to sell them off.*



The explanation for library underfunding! It's easy to see: The generation of deals like this, the 50-story building replacing the [Donnell library](#). And the proposal to replicate the [Donnell sale swindle](#) with a 38-story building replacing the Brooklyn Heights Library.

If you see things the way we do then what seems to be a very *hard* thing to explain becomes easy to explain: You ask "why should a ` [progressive](#) ' mayor be engaged in an unprecedented underfunding of the libraries in a time of plenty?" - Then you look at the huge luxury condominium tower proposed to replace the Brooklyn Heights Library, shrinking it down to one-third size, and you say that's the answer staring me starkly in the face! And the answer is all the more obvious

when you realize that the real estate development team "*lurking right behind the curtain*" to build it is sending money to the mayor. See: Saturday, June 6, 2015, [WNYC Reports Mayor de Blasio's "Furiously Raising Funds"- Including From Developers "Lurking Behind The Curtain" of Library Real Estate Sales- And WNYC's Money?](#)

We Used To Fight For Funds To *Expand* Libraries: Business Libraries As Case In Point

Mr. Killackey is correct that there is a history of libraries needing to fight for their funds from the city, just as every department or entity seeking city funding fights to justify its case for funds. But the libraries never before had to fight for funds so that underfunding wouldn't be a reason to sell and shrink libraries. *Au contraire*, in the past, libraries were fighting for funds to *expand*. And fighting for funds to *expand* vs. fighting for funds *not* to *sell and shrink* libraries is hardly an apples to apples comparison.



Two central destination libraries (the Downtown Brooklyn heights Library and SIBL) that were both funded at the same time, both with a special focus on business. The facilities for library patrons were thus mightily expanded, an embarrassment of riches. And now both may vanish at the same time?

Example?: A really good one is this very library that Killackey's BHA is advocating be sold and shrunk. In June of 1992 Crain's New York Business was reporting about the *expansion* going on at this library. The point of the article was that the BPL's fight to fund the library was going to be more uphill because of competition as the city simultaneously went forward with another expansion of library space, plans for the NYPL's Science, Industry and Business Library (SIBL) at 34th Street in the former B. Altman's building:

The usually subdued leadership at the Brooklyn Public Library is peeved that Brooklyn's pre-eminent business library is being cast aside as city and state officials build a library that may duplicate work already done by Brooklyn Public.

Not to worry: Both central destination business library expansions were fully funded and completed in the end.



The BPL spent \$5 million, the equivalent of nearly \$10 million in today's dollars, on its central destination Brooklyn Library. Opened in 1962 with 90,000 books its collection was by then up, substantially, to 130,000 volumes, plus periodicals and other resource materials. The library reopened Tuesday, October 12, 1993 in a no-cost-overrun renovation. The library added new second floor space over two of its wings. It involved a substantial gutting for the installation of upgraded mechanical, wiring, air conditioning and heating (an automatic system), energy efficient lighting, while providing and adding space for on-line computer services recognizing the "*technological revolution*." It alleviated what had been "*a cramped atmosphere*." (See: Heights Press: Library Reopens Next Tuesday, by Roanan Geberer, October 7, 1993 and Library Renovation is Moving Along, by Roanan Geberer, July 23, 1992.) The Building (now

63,000 square feet) was thereby expanded "by nearly a third." (See: The Phoenix, Expansion Work To Close Branch For 12-16 Months, Michael Armstrong, May 2-10, 1991.)

In Manhattan, SIBL moved forward to completion, opening in the spring of 1995. It's 160,000 square feet of [new additional library space](#) cost \$100 million (consider adjusting that for an equivalent in today's dollars).

Reverse Course On *Both* Business Libraries- *Simultaneously*?

The Crain's June 1992 article discussed to what extent these two libraries competed with each other, duplicating services, but what library patrons got was investment and expansion of such services at *both* sites *simultaneously*. Now, with a proposed concurrent sale of both libraries, library patrons would lose services at *both* locations *simultaneously*. . .

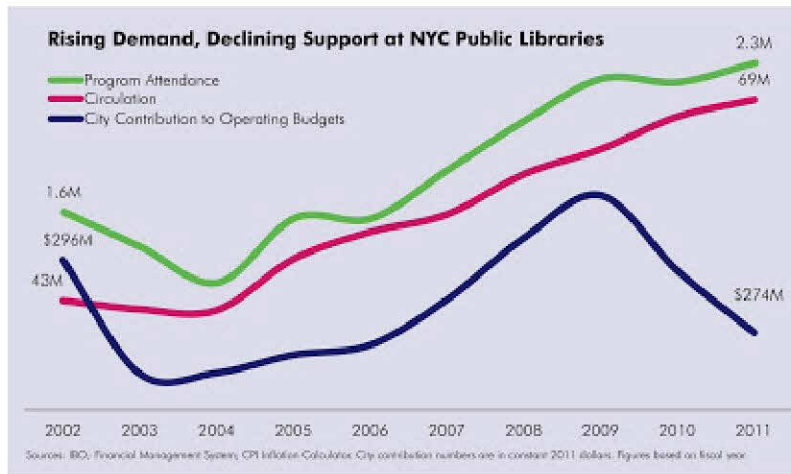
. . . In fact, part of SIBL has already been sold. In 2012 the NYPL [quietly sold off](#) 87% of SIBL's space for just \$60.8 million. What it sold off was space where books could be stored and readily retrieved from. With the sale books disappeared from the site, most of what in the 1992 Crain's article NYPL president Timothy Healy described as SIBL's "overused . . . business and science collection" of 2.5 million volumes. Librarians tell us many of these volumes now take appreciable extra time to retrieve for patrons because they are in Chicago. According to Crain's, SIBL was also "a depository for patents and government documents from not only the United States, but nations of the European Community." Similarly, the Brooklyn library enlarged in 1993 [was a](#) designated [Federal Depository](#) (and still is).

The unsold portion of SIBL that's threatened by the NYPL's announced intent to sell it, constitutes, just as it is all by itself, a very valuable viable library notwithstanding that so much of its book storage space has been sold off. That's even though SIBL now has far fewer books than the 90,000 volumes the Brooklyn library had on premises when it opened in 1962. By contrast, in Crain's in 1992 the NYPL bragged that SIBL's book count was "20 times that of Brooklyn's" and that it had "60,000 periodical titles."

Visit SIBL at 34th Street and Madison and see what you find there. It continues, in beautifully designed fashion, to have every imaginable resource that a library intended to provide a platform for and to work with computer resources is supposed to provide. Although SIBL's book count has been devastatingly diminished, it has [expanses of currently empty shelves](#) that could be refilled, this at a time when library circulation is up about 60% with almost all of that increase being [physical, not digital books](#).

Knowledgeable About The Turnaround?

Mr. Killackey's *thus-it-has-ever-been-so* assertion that libraries have always had to fight for their funding with his accompanying implication that we are not now facing a new threat as their sale is blamed on that underfunding, ignores that fact that throughout the Giuliani administration we were expending public funds to *expand* libraries. It was only when the Bloomberg administration came in, also looking at [selling off other public assets](#) ([schools](#), [public housing](#), etc), that we made a 180% turnaround. It ignores how the BPL's minutes document that before the BPL was planning to sell libraries there was *no backlog* of capital library expenditures. It ignores how the minutes of the BPL document that when the plans to sell libraries were being launched the BPL agreed with the city to defer and build up those capital repairs rather than fund them and that this was done in tandem with an effort to "*strengthen the argument for*" its "*strategic real estate plan*" to sell and shrink libraries. All of this had been documented in Noticing New York, but Mr. Killackey seems unaware (.Sunday, August 31, 2014, [Mostly In Plain Sight \(A Few Conscious Removals Notwithstanding\) Minutes Of Brooklyn Public Library Tell Shocking Details Of Strategies To Sell Brooklyn's Public Libraries](#).)



As Mr. Killackey says, I don't know what he knows, but what he knows seems to ignore how, at approximately the same time, just after Bloomberg got his third term, he dramatically started cutting funding to libraries even as library use was increasing greatly. The de Blasio administration, proceeding with library sales, has *not restored* those cuts.

When The BHA Fought For a Bigger Library and Smaller, More Contextual Buildings

The expansion of the Brooklyn Heights library with the 1991-1993 construction effected an increase to the library's space for which the Brooklyn Heights Association had been fighting for a number of years. In 1985 when the Brooklyn Heights Association was fighting Forest City Ratner's huge new One Pierrepont Plaza building planned for erection next to the Brooklyn library as too "*bulky*," a deal was reached allowing the Ratner building greater height in exchange for cutbacks at its top and Ratner's promise to give 12,000 square feet in the building to the library for it to *expand* into. This sweetener was intended to deal with the overcrowding at the library's adjacent site. (See: [Pact on Brooklyn Tower Reached](#), By Josh Barbanel, October 25, 1985.) Ratner's building was completed in 1988.



Library Space Promised to Sweeten Deals For Bigger Development- Not Delivered

Ratner's 1985 offer of library space as a sweetener to induce approval for a bigger development is reminiscent of how in discussions of transforming libraries into mixed-use redevelopments there has been [crass frankness](#) about the manipulative offer of libraries as a "*placating gesture*" to get the public to approve greater development. More recently, Two Trees Development offered the public 15,000 square feet of new library space in its BAM South luxury tower as sweetener for a substantial increase in the size of the permitted building, a deal handed out to it from the city by the Bloomberg administration that, like the 1985 Ratner deal, was given away without a bid.

Interestingly, Ratner apparently was never required to make good on its 1985 pact for the library space sweetener. Similarly, on May 27, 2007 BPL spokesman David Woloch quietly confessed to CB2's Youth and Education Committee that instead of providing the 15,000 square feet of library sweetener space in the BAM South project once promised, Two Trees would be giving just 2,500 square feet, one-sixth of what was originally promised. (See: Friday, February 1, 2013, [City Strategy Of Withholding Basic City Services To Blackmail Public Into Accepting Bigger Development](#).)

The proposed luxury condominium tower that would squash the library down to *one-third size* dwarfs the adjacent 1988 Ratner tower and has no cutbacks.

At a June 10, 2015 BPL presentation to Brooklyn's Community Board 7, Mr. Woloch assured members of the Sunset Park Community that if its library is torn down for redevelopment into a mixed-use facility there will be no bait and switch, that what is promised will be built. The Sunset Park plans were first disclosed [here](#) in Noticing New York with the BPL catching up to give out information afterwards. In a sense there has been a victory in that for the first time since Citizens Defending Libraries has been on the scene a library being sold is proposed to be enlarged, in this case to 20,600 square feet, virtually the same size the central destination 63,000 square foot downtown library is proposed to be shrunk to.

Illusory Promises- One Reason the BHA is Wrong

Unfulfilled and unenforceable promises provide a perfect segue for talking about more of what is wrong with the Brooklyn Heights Association's position to back the sale and shrinkage of the library. A top reason the BHA gives for selling and shrinking the library is that, "*proceeds from the sale will go to the BPL, which will use them to renovate other branch libraries.*"

This is wrong on a number of counts:

1. As one of the CB2 Land Use Committee members noted there is no way to assure that net funds, *if any*, would actually go to such funding of other libraries. There is no way to track it through or assure that New York City, to whom the money would go, would actually give more money to the libraries as a result. The city could actually just give less overall to the libraries. There is only the vaguest idea that *morally* money ought to come back to the libraries, but the libraries are already funded at an *immorally* low level, below what was compacted with Andrew Carnegie when he gave libraries to the city. What's more, if low funding translates this way into hand-offs to real estate developers, we are only apt to see *more* of this kind of low funding in the future.
2. The BPL is being [totally untransparent](#) about how there will be virtually *no net* proceeds from the sale of the library. It may wind up with a negative cash result. The BPL is disguising, underestimating and refusing to acknowledge the costs that must be netted out of the transaction.
3. The proposed self-cannibalizing sale of this library doesn't generate resources for the library; it involves a huge loss of library resources. It would cost \$60 million to rebuild the library building. The building together with the land there and the rights to expand for additional public uses there mean the dollar value to the library to the public is well over \$100 million, probably around \$120 million. . . and yet the BPL would net virtually nothing from a sale, perhaps less than zero. (See: Sunday, June 14, 2015, [Selling a \\$100 Million Plus Library For What? A Pittance! More Transparency Please.](#))

More On Why the BHA is Off Track, Including The Saint Ann's Problem

The BHA's testimony also includes a reference to the private Saint Ann's School in weirdly suggesting with rather out-of-the-blue belatedness that perhaps there should be some negotiation for a *larger* library:

Given the recent announcement that Saint Ann's School will not purchase the space originally assigned to them, we urge the Brooklyn Public Library to consider negotiating with Hudson for additional space in the building. In the event that the underground space is unsold, we welcome Hudson's plan to excavate less of the site.

If the reverse-course shrinkage of this library is truly the colossal mistake most people think it is and the library should therefore be *larger*, or if in the future it's determined the library should be *larger* because the city, borough, central business district and surrounding residential neighborhood are all growing fast (which they *all* are) there is a problem: *Stuck in the bottom of a residential luxury tower, the library can never be enlarged afterwards.** Yet the BHA suggests negotiating for a *larger* library, but is ready to just shrug if those negotiations don't work out? Come now! How contradictory can you get?

(* Sunset Park has a similar problem where a no-bid, behind-the-scenes process now puts that library on track to be put in the bottom of a residential, not a commercial, building, and also precluded the use of another better site for the expanded library.)

Perhaps more important, the BHA's mention of *Saint Ann's School* in its testimony is *deceptive*. It makes it sound like Saint Ann's was *paying* for the space it was getting in the building rather, than as was the case, *being paid* with the transfer of that space for its development rights. *Remember the developer refusing to say how much Saint Ann's is being paid?* The BHA's wording also makes it sound like Saint Ann's School was no longer going to be involved in the transaction, a [misleading impression](#) the developer and BPL apparently tried to foster right before the hearing.

If fact, it must be recognized that private Saint Ann's School is getting a substantial pay day due to the fact that because the library, a publicly owned asset, is being sold and shrunk, Saint Ann's can sell its development rights free-and-clear without the nuisance and cost of having to demolish and reconstruct its own building.

Who were the BHA's library deciders, that core to the BHA committee that passed its judgment that the library should be sold and shrunk in this developer-pleasing transaction?



BHA board member *library deciders* conferring at the June 17th hearing- Both on the BHA's library committee- Right

Alexandra Bowie who delivered testimony- Left Erica Belsey Worth high-end architect and Saint Ann's parent. Alexandra Bowie, who operated with great secrecy at the beginning, was one of them. Some years ago when Ms. Bowie was still President of the BHA and Mr. Killackey was still an unelevated board member, my wife and I tried to express concern about what Ms. Bowie [had said to us](#) about the users of the library that came to the library from the nearby projects. Mr. Killackey was dismissive of our concerns.



Architect and Saint Ann's parent [Inger Yancey](#)- "[The Yancey's were an early founding family of Saint Ann's School.](#)" Other BHA board members who are library deciders for the BHA and therefore for the entire neighborhood that the BHA is suppose to represent?: Erika Belsey Worth and Inger Yancey. Both are architects. Both are *Saint Ann's parents*. Ms. Belsey Worth designs for those with a more refined taste who can afford it. As for Ms. Yancey, reading the Brooklyn Eagle it is [apparently a point of pride](#) that: "[The Yancey's were an early founding family of Saint Ann's School.](#)"

Frankly, this is unfair and lacks proper process.

A Dead-locked CB2 Land Use Committee and A Declared End To Public Hearing Input While The Developer Continues To Lobby

After the hearing the CB2 Land Use Committee deadlocked and did *not* vote to approve the library sale and shrinkage. One reason expressed by committee members was the lack of any true assurance that any funds, net or otherwise, from the sale and shrinkage would actually go back to the libraries. That concern took hold despite the fact that the BHA blithely ignores that problem. Another reason expressed was that the committee had previously voted not to approve any big new developments until the infrastructure problem of local school PS8, at 140% over capacity is attended to. . It was recognized that voting to approve the transfer of the public land to build this tower would have overridden this stance established by the committee's previous vote. . .

. . . What we see is a worsening imbalance as we try provide the public infrastructure necessary to keep up with development as [privatization of once-public assets](#) accelerates with transfers such of these.

The deadlock was apparently unexpected, the BPL and the developer having timed their progress in requesting a vote to

their belief that with behind-the-scenes lobbying they had locked up the votes they needed.

Hopefully the committee was also influenced in its vote by: The public testimony; the BPL's total lack of transparency with respect to this and other proposed library sales; and the value of the asset being sold versus the insanely low price for which it would be sold off.

As the CB2 Land Use Committee debated its vote there was kibitzing from the some public in attendance calling attention to the fact that two of the CB2 Land Use Committee members are salaried employees of the BHA. It was asserted that these two members should recuse themselves and not vote. That's an interestingly hard call to make because at that very moment those two members seemed to be doing the right thing and making the right points about why the proposal to sell the library was a problem. But if the two members who are employees of the BHA were to recuse themselves it could wind up in essentially the same place because a majority of affirmation votes is required for the committee to approve the sale and shrinkage and recusals, like negative votes or abstentions would all similarly subtract from that required total.

The CB2 Land Use Committee is going to be asked to vote on the proposed library sale and shrinkage yet again.



June 12, 2015 CB2 Executive Committee meeting

At the June 12, 2015 CB2 Executive Committee meeting, CB2 Chair Shirley McRea announced that approval of the proposed sale and shrinkage of the library was being sent back to the committee referring to "an email from the board office." Chair McRae said that July 6th was being looked at for the date for the new committee meeting, but that they were having difficulty setting it up. Following the committee meeting she said it was planned that the full CB2 board would take up the matter July 15th.

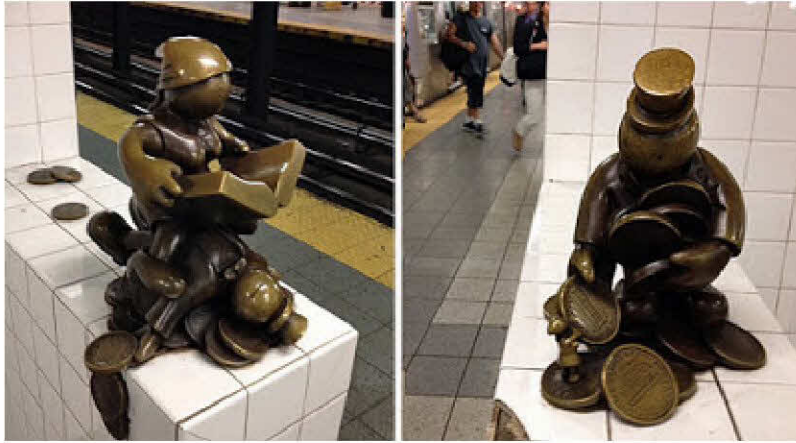
Ms. McRae told the room:

Now the follow-up meeting to last Wednesday's meeting, and everyone needs to be very clear on this, the public hearings are closed, There are no more hearings on the BPL. It's over. It's done with. It was done on Wednesday. When this committee meets next it will be to do what they were supposed to. . What should have taken place, what should have taken place at last Wednesday's meeting without having sat there for three, four, five hours and then trying to come to some decision. I just want everyone to be clear on that: It is not a repeat of the public hearing. This is for the committee now to come together and do the business of the committee.

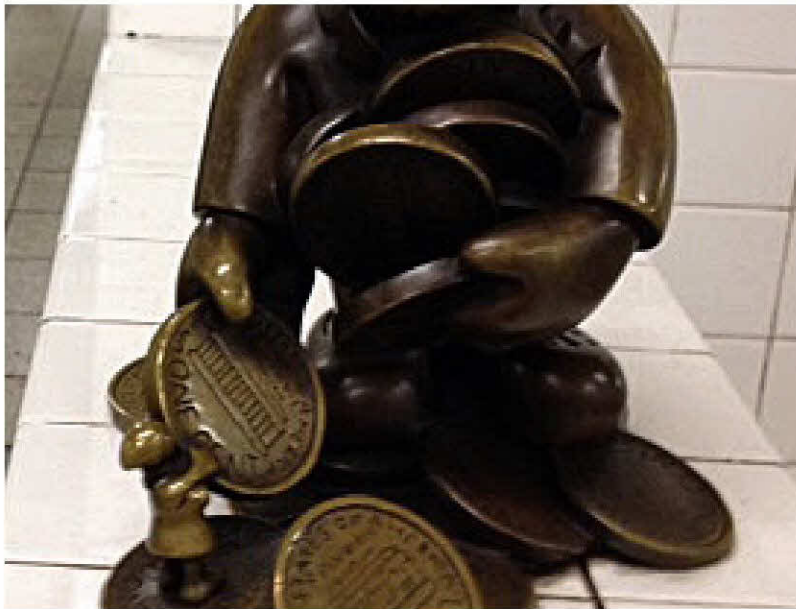
Maybe the "hearing" is technically over, but that Wednesday the 17th, immediately the hearing, the developer was lobbying the committee members to change their votes, so it is not as if the CB2 land Use Committee isn't still *hearing* things from the developer. Hopefully, they will also still be *hearing* things from the public and it would be nice if one of the things they hear was the Brooklyn Heights Association admitting their decision was seriously flawed and wrong and admitting to the position that we should not be selling and shrinking a valuable library for a pittance.

The BHA we should stand up with us and the rest of the community against these deals that don't benefit the public, but

do benefit *private* parties with *private* interests antagonistic to the public's, a developer sending campaign contributions to the mayor and a private school.



Two Tom Otterness sculptures at the 14th Street Station on the A-Train. Which way will the library struggles turn out? With book lovers on top? Or with all our public wealth transferred to the monied interests who will dispense a few pennies as handouts?



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Subject: Re: Articles submitted as testimony for library hearing.

Date: Mon, Aug 31, 2015 12:38 am

This is the eighth of a number of articles I am submitting as testimony in connection with the library hearing that are relevant and informative with respect to the proposal in obvious ways:

<http://noticingnewyork.blogspot.com/2015/07/questions-brooklyn-community-board-2.html>

Sunday, July 5, 2015

Questions Brooklyn Community Board 2 Land Use Committee And Other Members Are Raising About The Proposed Sale And Shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights Central Destination Downtown Library



Wednesday, June 17th, the [FIRST EVER public hearing](#) about the proposed sale and shrinkage of an important New York City library, was held before Brooklyn Community Board 2's Land Use Committee.

The proposed sale and shrinkage is of the Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's central destination library in Downtown Brooklyn on Cadman Plaza West at the corner of [Tillary and Clinton](#).

In recent years New York City library administration officials proposed to sell, or actually sold, other libraries, but no public hearings were required, because unlike this present situation, even though those libraries were funded mostly and very heavily by the city, those libraries, the Donnell Library, the Mid-Manhattan Library and SIBL (the Science, Industry and Business Library) were *not* owned by the city. The latter of these two proposed sales were supposed to be part of the NYPL's Central Library Plan. It would have also destroyed the stacks for the 42nd Street Central Reference Library's research books.

No hearings were required because, as noted, the city didn't own the land being sold, but it would have been far better if public hearings had been held when those other sales were proposed because the transactions, handing out juicy deals

to the real estate industry, *did not stand up to scrutiny*.

The November 2007 sale and shrinkage of the 97,000 square foot Donnell Library on 53rd Street across from MoMA, one day supposed to be "*replaced*" by a 28,000 square foot, [largely underground, largely bookless](#) library is now universally recognized to have been a colossal mistake, even sheepishly by library administration officials. The sale, a huge loss to the public and even shrinking the library down to less than one-third size, netted the NYPL [considerably less](#) than \$30 million while the penthouse in the fifty-story building replacing it on what was [documented](#) to be the highest value block in Manhattan is being marketed for \$60 million. The NYPL would have been deeply in a financial hole, suffering a significant cash loss from the sale if it had endeavored to replace the Donnell Library with a full-scale equivalent of the library sold rather than shrinking it down to a fraction.

The de Blasio administration [ultimately defunded](#) the Central Library Plan involving the sale of Mid-Manhattan and SIBL in what was a similar drastic downsizing of publicly owned library space and assets, selling off over 400,000 square feet of library space to cram it into just 80,000 square feet. Only after the Central Library Plan was derailed was it revealed that this shrinkage and divestiture of assets was going to cost the public [over one-half billion dollars](#). Exactly how much more we still don't know but that *half billion figure is hundreds of millions more* than what the NYPL was previously publicizing to be the plan's cost.

Why the discrepancy? Why were these deals so bad for the public, so almost inconceivably worse for the public than could be imagined in ways that were not openly represented by library administration officials to be the case?

The best answer is that they were really being done as favors for the real estate industry for whom the deals were very beneficial.

Now CB2 finds itself with another such library deal, the proposed Brooklyn deal, that's closely [modeled to replicate](#) the Donnell sale, another luxury tower squashing down an important library to just one-third size.



CB2's Land Use Committee members raised important questions about the proposed transaction on the 17th after hearing public testimony that spotlighted multitudinous concerns. Three of the committee's top concerns:

1.) Brooklyn Public Library administration officials are *supposedly* proposing this hand-off to a developer in order to bring in funds for libraries. The problem with tha is that this pretense doesn't bear scrutiny because, as CB2 committee members noted, *there is absolutely no assurance any funds from a sale and shrinkage would go to the libraries*. . . for *two* reasons, actually: a.) because any funds would *go to the city* that now displays a tendency to withhold funds from the libraries and there'd never be a way to trace the funds or assure they had actually come back, and b.) when you do the math and pierce through the BPL's lack of transparency on the subject, the amount of cash netted with the BPL incurring [this huge public loss](#), like Donnell, is a paltry sum and perhaps [less than zero](#).

2.) The committee, taking note of the imbalance of what is now fast-paced development in the area with

the provision and maintenance of public infrastructure, previously voted that it should *not* approve any huge new developments while severe overcrowding at PS8 continues unaddressed. PS8 is currently at 140% and soon faces worse. Approving the sale of the library for more development would amount to overturning the committee's previous vote.

3.) In order to obtain a bonus and build a bigger building while also trying to generate public support for the selling off the library's assets, the developer is proposing to build so-called "affordable" housing units at two other sites. Committee members noted that with a sort of *quintessential* "poor-door," in-your-face bravado the developer is choosing to put these units in a far less desirable location than increasingly fashionable Brooklyn Heights, where the units in the luxury tower replacing the library would be marketed. The result would be various forms of gentrification: Those wanting to curtail the many visitors coming to the vicinity of Brooklyn Heights when they use the downtown neighborhood would achieve their aim, plus a high-end luxury building would be built on the Brooklyn Heights border . . . any lower income residents would get settled at a far remove.

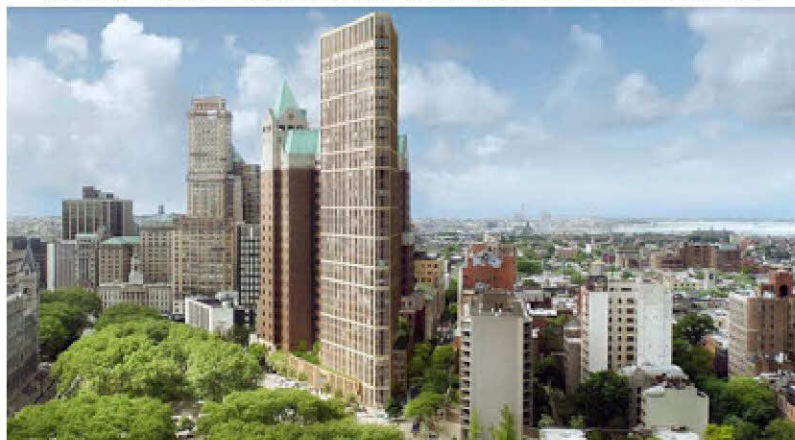
Facing these and other concerns the Land Use committee deadlocked, refuse to recommend the BPL's proposed sale and shrinkage.



"Poor Door": One location where a few "affordable" units would be built resulting in . . .



Another location where a few "affordable" units would be built



the "Library-Squasher"

The Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's Downtown, central destination library will be shrunk from 61,000 square feet to just 21,000 square feet (about the same size as the 26,000 square feet for the Sunset Park Library)

How much is Saint Ann's School being paid in this "private" transaction driving a PUBLIC loss?:

Will Saint Ann's get MORE \$\$ than library administration/city officials are saving, getting virtually nothing . . . perhaps LESS THAN ZERO?

Click to enlarge if you dare- The Library-squashing tower that would benefit Saint Ann's private school and a developer if built, but not the public.

Other things are also on the minds of CB2 members. Ultimately the entire CB2 board will be asked to vote on the sale

and shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights library the BPL officials are recommending.

At a meeting where the BPL [presented](#) the proposed sale and shrinkage to the CB2 Youth and Education Committee one member asked why so much of the proposed "replacement" library had to be *underground*. The answer?: *Money*. Unless the library is shrunk way down and as much as is currently proposed to be underground, is put underground, the nominal amount of money (if any?) the library is netting when it sells off this significant asset would be so little as to be laughingly imperceptible when presented as the supposed justification for the sale.

Also on the mind of one of that committee's members: Sometimes when you visit the library you find people who are observable as probably homeless and, for some people, that's depressing. From canvassing and talking with users outside the library (I am a co-founder of [Citizens Defending Libraries](#)) we know that there are also a fair number of users of the library, people impeccably dressed and groomed as they look for jobs, that you would never suspect to be homeless, but, in [Will Smith-"The Pursuit of Happyness"](#) fashion, they are. Yes, and there are also people with low incomes who's could be in danger of becoming homeless without support they get from the library. Frankly, a full range of people use the library, myself included.

As for the conundrum of how best to treat the perceptibly homeless: That's a management question. Swapping the existing library for a smaller one or one that has new surfaces and furniture has nothing to do with what decisions are made when that kind of management challenge is grappled with.

Another CB2 member suggested that our Citizens Defending Libraries opposition to the sale and shrinkage of the library should focus more on the value of the existing library to the public (it has a dollar value to the public of [well over \\$100 million](#)) and how little the BPL is proposing to sell the library for, perhaps netting less than zero. Conversely, this CB2 member suggested that it is *not* important or relevant that Saint Ann's, a private school, will be getting a huge payday if the library is sold. This is because, if the library is sold and shrunk Saint Ann's will be able to get paid for transferable real estate development rights, walking away with a free-and-clear amount that may exceed the cash the city is netting when it sells the library.

This CB2 member told us that we should not begrudge Saint Ann's its payday, because the school is entitled to benefit by selling what it owns and that we should not be concerned if Saint Ann's is working hard behind the scenes to lobby local politicians for the sale and shrinkage of the library. 'You can lobby elected officials against the sale,' this CB2 member told us. We can do it behind the scenes if we want and we can wine and dine elected officials in the process he said. There is truth to some of this analysis, but mostly we disagree. Among other things, we probably don't have the same kind of access, nor can we reach deeply into our purse believing that any war chest expenditures will be more than replenished by a coming payday.

The fact that we know this CB2 member to be a significantly close confidante and advisor to one of our more important elected officials makes us wonder whether this is advice that has been given to that elected official and whether it is reflective of the kind of lobbying that Saint Ann's is doing behind the scenes condoned at least by some.

Certainly, if nothing else, the [influence](#) that Saint Ann's has had with respect to Brooklyn Heights Association relating to this proposed transaction is improper. And the Brooklyn Heights Association has, indeed, taken a [very odd position](#) supporting the transaction that would benefit Saint Ann's. That matters a lot.

One example of how it matters?: The Daily News printing its [editorial](#) defending this real estate transaction prominently advised its readers of the BHA's support. In the editorial it seemed as if the Daily News was working hard to ridicule those opposing the sale and shrinkage of libraries and wanted to suggest that those doing so don't have that right.

So these are just some of the things the CB2 members are considering as matters of concern when debating this transaction. There are a good many more for them to think about as well. The BPL is not being transparent about what it is doing. That includes not releasing documents like its "*Strategic Real Estate Plan*" (dating back to 2007) and "*The Revson Study*," both of which would help the public to know which libraries the BPL will target as real estate deals next.

The BPL also worked with the developer to cynically release hundreds of pages of withheld environmental documents (along with all sorts of other documents) in an information dump two days before the hearing on the 17th and those documents have some startling revelations.

Posted by [Noticing New York](#) at 8:35 PM [No comments](#):

Labels: [Brooklyn CB2](#), [Brooklyn Heights Association](#), [Brooklyn Public Library](#), [Citizens Defending Libraries](#), [libraries](#)

How Self-Contradictory Can The Brooklyn Heights Association Be As It Advocates Sale And Shrinkage of The Brooklyn Heights Central Destination Downtown Library?



Three strikes and you're out?

The Brooklyn Heights Association has now taken three solidly self-contradicting positions as it digs in to argue for what's an obviously absurd stance for it to be taking in the first place: its promotion of the sale and shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's central destination library in Downtown Brooklyn on Cadman Plaza West at the corner of [Tillary and Clinton](#).

- First, the BHA now arguing for the *shrinkage* of a library that it previously advocated be *enlarged* and which was, in fact, thereupon enlarged and considerably upgraded at appreciable public expense and inconvenience, reopening in the fall of 1993.

... Calling for the *shrinkage* of a library the BHA had previously called for the *enlargement* of? .

... That's inconsistency Number 1.

- Then, how is it that when [Citizens Defending Libraries](#) (of which I am a co-founder) asked the Brooklyn Heights Association to call for proper funding of New York City libraries so that the Brooklyn Heights, Mid-Manhattan, SIBL and Pacific Branch libraries would not be sold, the BHA refused to call for proper funding, saying such funding was *NOT* a neighborhood concern? . . . BUT NOW--- The Brooklyn Heights Association is calling for the Brooklyn Heights Library to be sold because (supposedly) the sale and shrinkage would mean that libraries in *other* neighborhoods would get better funding? . . . Actually, that is such a treacherously false belief about funding as to be patently silly, because there is no guarantee that money would actually go to libraries, this library is being sold off at a huge public loss in a transaction that may net less than zero cash, and selling off libraries to developers as a self-cannibalizing funding program may simply foster *more* underfunding.

Switching from saying that proper funding of NYC libraries is not a BHA or neighborhood concern to saying that it is an important enough BHA and neighborhood concern so that it's a reason to sell off the Brooklyn Heights Library is inconsistency Number 2.

- Now you [can read](#) on the BHA's website that the BHA is opposing new buildings in Brooklyn Bridge Park because:

Public school overcrowding will be exacerbated by the additional development. PS 8 is already operating at more than 140% capacity and turning away local kindergarteners for this Fall.

Right! . . . But tearing down and shrinking a library supporting educational pursuits and consequently the school system isn't a similar problem, or an even greater exacerbation of it?

That's inconsistency Number 3! . . .

. . . Three strikes and you are out?

Why then might we theorize the Brooklyn Heights Association wants to be so terrifically, *consistently inconsistent* when it comes to wanting to see the library sold?



the "Library-Squasher"

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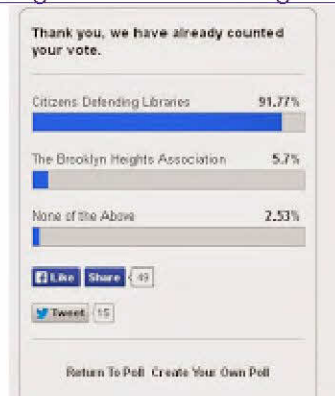
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Click to enlarge if you dare- The Library-squashing tower that would benefit Saint Ann's private school and a developer if built, but not the public.

Here is Noticing New York coverage where you can read about two things to which we must unfortunately give connected consideration:

- How at the June 17th Brooklyn Community Board 2 Land Use Committee hearing about selling and shrinking the library the developer refused to say what Saint Ann's school is being paid as a result of the library's sale and shrinkage because, "*it's a private transaction*". . . He said that even though this *private* transaction is driving a *public* one!
- How Saint Ann's-connected people are deciding for the Brooklyn Heights Association that the BHA should promote the sale and shrinkage of the library.

Friday, June 26, 2015, [Embarrassment of Past Riches!: Augmentation of NYC Book Space At Two Business Libraries Simultaneously- Only Recently The Brooklyn Heights Association Fought For Larger, Not Smaller Libraries.](#)



Brooklyn Hts Blog: Who do you support?

Who then do we want to trust on this? Do we want to trust the *consistently inconsistent* Brooklyn Heights Association? Or as the Brooklyn Heights Blog asked after the 2014 Brooklyn Heights Association annual meeting: Who do you support, the BHA or Citizens Defending Libraries?

I think it's pretty clear: If the Brooklyn Heights Association wants to truly represent the community and the public interest, as is its responsibility to do, it's time for the Brooklyn Heights Association to contradict itself just one *final* time, changing its position to oppose the sale and shrinkage of the library, and the BHA should do so now while doing so can still have a

beneficial effect on the process. . .

It would be the *most consistent* thing it could do and the thing *most consistent* with the public's interest.

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Cc: cema62 <cema62@aol.com>

Subject: Re: Articles submitted as testimony for library hearing.

Date: Mon, Aug 31, 2015 12:41 am

This is the ninth of a number of articles I am submitting as testimony in connection with the library hearing that are relevant and informative with respect to the proposal in obvious ways:

<http://noticingnewyork.blogspot.com/2015/07/how-self-contradictory-can-brooklyn.html>

Sunday, July 5, 2015

How Self-Contradictory Can The Brooklyn Heights Association Be As It Advocates Sale And Shrinkage of The Brooklyn Heights Central Destination Downtown Library?



Three strikes and you're out?

The Brooklyn Heights Association has now taken three solidly self-contradicting positions as it digs in to argue for what's an obviously absurd stance for it to be taking in the first place: its promotion of the sale and shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's central destination library in Downtown Brooklyn on Cadman Plaza West at the corner of [Tillary and Clinton](#).

- First, the BHA now arguing for the *shrinkage* of a library that it previously advocated be *enlarged* and which was, in fact, thereupon enlarged and considerably upgraded at appreciable public expense and inconvenience, reopening in the fall of 1993.

... Calling for the *shrinkage* of a library the BHA had previously called for the *enlargement* of? .

... That's inconsistency Number 1.

- Then, how is it that when [Citizens Defending Libraries](#) (of which I am a co-founder) asked the Brooklyn Heights Association to call for proper funding of New York City libraries so that the Brooklyn Heights, Mid-Manhattan, SIBL and Pacific Branch libraries would not be sold, the BHA refused to call for proper funding, saying such funding was *NOT* a neighborhood concern? . . . BUT NOW--- The Brooklyn Heights Association is calling for the Brooklyn Heights Library to be sold because (supposedly) the sale and shrinkage would mean that libraries in *other* neighborhoods would get better funding? . . . Actually, that is such a treacherously false belief about funding as to be patently silly, because there is no guarantee that money would actually go to libraries, this library is being sold off at a huge public loss in a transaction that

may net less than zero cash, and selling off libraries to developers as a self-cannibalizing funding program may simply foster *more* underfunding.

Switching from saying that proper funding of NYC libraries is not a BHA or neighborhood concern to saying that it is an important enough BHA and neighborhood concern so that it's a reason to sell off the Brooklyn Heights Library is *inconsistency Number 2*.

- *Now* you [can read](#) on the BHA's website that the BHA is opposing new buildings in Brooklyn Bridge Park because:

Public school overcrowding will be exacerbated by the additional development. PS 8 is already operating at more than 140% capacity and turning away local kindergarteners for this Fall.

Right! . . . But tearing down and shrinking a library supporting educational pursuits and consequently the school system isn't a similar problem, or an even greater exacerbation of it?

That's inconsistency Number 3! . . .

. . . Three strikes and you are out?

Why then might we theorize the Brooklyn Heights Association wants to be so terrifically, *consistently inconsistent* when it comes to wanting to see the library sold?



the "Library-Squasher"

The Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's Downtown, central destination library will be shrunk from 61,000 square feet to just 21,000 square feet (about the same size as the 20,000 square feet for the Sunset Park Library)

How much is Saint Ann's School being paid in this "private" transaction driving a PUBLIC loss?:

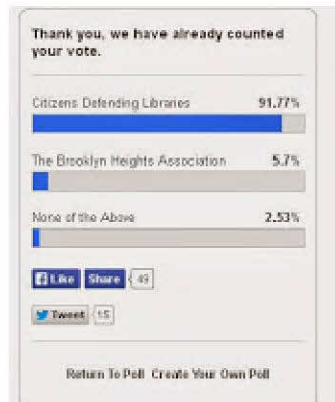
Will Saint Ann's get MORE \$S than library administrators/city officials are seeing, getting virtually nothing . . . perhaps LESS THAN ZERO?

Click to enlarge if you dare- The Library-squashing tower that would benefit Saint Ann's private school and a developer if built, but not the public.

Here is Noticing New York coverage where you can read about two things to which we must unfortunately give connected consideration:

- How at the June 17th Brooklyn Community Board 2 Land Use Committee hearing about selling and shrinking the library the developer refused to say what Saint Ann's school is being paid as a result of the library's sale and shrinkage because, "*it's a private transaction*". . . He said that even though this *private* transaction is driving a *public* one!
- How Saint Ann's-connected people are deciding for the Brooklyn Heights Association that the BHA should promote the sale and shrinkage of the library.

Friday, June 26, 2015, [Embarrassment of Past Riches!: Augmentation of NYC Book Space At Two Business Libraries Simultaneously- Only Recently The Brooklyn Heights Association Fought For Larger, Not Smaller Libraries](#).



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Cc: cema62 <cema62@aol.com>

Subject: Re: Articles submitted as testimony for library hearing.

Date: Mon, Aug 31, 2015 12:43 am

This is the tenth of a number of articles I am submitting as testimony in connection with the library hearing that are relevant and informative with respect to the proposal in obvious ways:

<http://noticingnewyork.blogspot.com/2015/08/was-library-administration-officials.html>

Thursday, August 13, 2015

Was Library Administration Officials' Campaign For Restoration of Library Funding Done With Great Fanfare A Victory? No. Was It Even A Great Campaign? No.



Caption to this "We Did It" photo sent by the NYPL: "You asked them to Invest in Libraries-and they did! Pictured, from left to right: Libraries Sub-Committee Chair Costa Constantinides, Finance Committee Chair Julissa Ferreras, Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, and Majority Leader Jimmy Van Bramer"- And what "did" they do?

There had been so much fanfare about it all and then, late Monday night, June 22, 2015, [the public got news](#) on the results of one of the most major campaigns for restoration of library funding that anyone can remember. The campaign NYC Library administration officials ran, aimed at the de Blasio administration, was for restoration of progressive annual cuts implemented by the Bloomberg administration going back to 2008. Was the campaign a success?: It was announced that libraries would receive an additional approximately \$40 million * "for all branches operating within the five boroughs" over what had been in the "the mayor's office original plan to significantly cut library funding in next year's budget." ... Was the campaign even a good one?

Sadly, the answer to both these questions is **NO!**

(* **Introductory background note on the figures:** Perhaps it's indicative of just how casually a few paltry million is thought of in the scheme of things, but the restoration of funds was variously reported and discussed as being in the amount of \$39 million, and alternatively, without explanation, in the amount of \$43 million. Initially, the New York Times [reported](#) the restoration amount to be \$39 million on June 22, 2015. Similarly, \$39 million is what was discussed as the figure from budget negotiators on [June 24, 2015](#)

on the Brian Lehrer show. A [City Council press release](#) announcing the restored funds on June 26, 2015 oscillates, stating the restored figure to keep branches open as \$39 million in one place, and \$43 million in another. Ultimately, library PR started consistently using the \$43 million, which my discussions with the NYC Independent Budget Office indicate is probably the correct number. A recent New York Times [article by Ginia Bellafante](#) that sought to convey with emphasis that libraries that might be sold off have gotten a lot of money recently stated the figure to be *\$46 million*, but that was probably a typo or a miscommunication between Ms. Bellafante and the library administration spokesperson she was communicating with. . . . However, dirty little secret, the actual increase to funding this 2016 funding year over the prior funding year is just \$35 million, the statement of the greater \$43 million figure is because de Blasio was actually proposing to cut funding from the previous year's level.)

It Hasn't Been Reported, But A Confused Public Needs To Know. . .

These questions were asked of me by a reporter in connection with an article that *might* have been written. Time has passed and that article has yet to be written so I think it's time to write it myself. Full disclosure: The reporter contacted me because I am a co-founder of [Citizens Defending Libraries](#), an organization that has been fighting for adequate funding for New York City Libraries, one reason being that [we don't want](#) underfunding of our city's heavily used libraries to be used as an excuse to [sell them off](#).

Based on what has been written and appeared in the news media to date, the public would be pretty confused about what happened, including being confused by the fact the campaign was declared a *victory* and the PR pushed out by library administration officials PR that has led to goofy, misleading statements like [this one](#) in the Times: "*The city's 2016 budget includes the largest increase in operating and capital funding for libraries in the city's history.*"

In reality, failing to get a restoration of the Bloomberg cuts they identified, library administration officials got *\$22 million* less funding for libraries from Mayor de Blasio on the operating side than they asked for and they should have been asking for even more money overall. The Bloomberg administration's intentional deferral of capital expenditures for the libraries has not been adequately addressed so that needed repairs for libraries will not be made and this lack of funding will be cited as a reason to sell off significant library assets at bargain basement prices.

Is it truly fair to say library administration officials ran an ineffective campaign for the restoration of library funding? How could it be that when, with the campaign that they ran, every major New York City daily editorialized that proper funding to the city's libraries should be restored: [The New York Times](#), the [New York Post](#), the [Daily News](#), [The Observer](#), [AM New York](#) (as a key tool to narrow the city's income gap), and the [Staten Island Advance](#)? Good points were made by all getting important messages out. For instance, the Times editorial cited its columnist Jim Dwyer who had [pointed out](#) that in the last 8 years at least *\$620 million* has been spent on *just three* sports arenas, (the Ratner/Prokhorov "Barclays" arena included) and that this amount was *1.37 times* the amount spent on libraries serving *seven times* as many users.

Said the New York Times editorial while citing that Dwyer piece:

Mr. de Blasio leads a city where the corporate and entertainment infrastructure are seldom neglected. Citi Field, Yankee Stadium and the Barclays Center, to name just three, are beneficiaries of hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayer funds . . . while schools and libraries languish.

The reason it is fair to say that the campaign was actually *not* the campaign that it needed to be is that the big picture of what went on is that the fight for more library funding was fundamentally flawed: It was hamstrung by starting out not asking for enough, asking essentially only for a compromise . . . Worse: The campaign did not clearly state what was at stake. Doing so would have been important to rally the public. . . . When your starting position is to ask for what is only a weak compromise what you are likely to get, and what we got, was a compromise on that requested compromise.

Libraries have always had to fight for funding, but we used to fight for funding to [enlarge](#) our libraries as we were doing through to the end of the Giuliani administration and before him under Dinkins. Now the money we need is so that there isn't an excuse to sell off in our libraries in a weird program of self-cannibalizing funding that sacrifices and drastically reduces our overall assets, selling libraries like [Donnell](#), the 34th Street [Science, Industry and Business Library](#) (SIBL) and [Brooklyn Heights](#) for a fraction of their value.

Libraries are one of the top priorities of the public. They cost the merest fraction of the budget to fund. Usage is way up. They supplement what we spend on schools and more than pay for themselves economically although their real

value in terms of democracy, society and culture is fuller than that.

The public absolutely does not want libraries underfunded and the public certainly does not want to face the doomsday scenario that libraries are so underfunded that the public will be told that unrepaired libraries need to be sold off and shrunk. The funding campaign waged by the library administration officials did *not* ask for the amount of money we need so there will be no excuse to sell off libraries like SIBL or the Brooklyn Heights central destination library in Downtown Brooklyn. The library administration officials' campaign did not tell the public that without proper funding we would be selling our libraries. Any real threat like this should've been trumpeted! It wasn't and most of the public still aren't aware libraries are threatened by such sales.

Why did library administration officials hold back and not make the case for funding sufficient so that libraries won't be sold?: These very same library administration officials are pushing these real estate deals, which are, in fact, juicy handouts to developers. This amounts to a perverse incentive to underfund libraries. .

. . . The current level of underfunding began after Bloomberg secured his third term and as plans to sell and shrink libraries, *citing underfunding as an excuse*, were launched.

Listen To Young Adult Fiction Writer Judy Blume

The following was from an April 25, 2015 "Invest In Libraries" campaign email, "Are you there Mr. Mayor? It's Me, Judy Blume," sent out by the Libraries. . In this case, for purposes of the email, the words were put in the mouth of author Judy Blume asking New Yorkers to sign a letter to Mayor de Blasio asking for more funding (*emphasis supplied*):

Librarians are the protectors of intellectual freedom. They are the defenders of books and imagination and thought. They are on the front lines, working every day to improve literacy, to close the digital divide, and to spark creativity in everyone who walks through their doors.

*Despite this role, **NYC libraries have been cut \$65 million in annual operating funds since 2008. They are down hours and about 1,000 staff members.** If that funding was restored to the City's three library systems, the total budget for public libraries would be less than half of one percent of the total City budget. Seems like a no-brainer to me.*

Take a moment. Literally just about 30 seconds. Tell Mayor de Blasio and the City Council that our libraries are worth more.

*Additionally, library buildings themselves are not up to par. **The City's 217 branches need \$1.4 billion worth of maintenance and renovations over 10 years.** They leak. They are overcrowded. They don't have enough outlets. **Really? This is not acceptable.***

There's nothing to disagree with here. And it's eloquent. But where is the mention that without proper funding major libraries, significant capital assets will be sold?

Next, notice that the Blume email observes that since 2008 (when Bloomberg was launching library sales plans) library operating funding has been cut *\$65 million*. Wouldn't you imagine that anything less than a restoration of those [requested](#) \$65 million in funds would be a defeat? One would think so, but although the revised budget de Blasio agreed to restored significantly less everyone involved in the ineffective campaign was willing to proclaim victory as if the public wouldn't notice the still missing funds. And the public, being told that a victory had been achieved might, indeed neglect to remember the figures in the Judy Blume email.

Declarations of Victory- Really?

Here is a June 30, 2015 email (Subject: "Subject: Major Victory for NYC Libraries!") from the NYC Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito declaring a victory in the library funding campaign fight:

In case you missed the good news, this past week the New York City Council adopted a balanced, fiscally responsible budget for Fiscal Year 2016 that includes \$43 million in funding for our city's libraries.

With this funding, branches across all three library systems – the Brooklyn Public Library, the Queens

Library, and the New York Public Library (which serves Manhattan, the Bronx and Staten Island) – will be able to stay open six days a week!

We also successfully persuaded the Mayor to commit to a \$300 million 10-year capital plan to help maintain and revitalize these vital institutions.

Our thanks to you and everyone else who helped make these important victories possible!

Here is a similar June 24, 2015 email declaration of victory sent out by Brooklyn Public Library president Linda E. Johnson:

Dear Library Supporter,

This is a great week for Brooklyn Public Library.

On Monday, we learned that Mayor de Blasio and the New York City Council have reached an agreement to increase funding for public libraries in the City's budget.

Here from NYPL President Tony Marx's June 30, 2015 "Big win for NYC's libraries" (alternately to others it went to the same day "The big news, and a big thank you") with a huge "We Did It!" banner:

New Yorkers spoke out. And City leaders listened.

We're thrilled to report that the Mayor and the City Council announced their agreement on the budget. The City will increase libraries' operating budget by \$43 million. We'll also see a significant increase in the budget for taking care of our aging buildings.

This is the largest single increase of operating funds in our history and will allow for 6-day service across the city, plus more books, programs, and increased research library services.

** * * **

We are so grateful to Mayor de Blasio, City Council Speaker Mark-Viverito, Council Finance Chair Ferreras, Majority Leader and Cultural Affairs Chair Van Bramer, Sub-Committee on Libraries Chair Constantinides, incoming Libraries Chair Andy King, and all the members of the Council for this historic increase, which provides great momentum for the future.

** * * **

We at the Library have been honored to have been a part of this campaign, which showcased the best of New York.

"We Did It!" Did What?

The banner said "We Did It!" Whether that's true all depends on what your definition of "It" is.

If "It" means that New York City libraries will continue to be underfunded, then they did "It."

If "It" means that New York City library administration officials will proclaim that library funding is now at a level so low that libraries need to sold and shrunk as a result, then they did "It."

If "It" means that all of the above can be true and still let library administration officials, the New York City Council and the mayor proclaim this "the largest single increase of operating funds in our history," then they did "It."

This is the "It" that these officials apparently think means that they can tell the world they ran a great campaign even while libraries are underfunded and in jeopardy of sale, a sort of sweet spot where they probably expect much of the public will be lulled into thinking there is no longer anything to be on guard against, that its interests were vigilantly protected. . . This sweet spot was steered into almost as if by magic. Were smoke and mirrors involved?

What enables the proclamation that this is this "t he largest single increase of operating funds in our history"? Partly it's a *budget dance*. The actual increase to funding this 2016 funding year over the prior funding year is really just \$35 million. The statements describing the increase to be \$43 million instead is because Mayor de Blasio was actually proposing in his original executive budget this year to *cut* funding from the previous year's level.

Last year, the first year for which Mr. de Blasio was in office to propose a budget for libraries, City Council members in the their budget hearings gleefully announced that with Democrat de Blasio in office the "*budget dance*" was over. The "*budget dance*" engaged in [routinely and cynically](#) by Bloomberg involved gaming ploys to distract attention and energy by proposing cuts to the public's beloved libraries that the Bloomberg administration never, ever intended to fully implement and then letting the city council fight and take credit for reducing them. The good news that first de Blasio budget year was that the dance was theoretically over and that de Blasio somewhat increased library funding over the prior year's Bloomberg budget, even though he by no means made up for all the past Bloomberg cuts.*

(* That year de Blasio also [derailed the NYPL's central library plan](#), cutting off its funding, although, somewhat inconsistently, he did not simultaneously recapture for other uses plus city oversight and scrutiny the \$150 million in city money that had been associated with it.)

This year during budget hearings the City Council members were forced to acknowledge that the "*budget dance*" was back with City Council member Jimmy Van Bramer stating that what they were fighting for this year was not a "*restoration*" of funds but a "*restoration of a restoration*" of funds.

Library Administration Officials Commanded Significant Resources to Hit This "We Did It!" Sweet Spot

Library administration officials and those with them in the lead on this campaign were able to commandeer significant resources with many like Judy Blume, significant personages appropriately eager to fight for the libraries. One would hope that Ms. Blume and these others would consider that their contributions to the fight were well used.

For instance, on June 8, 2015, the NYPL ran an ad in the New York Times with a list of supporters which included really big names like Robert A. Caro, Malcolm Gladwell, and Tony Kushner. At the bottom of the page it said the "*Advertisement paid for by NYPL Board of Trustees Chair Evan R. Chesler and NYPL Executive Committee Chair Abby S. Milstein.*" Ms. Milstein is from the Milstein real estate family.

Others signing the advertisement statement that "*The world's capital of opportunity deserves better*" included: Vincent Alvarez, Kurt Andersen, Paul Auster, Rabbi Andy Bachman, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Judy Blume, Andy Borowitz, Phoebe Boyer, Rabbi Angela W. Buchdahl, David Byrne, Geoffrey Canada, Graydon Carter, Mario Cilento, Vin Cipolla, Edwidge Danticat, His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America, Junot Díaz, E. L. Doctorow, Jennifer Egan, Héctor Figueroa, Reverend Floyd H. Flake, Jonathan Franzen, Neil Gaiman, Henry Garrido, William Gibson, Elizabeth Gilbert, Adam Gopnik, Kim Gordon, Annette Gordon-Reed, Philip Gourevitch, Vartan Gregorian, George Gresham, Ethan Hawke, John Hockenberry, Jenny Holzer, Siri Hustvedt, Sherrilyn Ifill, Walter Isaacson, Jennifer Jones Austin, Maira Kalman, Imam Khalid Latif, Paul LeClerc, John Legend, Jonathan Lethem, David Levering Lewis, James McBride, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Toni Morrison, David Nasaw, Victor S. Navasky, Harry Nespole, James Patterson, Darryl Pinckney, Richard Price, Francine Prose, Ruth Reichl, Anthony D. Romero, Oliver Sacks, Stacy Schiff, Anna Deavere Smith, Colm Tóibín, Javier Valdés, Reverend Michael A. Walrond, Jr., Tom Wolfe, Jacqueline Woodson, Sheena Wright, Tim Wu.

Notably, this list includes individuals who, like Citizens Defending Libraries, were plaintiffs in lawsuits against the NYPL to halt the NYPL's Central Library Plan, an ill considered real estate boondoggle involving library space shrinkage and library sell-offs: David Levering Lewis and David Nasaw. Similarly, it includes now recently deceased E. L. Doctorow (a professor of mine at Sarah Lawrence) who supported the [Committee to Save the New York Public Library](#) (of which I am also a part and which has coordinated with Citizens Defending Libraries) [joining in criticism](#) of that Central Library Plan. Tim Wu, last on the list, was candidate for Lieutenant Governor of New York on the ticket with Zephyr Teachout who held [a rally](#) with Citizens Defending Libraries decrying the library sell-offs and sales on the steps of the 42nd Street Central Reference Library during their campaign.

The energy of all these individuals wound up supporting a campaign that steered into falling short of the mark, and consequently the prospect of turning libraries into real estate deals. What if some of these individuals could, alternatively, have put their energy into a campaign with higher standards and demanding a better deal for the public?

In the strange bedfellows department, some of the individuals in this long list, former NYPL president Paul LeClerc and Municipal Art Society president [Vin Cipolla](#) were involved with launching or supporting library sell-offs and shrinkage,

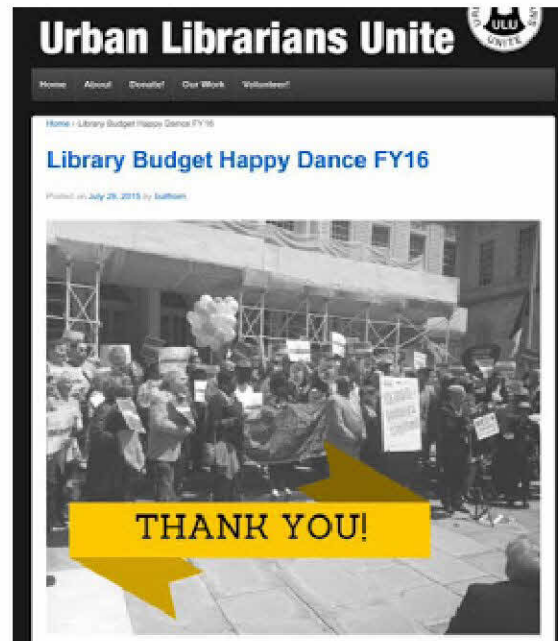
individuals who would not have wanted this grand campaign to steer a different course.

Celebratory Endorsement While Underfunding Persists

Still others were similarly broadcasting to the public that they were endorsingly enthusiastic about this sweet spot that had been hit.

Brad Lander, who has been working hard to turn libraries into real estate deals for a number of years now, emailed his constituents (6/26/2015):

"I am especially excited about . . . six-day service at all our public libraries: Thanks to an additional \$43 million, every public library across NYC will be open 6 days a week. This has long been one of my priorities – and it was made possible this year by an incredible "Invest in Libraries" campaign that involved many of you."



From Urban Librarians Units "Happy Dance" post about the level of funding for the libraries Urban Librarians Unite is a group that was formed [contemporaneously](#) with the launching of the library sales and which has managed to find itself on the [supporting side](#) of all the proposed variations of library sales that have materialized since then, posted, on July 29, 2015, its "[Library Budget Happy Dance FY16](#)":

It's starting to feel real now. In June, libraries in NYC received an additional 43 million dollars in operating funding, something we have been fighting for for 6 years. . . .

. . . It's completely awesome and a little bit overwhelming, but real. Definitely real.

We did it. YOU did it. Thank you to all the letter writers, elected official callers, 24 hour read in readers, postcard collectors, researchers, petition signers and city council testifiers. You were so loud that libraries couldn't be ignored.

Underfunding of Libraries Now Cited As Reason to Sell Them

Has the de Blasio administration restored New York City library funding to anything near sufficient levels? On Wednesday July 15, 2015, a community board in Brooklyn, Community Board 2, voted to sell off and shrink down to just one-third size a major destination library in burgeoning downtown Brooklyn, the Brooklyn Heights Library, for a very low price. That library had not long ago, in October 1993, under a previous administration, the Dinkins administration, been [greatly expanded and completely upgraded](#) at with city funding reflecting appreciable public expense and sacrifice. . .

. . . .The reason for the sale of this public asset worth probably [\\$120 million or more](#) to net the city selling it significantly less than \$40 million?: The community board said there was no other alternative to address the lack of city funding. One of the CB2 board members pushing for the sale and shrinkage of the library, William Flounoy, chairperson of the

Economic Development and Employment Committee, speaking of repairs (the air conditioning) that haven't been made at the library [said](#): *"There's no money in the system to maintain it."*

Meanwhile, another major library, the Science, Industry and Business Library, built at considerable expense (\$100 million) when it opened in 1996 (also with a [special focus](#) on business and career functions) is similarly on the sales block for the same reasons.

Must the answer be to now sell and shrink libraries? In a Brooklyn Magazine [article](#) about how in the aftermath of the proclaimed funding victory capital needs of the libraries still remain desperately unmet, Christian Zabriskie, Executive Director of Urban Librarians Unite, says selling the Brooklyn Heights Library (probably SIBL and others too) is the "*pragmatic*" thing to do because *"libraries don't really have any assets other than the buildings,"* as if the purpose of publicly paid for libraries is to pay financial tribute or spin off assets. Libraries are long-term capital assets that took years to build and acquire. Rather than rush, wouldn't it be better to wait and continue the fight for restoration of the small amount of funds needed? Remember Ms. Judy Blume's informing us above that, *"If that funding was restored to the City's three library systems, the total budget for public libraries would be less than half of one percent of the total City budget."* . . .

. . . that "*less than half of one percent*" is what the entire budget would be, not the still missing fractions needed to end de Blasio's carry-over of the the Bloomberg cuts .

In a recent [Ginia Bellafante](#) New York Times article promoting the sale and "*redevelopment*" of the Heights and other libraries, Zabriskie ridicules the idea that there could be such alternatives: *"We would obviously prefer it if buildings weren't sold off. But it's the real world. I'd rather ride a unicorn to work, but I can't."* This ridicule about the possibility of adequate funding comes from the man that Urban Librarians Unite, in its "*Happy Dance*" post about funding touts "*just never freaking stopped*" when it came to library advocacy?

The Underfunding Is Recent, Peculiar To the Bloomberg and de Blasio Administrations

The Brooklyn Magazine [article](#) quotes David Woloch, Executive Vice President of the BPL who says that in Brooklyn alone, capital needs are a "*problem that has been growing for a really long time, for decades*" making the current funding problems seem perhaps all the more insurmountable. But this is disingenuous. Going just one 'decade' back would take us to 2005, and Bloomberg's NYC and BPL deferrals of capital repair expenditures doesn't commence until [November of 2008](#), although the plans to sell and shrink libraries that occasioned them may well go back to 2005. . . . Going back two 'decades' gets us to 1995, the era when under Dinkins and Giuliani we were [enlarging and upgrading libraries](#), including the Brooklyn Heights Library.

Giuliani's expansions continued to the end of his administration [carrying over](#) into the first years of the Bloomberg administration that started January 1, 2002.

Mr. Woloch once worked at the city department of transportation for Iris Weinshall, senator Schumer's wife, who now as COO at the NYPL is selling off SIBL, completed as part of a major publicly paid for expansion in [1996](#).

Selling Libraries Is Amounts To Public Loss, Not Generation of Funds For the Public

Providing another disingenuous rationale for selling off the Brooklyn Heights library Mr. Woloch and Mr. Zabriskie have advanced the idea that (ignoring any associated public losses) , according to Zabriskie, the sale *"will generate revenue to repair other branches in lower income areas. The sale of this one library will benefit many."*

In point of fact, the money from any sale goes back to the city, *not* the library. Although the BPL is, in connection with the proposed Heights Library sale, moving four identified libraries to the head of its list for city capital repair funding of some of their needed repairs there is no guarantee that after whatever lobbying and beseeching is done money will come back to the libraries after this bird-in-the-hand asset is sacrificed and, in the end, there is no way to track things through to show this to have been the case. Further, some would say the BPL moving these four libraries to the head of the list is just a cynical political move to buy support from key local elected officials at the unfair expense of other libraries equally or in greater need of funding.

Lastly, although the sale will "*gross*" a \$52 million price for the city and the BPL it has many attendant expenses the city and BPL will have to pay for, including, but not limited to, \$16+ million to outfit the new much smaller replacement and a yet to be determined or revealed amount, probably again many millions, to cram shifted functions into the Grand Army

Plaza where no additional space will be created to accommodate them. The BPL has not opened up its books on this, but in the end, the sale could net close to or less than zero.

Zabriskie also invokes his own "[*library science*](#)" analysis to justify his conclusion its a good idea to sell and shrink the Heights library. I am not a librarian and I don't play one on TV, but [given](#) the greater expense of *digital* books and the fact that the public prefers *physical* books we would beg to take issue with Zabriskie's expression of his professional opinion on this matter.

Was the campaign for restoration of library funds a successful campaign? No. Neither that, nor a good one. As the most recent Citizens Defending Libraries petition to Mayor de Blasio ([Mayor de Blasio: Rescue Our Libraries from Developer Destruction](#)) states:

Selling irreplaceable public assets at a time of increased use and city wealth is unjust, shortsighted, and harmful to our prosperity. These plans that undermine democracy, decrease opportunity, and escalate economic and political inequality, should be rejected by those we have elected to pursue better, more equitable, policies.

The campaign has left us exactly there, in a place where we are selling those precious assets. Only those who think that this is a good thing or believe that this was legitimately the intent of the campaign should believe that it was a good and successful one.

MICHAEL D. D. WHITE

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From: Michael D. D. White <mddwhite@aol.com>

To: askeric <askeric@brooklynbp.nyc.gov>; ochernomorets <ochernomorets@brooklynbp.nyc.gov>

Cc: cernac62 <cernac62@aol.com>

Subject: Re: Articles submitted as testimony for library hearing.

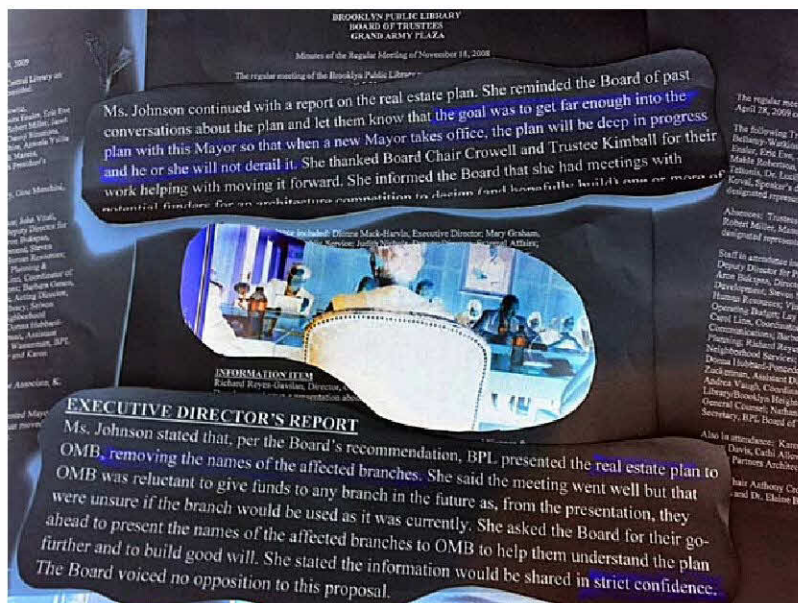
Date: Mon, Aug 31, 2015 12:48 am

This is the eleventh of a number of articles I am submitting as testimony in connection with the library hearing that are relevant and informative with respect to the proposal in obvious ways:

<http://noticingnewyork.blogspot.com/2014/08/a-multiplicity-of-scoops-astounding.html>

Sunday, August 31, 2014

A Multiplicity of Scoops: An Astounding List of Things You'd Discover By Reading The Brooklyn Public Library's Minutes- All About Its System-wide Plans To Sell And Shrink Libraries!



Here's a bulleted road map to the multiplicity of scary, documented scoops that you need to know are in Noticing New York's new article: August 31, 2014, **Mostly In Plain Sight (A Few Conscious Removals Notwithstanding) Minutes Of Brooklyn Public Library Tell Shocking Details Of Strategies To Sell Brooklyn's Public Libraries.**

Each one is potentially a major story in and of itself, but collectively. . . .

Noticing New York has sourced, from the Brooklyn Public Library's own board of trustee minutes, a history of how the BPL plans to sell and shrink Brooklyn's libraries, secretly turning them into real estate "*opportunities*" that would "*support economic development.*"

Here's what you can discover from the minutes of the Brooklyn Public Library that constitute *BREAKING NEWS*, because, before this, the public *just didn't know*.

- How **influential and strategically placed were a married couple, David Offensend and his wife Janet Offensend**, with the New York Public Library and Brooklyn Public Library respectively, so as connect and interrelate in terms of timing, approach and purpose, the sale and shrinkage of NYPL libraries in Manhattan with the sale and shrinkage of libraries in Brooklyn?
- **Profound Secrecy!** What were the BPL's instructions about *keeping secret* the names of libraries affected by its real estate plans? What did it instruct should be kept in "*strict confidence*" in this regard and what information was kept from the public and those funding libraries?

- **A problem for incoming Mayor Bill de Blasio?** What is known about plans to lock his administration into the BPL's secret library sell-offs? During his campaign to be elected, candidate de Blasio called for a halt to the sale and shrinkage of New York City libraries, including those the BPL was targeting in Brooklyn.
- **How small** has the BPL considered making libraries? To what *postage stamp-size* could libraries be shrunk and what did the BPL have in mind in this regard? . . . And what name did it give to what it considered to be the *model* it would promote?- In what (lucky?) neighborhood was the first such *model* library intended to appear?
- How many *critical mentions* (and in how many different ways) do **First Deputy Mayor Patti Harris and Deputy Mayor for Economic Development Daniel Doctoroff**, Bloomberg's principal henchmen when it comes to real estate and development deals, come up in this saga of targeting libraries as real estate "*opportunities*"?
- A real estate strategy plan was formulated that prioritized at the top of its list for sale *two libraries* both immediately adjacent to Forest City Ratner property- **What former Forest City Ratner Vice President did the BPL hire to formulate that strategy?** What is to be known about how and why the firm was chosen?
- **Air conditioning breakdowns?** In the summer of 2012 the air conditioning in the Brooklyn Heights Library *'broke down'* along with other air conditioning systems of libraries across the BPL system- This was just before library sales were to be announced. Who was hired to handle this *'emergency'* and on what terms, exactly how long before it happened?
- **Brazenness?** In 2012 Sam Roberts of the New York Times praised the library heads for their instinctive and open sharing of information as BPL president Linda Johnson was, in fact, withholding information about the library sales. How did Ms. Johnson react to Mr. Robert's praise?
- What's being proposed with respect to the issuance of **tax-exempt bonds for the libraries?** Why are powers being given to the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York in this regard and what did now **City Club President Michael Gruen** say in 1995 about the building of tall towers that could be relevant to the subject of libraries today?
- **Eminent Domain** is a powerful tool that enables private owner's property to be seized against a property owner's will. It's a tool that *private* developers love to have put in their hands by *public* officials- Find out about eminent domain being a part of the BPL's strategic real estate plan and what libraries that might affect.
- What is the mysterious "**Revson Plan**" that identifies libraries to be turned into development projects and *could possibly prevent your community's library from being renovated?* Why does this plan exist if there is a separate strategic real estate plan to identify projects for sale?
- What were the **first Brooklyn Libraries** to be viewed as real estate deals, and how far back in the last decade was that?
- For which library that the BPL included in its strategic real estate plan did City Councilman **Domenic Recchia** find funds?
- What consultant(s) did the BPL get to tell it in a *'needs'* study that the BPL **should be engaged in "support for economic development"**?
- **How many consultants does it take** to say that pursuing real estate deals *changing* libraries is a *bright idea?* . . . And how *after-the-fact* will their *justifications* be provided?
- What consultant got the better part of **\$1 million** for its work to *justify* selling off libraries?
- What consultant assessing the condition of real estate in the library got what instruction about continuing to work to make their report a **more convincing argument** for selling libraries?
- What telling relevance does **Mayor Bloomberg's promotion of sugary drinks** (that's right, *promotion*) have to do with this history respecting the sale of libraries?
- What are the BPL's likely troublesome goals with respect to entering into **private partnerships** and with what big, well-known developer did the BPL enter an odd-sounding partnership as one of its first?
- When Brooklyn libraries were in jeopardy from system-wide sale plans what did Borough President **Marty Markowitz** tell the public that would persuade them quite the opposite, and why should he have known better?
- What **unknown knock-down drag-out fight did the Queens Library have with Mayor Bloomberg** just as Bloomberg was leaving office about whether the powerful exiting mayor would be able to appoint, and leave behind him, a top aide on the Queens board?
- There has been a **massive story covered by the media at great length** concerning charges that the Queens Library is *'mismanaged.'* What could you read here that may convince you that when you thought you knew enough to understand this heavily-reported story, you actually didn't?

- What *is* and *isn't* in the minutes about how the BPL is **getting rid of books**?
- What *is* and *isn't* in the minutes about how the **Brooklyn Heights Library that the BPL has prioritized to be sold**?
 - How **little scrutiny** did the BPL board give to selling off of libraries and how *little objection* did its trustees raise?
 - Before the plans to sell Brooklyn libraries proceeded, what legislation was passed in Albany to restructure the BPL board, giving Mayor Bloomberg much greater **mayoral control** (like with NYC schools)?
 - What thought might have been given to the question of whether **ethics laws** and considerations would be violated by *BPL board trustees selling libraries to pursue real estate development objectives*?
 - How much do the New York State sunshine laws, like the Open Meetings Law, allow us to **discover about the way power works when real estate deals like the selling off of libraries are being worked on in secret**?
 - What does the sale of libraries have to do with the stories involving the sale of a number of other public assets up for dismantling: **Long Island College Hospital, Brooklyn Bridge Park, South Street Seaport, NYCHA's public housing, New York City schools, NYU's expansion through Greenwich Village**?

Yes, it's a multiplicity of multiplicity of scary, documented scoops that you need to know are in Noticing New York's new article, each an arresting story on its own and certainly deserving of even further investigation and follow-up. .

. . Collectively they interrelate to tell [a stark story](#) about how our public officials have strayed far and dismally from the standards the public is entitle to expect.

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From: Michael D. D. White <mddwhite@aol.com>

To: askeric <askeric@brooklynbp.nyc.gov>; ochernomorets <ochernomorets@brooklynbp.nyc.gov>

Cc: cernac62 <cernac62@aol.com>

Subject: Re: Testimony for today's hearing about proposed sale and shrinkage of Cadman Library

Date: Wed, Sep 2, 2015 12:01 am

I wanted to supplement my testimony of August 18, 2015 (below) as follows.

At the oral portion of the hearing the developer said that Saint Ann's School, the private school benefitting from this transaction will be paid less than \$6 million. I cautioned Borough President Adams to scrutinize this new, undocumented and somewhat vague representation carefully.

My submitted testimony cautioned about the possibility that Saint Ann's may get more free and clear cash from this transaction than the libraries would. That is still true.

One question is what is Saint Ann's really getting? That bears scrutiny. Remember that at one time Saint Ann's was, according to the developer's representation during one of the public proceedings, receiving a 20,000 square foot student theater (essentially the same size as the proposed shrunken library). Now Saint Ann's will theoretically take just cash. Consider also the tangle of interrelationships. *The developer's architect is doing Saint Ann's design work.*

The other reason Saint Ann's may get more from this transaction is that the library is getting so little. Assuming, arguendo, that Saint Ann's might get in cash and benefits less than \$6 million: Understand that, when all the math is done, the city and the library may still net even less than \$6 million.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Michael D. D. White <mddwhite@aol.com>

Sent: Tue, Aug 18, 2015 3:38 pm

Subject: Testimony for today's hearing about proposed sale and shrinkage of Cadman Library

Emailed to: askeric@brooklynbp.nyc.gov

August 18, 2015

Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams
Brooklyn Borough Hall
209 Joralemon Street
Brooklyn, New York 11201

Re: *Proposed sale and shrinkage of Brooklyn's central destination downtown library, the Brooklyn Heights Library on Cadman Plaza, corner of Clinton and Tillary*

Dear Borough President Adams:

One of the great glorious things about libraries is that people come to them wanting to know things. I think that is also why there is a long history that civilizations that dismantle their libraries fail.

I think that you as Borough President also want to know what you need to know, one of the reasons for holding this

hearing. Because of the extreme lack of transparency on the part of the Brooklyn Public Library in formulating and rolling out its real estate plans, there is much that you, and we as the public, don't know about this transaction that ought to be freely available information.

That includes much that is just plain embarrassing not to know yet. Correct me if I am wrong, but I don't think you know whether a private school, Saint Ann's will be taking home more free and clear cash from this transaction than the city and the BPL will net from selling and shrinking this valuable library. *Do you know the answer to that question?*

Similarly, the idea that BPL was secretly planning to sell this library going as far back as 2007 or further, but didn't publicly reveal it until 2013 is appalling. Similarly, the fact that the BPL continues secretly, refusing to respond to Freedom of Information requests to furnish its "*strategic real estate plan*," the "*Revson Study*" and other documents that could reveal which libraries are next on the list.

Do we really know what the cost of repairing the mysteriously broken air conditioning in this library is? Not one of the Community Board 2 Members who voted (either way) on the proposed sale and shrinkage of this library for a pittance ventured that they knew the answer to this question even though that is a primary reason the BPL cites to sell the building. We have made FOIL requests that would shed a lot of light on this question, but the BPL has improperly stonewalled. . . But who after all would be so silly as to sell their home because their air conditioning was on the fritz?

Some other things we don't know:

- The true and complete costs to the public of selling and shrinking this library as proposed. This recently enlarged and fully upgraded library, a sturdy building in good shape, would cost at least \$60 Million to build from scratch and the land and right to expand the public uses on the site is assuredly worth at least another \$60 million, over \$120 million all together, but the BPL may net virtually nothing or even wind up in a financial hole selling it.
- Information about the historic nature of the building, including BPL communications with Landmarks.
- How much the BPL is spending on high-priced lobbyists and PR firms to push for the sale of libraries.
- Information about book counts: what they have been, what they are now and what they are intended to be in the future. For instance, the BPL and the architect representing it and the developer in this regard have not been able to state what the book shelf capacity of the entire Brooklyn Heights Library is or what it will be reduced to in the future.

I know that as Borough President you have been thinking about what your constituency wants. In that regard you have been wondering about whether the Brooklyn public would prefer more expensive digital books in place of physical ones for which circulation has gone up. I think you'll find the answer is that the preference is the reverse, it's strongly for physical books, and I offer you (attached) the resource of a Citizens Defending Libraries web page with a lot of links to study up on that subject. It is also surprisingly expensive and less beneficial to keep books off-site from the libraries.

There is a lot more to study on the subject of these proposed library sales and so I will also submit to you as an attachment hereto prior testimony from Citizens Defending Libraries given before the City Council.

Are our libraries underfunded right now? Yes, and that underfunding dates back to the plans to convert our libraries into real estate deals. Libraries cost relatively little to fund, but the lure of these deals has become a perverse incentive to underfund libraries as an excuse to sell them off. That said, it is the ultimate in short-sightedness to sell off irreplaceable long-term capital assets to deal with short-term funding deprivations.

Mr. Adams, we have written to you before, but it is worth saying again: Selling, shrinking libraries, putting their resources out of reach, leads to a vicious cycle of decreased democracy and opportunity, leading to greater political and wealth inequality.

Sincerely,

Michael D. D. White
Co-founder,
Citizens Defending Libraries

MICHAEL D. D. WHITE
Co-founder

[Citizens Defending Libraries](http://citizensdefendinglibraries.blogspot.com/)

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Attachment

Physical Books vs. Digital Books

[Back To [Main Page](#)] In addition to the main resource page, here are some extra useful links about physical vs. digital books. This page will be updated.

This page is just about physical, printed books vs. digital books. The links on this page were (and most still are) part of another Citizens Defending Libraries page about libraries in general ([Extra Useful Links About Libraries In General](#)), but it finally got to the point that, with more and more updates, the links on the subject of the benefits of physical books vs. digital books got to be so numerous it was time to put up a page just for the purposes of linking to articles on this subject alone.

Let us say at the outset, that Citizens Defending Libraries is *not* against digital books. It is just that we think that physical books (for many of the reasons you see in the articles linked to below) still need to be found in, and a primary focus of our libraries. . . . Instead, in New York City library and city administration officials have been denigrating the value of physical books as they have moved forward to remove them from the city's libraries . . . *Why? We think it is clear that the answer is because physical books take up real estate and developers are clamoring to have that real estate transferred to them notwithstanding that library usage is way up.*

Here are the links to those articles.

- **Scientific American: [The Reading Brain in the Digital Age: Why Paper Still Beats Screens \(Why the Brain Prefers Paper\)](#)**, by Ferris Jabr, November 2013.

IN BRIEF: Studies in the past two decades indicate that people often understand and remember text on paper better than on a screen. Screens may inhibit comprehension by preventing people from intuitively navigating and mentally mapping long texts.

* * *

Preliminary research suggests that even so-called digital natives are more likely to recall the gist of a story when they read it on paper because enhanced e-books and e-readers themselves are too distracting. Paper's greatest strength may be its simplicity.

* * *

. . . reading a then popular electric console book . . . prevented the three-year-olds from understanding even the gist of the stories, but all the children followed the stories in paper books just fine.



- **New York Times:** [Is E-Reading to Your Toddler Story Time, or Simply Screen Time?](#), by Douglas Quenqua, October 11, 2014.

... new studies suggest that reading to a child from an electronic device undercuts the dynamic that drives language development.

"There's a lot of interaction when you're reading a book with your child," Dr. High said. "You're turning pages, pointing at pictures, talking about the story. Those things are lost somewhat when you're using an e-book."

- **The Gothamist:** [Park Slope Parents Say Library Has Too Much Technology](#), by Lauren Evans, March 26, 2013.

Josh Skaller, father to a 12-year-old and a 3-year-old, told DNAinfo that while he appreciates the resources offered by the library's Park Slope branch, he worries that his children may not be able to locate books under the heaps and heaps of gleaming technology. (Which, for the record, no longer includes iPads, which were taken off the floor after one of the library's four was stolen promptly after the branch reopened in September.)

"It's not so easy to peruse the stacks because the tables with the computers are right there," Skaller said. "There's not a lot space away from those screens... For the 3-year-old, there's an immense opportunity to discover new things to read, and anything that's pulling her away from that gets in the way of the purpose of the trip to the library."

- **The Huffington Post:** [Sorry, Ebooks. These 9 Studies Show Why Print Is Better](#), by Maddie Crum, February 27, 2015.

... A slew of recent studies shows that print books are still popular, even among millennials. What's more: further research suggests that this trend may save demonstrably successful learning habits from certain death. Take comfort in these 9 studies that show that print books have a promising future:

Students are more likely to buy physical textbooks.

A study conducted by Student Monitor and featured in *The Washington Post* shows that 87 percent of textbook spending for the fall 2014 semester was on print books. Of course, this could be due to professors assigning less ebooks. Which is why it's fascinating that...

Students opt for physical copies of humanities books, even when digital versions are available for free. ...

- **The Washington Post:** [Why digital natives prefer reading in print. Yes, you read that right](#), by Michael S. Rosenwald, February 22, 2015.

Textbook makers, bookstore owners and college student surveys all say millennials still strongly prefer

print for pleasure and learning, a bias that surprises reading experts given the same group's proclivity to consume most other content digitally.

* * *

Earlier this month, Baron published "Words Onscreen: The Fate of Reading in a Digital World," a book (hardcover and electronic) that examines university students' preferences for print and explains the science of why dead-tree versions are often superior to digital. Readers tend to skim on screens, distraction is inevitable and comprehension suffers.

. . . Pew studies show the highest print readership rates are among those ages 18 to 29, and the same age group is still using public libraries in large numbers.

* * *

most important . . . is "building a physical map in my mind of where things are." Researchers say readers remember the location of information simply by page and text layout - that, say, the key piece of dialogue was on that page early in the book with that one long paragraph and a smudge on the corner. Researchers think this plays a key role in comprehension.

* * *

. . . there has been "pedagogical reboot" where faculty and textbook makers are increasingly pushing their students to digital to help defray costs "with little thought for educational consequences." . . .

"We need to think more carefully about students' mounting rejection of long-form reading," . . .

• **Wall Street Journal:** [The Reader on the Prowl- Even the smartphone-toting, text-messaging generation prefers to study using real books. It makes things easier to remember](#), by Steven Poole, February 19, 2015.

. . . it turns out that the smartphone-toting, instant-messaging young generation still prefers to study at university using printed material if it can. What is driving the adoption of electronic textbooks is not any preference of students or teachers but simply the fact that they are cheaper. . .

Students forced to study using e-texts complain about eyestrain, distractibility and poorer recall of material.

* * *

. . . Amazon's latest Kindle, the Voyage, has a high-resolution e-paper screen but still a tiny collection of ugly typefaces, while paragraphs are forcibly "justified" by a brute algorithm (so that the right-hand edge of a paragraph is straight). Compare this with a beautifully typeset physical book: I'd wager that the typographical difference is more impoverishing to the reading experience than the difference between screen and paper itself.

• **School Library Journal:** [Pew Study: Teens Still Love Print Media, 'Traditional' Library Services](#), by Karyn M. Peterson, June 25, 2013.

Tech-savvy American young adults are more likely than older adults to have read printed books in the past year, are more likely to appreciate reading in libraries, and are just as strong supporters of traditional library services as older adults, a new national report from the Pew Research Center shows. According to the survey of Americans ages 16–29, a majority of young adults believe it is "very important" for libraries to have librarians and books for borrowing, while relatively few think that libraries should automate most library services or move most services online.

* * *

"Younger Americans' reading habits and library use are still anchored by the printed page," says Kathryn

Zickuhr, research analyst at Pew's nonprofit Internet & American Life Project and a co-author of the report.

** * **

85 percent of 16–17 year-olds read at least one print book in the past year, making them significantly more likely to have read a book in this format than any other age group.

- **Toronto Star:** [Kids, teens still prefer books to digital readers](#), by Michael Oliveira, November 22, 2013.

Based on the results of online surveys conducted for Booknet Canada, a non-profit industry organization that tracks sales and trends, it appears parents and children aren't eager to give up on the time-honoured tradition of flipping through paper books in favour of clicking around in digital content.

** * **

. . . few indicated they actually prefer digital books or could see themselves eschewing paperbacks for good.

Only one per cent of the parents polled said their kids aged 13 and under were at the point of reading more ebooks than print books.

** * **

Only about one in four parents said they read ebooks with their kids. And only four per cent of parents said they preferred that their children read ebooks, while 63 per cent favoured old-fashioned books.

Among teenagers, 29 per cent said they preferred reading ebooks, 37 per cent chose print . . . The surveys suggest teens aren't rushing to embrace ebooks.

- **Economist:** [The future of the book](#), October 11, 2014.

Books are not just "tree flakes encased in dead cow", as a scholar once wryly put it. They are a technology in their own right, one developed and used for the refinement and advancement of thought. And this technology is a powerful, long-lived and adaptable one.

** * **

What is the future of the book? It is much brighter than people think.

Even the most gloomy predictors of the book's demise have softened their forecasts.

. . . The much ballyhooed decline of the physical book has been far from fatal. . . The growth rate of e-books has recently slowed in many markets, including America and Britain. Publishers now expect most of their sales to remain in print books for decades to come-some say for ever.

There are a number of reasons. One is that, as Russell Grandinetti, who oversees Amazon's Kindle business, puts it, the print book is "a really competitive technology": it is portable, hard to break, has high-resolution pages and a "long battery life". . . Sales of e-readers, the most popular of which is the Kindle, are in decline. "In a few years' time," a recent report by Enders Analysis, a research firm, predicts, "we will look back at e-readers and remember them as one of the shortest-lived of all consumer media devices."

Cynthia Pyle's erudite letter to the editor in amplifying response: [Letters to the editor- Scholars like books](#).

- **NPR:** [Pew Study: Many Technophiles Also Love Libraries](#), by Lynn Neary, March 13, 2014.

You might think that in a world of Google and Wikipedia, people who love technology wouldn't care much about the musty old local public library. But, according to , you'd be wrong.

* * *

In its latest study, Pew set out to determine what types of people use and value public libraries. It compared highly engaged, "library lovers" and "information omnivores" to those who have never used a library . .

Not surprisingly, library lovers . . tend to be better educated, have higher incomes and are more involved in social and cultural activities than people with little or no engagement with libraries.

. . the Pew study finds that the most highly engaged library users are also big technology users.

Report:

. . . . 90% of Americans ages 16 and older say that the closing of their local public library would have an impact on their community..

. Deeper connections with public libraries are often associated with key life moments such as having a child, seeking a job, being a student, and going through a situation in which research and data can help inform a decision. .

. . Members of these high engagement groups also tend to be active in other parts of their communities. They tend to know their neighbors, they are more likely to visit museums and attend sporting events, and they are more likely to socialize with families and friends.. .

. . those who have used a library in the past year, adults living in lower-income households are more likely to say various library services are very important to them and their families than those living in higher-income households..

. . Many of those who are less engaged with public libraries tend to have lower levels of technology use, fewer ties to their neighbors, lower feelings of personal efficacy, and less engagement with other cultural activities.

- **The Guardian:** [Why our future depends on libraries, reading and daydreaming](#), speech by Neil Gaiman, October 15, 2013.

I do not believe that all books will or should migrate onto screens: as Douglas Adams once pointed out to me, more than 20 years before the Kindle turned up, a physical book is like a shark. Sharks are old: there were sharks in the ocean before the dinosaurs. And the reason there are still sharks around is that sharks are better at being sharks than anything else is. Physical books are tough, hard to destroy, bath-resistant, solar-operated, feel good in your hand: they are good at being books, and there will always be a place for them.

- **Noticing New York:** [The Library of the Future Envisioned- "The 21st Century Library". . . And Beyond- Questions Floating In Science Fiction's Crystal Ball](#), by Michael D. D. White, January 26, 2015.
Monday,

In 1989 Isaac Asimov, speaking to the American Booksellers Association:

made a passionate defense of the survival of the book when he asked his audience to imagine a device that "can go anywhere, is totally portable. . . . Something that can be started and stopped at will [and] requires no electric energy to operate." This dream device is, of course, the book. "It will never be surpassed because it represents the minimum technology with the maximum interaction you can have."

- **Melville House:** [Citizens Defending Libraries calls the Central Library Plan "a real estate grab" and "contrary to the public interest"](#), by Claire Kelley, February 19, 2014.

Are you concerned that libraries are moving towards privatization and that there is a move to replace physical books with digital resources?

. . . Libraries are an essential public commons, and should continue as such.

The issue of ownership is a good segue into the second part of your question. There is much evolving right now with respect to digital rights that hasn't been resolved: Copyrights are being extended and made stricter; so-called "orphan works" are in serious jeopardy; content providers are consolidating into monopolies that raise prices while much of what is available digitally is made available through time-limited subscriptions that have a potential ephemerality that never applied to books on the shelves. Technology busily shifts too: The New York Times had a sentence in a tech section article recently, "If you own a Nook, the fate of your books may now be up in the air."

We favor, and we are not against, adding digital resources, but right now we think that the benefits of digitization, partly fad, and partly, to an extent, legitimate future, are being seized upon and exaggerated to excuse a rush to get rid of physical books because books take up real estate and the focus of too many people running the libraries is selling real estate. The public, all of its generations, like physical books. For the most part the public hasn't switched away from physical books. Scientific American just did an interesting review of the science literature indicating that the human brain may be hard-wired to learn and retain information better with physical books. Many books aren't available digitally. Making them available would be a massive undertaking at which it is easy to fail. Nicholson Baker's "Doublefold" and his tales of the unutterable destruction that occurred at San Francisco's library provide serious cautionary tales. It doesn't serve to banish books in a precipitous experiment undertaken by people with questionable motives who lack library credentials. Working for a hedge fund doesn't qualify you to curate mankind's store of knowledge.

NYPL President Tony Marx reads a physical copy of the New York Times, so do I, and that's the way I read many books. Physical media shouldn't be the exclusive preserve of a lucky privileged few.

- **The Washington Post:** [Where are the books? Libraries under fire as they shift from print to digital](#), By Michael S. Rosenwald, July 7, 2015.

"Some of the clashes have been heated. In New York, protesters outside the city's main branch have shouted: "Save the stacks! Save the stacks!"

** * * **

librarians are steering tight acquisition budgets to e-books, which are more expensive than print. . E-book spending has grown from 1 percent of library budgets to 7 percent, according to a Library Journal survey.

** * * **

library purists. . say the futurists are pushing budget-busting e-books when large swaths of society still want print, particularly as research emerges showing print provides a more immersive, less distracting reading experience.

They also cite sales data showing that e-reader and e-book sales have leveled off and argue that the next generation of library patrons still strongly prefers print."

- **N+1 (N Plus One Magazine):** [Lions in Winter, \(Parts One and Two\)](#), by Charles Petersen, March 7, 2012.

Until Congress acts, if it ever does, the best that Google will legally be able to provide when users request orphan books is "snippet view," the annoying feature that lets you search through a book and see a line or two whenever a particular word occurs, but nothing else . . . "Snippet view" is . . . of little use to researchers without access to the book itself. (*Even "Snippet View" is currently being challenged by the Authors Guild in court. . .)*

** * * **

But even if Congress were to act tomorrow. . . the availability of digitized books to the point where one could be confident of finding what one needed, in the way one can still be confident upon arriving at the New York Public Library, is still some years away. . . . probably closer to twenty.

* * * *

... While the administration at the New York Public Library likes to pretend the renovation will not affect researchers, when pressed they insist the main building must be "democratized." ...

More than anything, this rhetoric reveals the fundamentally anti-democratic worldview that has taken hold at the library. It is of a piece with what the new Masters of the Universe have accomplished in the public schools, where hedge funders have provided the lion's share of the backing for privatization, and in the so-called reforms to our financial system, where technocrats meet behind closed doors to decide what will be best for the rest of us...

- **Noticing New York:** [Internet Guru Clay Shirky Speaking At Brooklyn Heights Association Annual Meeting Says We Need Libraries Because Of Holes In The Internet](#), by Michael D. D. White, March 5, 2014.

... Tim Wu and Lewis Hyde, two names ... that Mr. Shirky would have to know, who both write about the impoverishment of the public sphere, Wu writing about how it occurs when media industries inevitably trend toward monopoly and Hyde talking about the disappearance of the public commons through increasingly privatized ownership of the ideas and information we consume. ...

- **Citizens Defending Libraries:** [Testimony By Citizens Defending Libraries At June 27, 2013 State Assembly Committee Hearing On Selling New York City Libraries](#), June 27, 2013, (see also similar testimony before the New York City Council [September 30, 2013](#) and [March 11, 2014](#)).

Dear Committee:

While many of us are well aware that these proposed library sell-offs represent real estate deals that privatize publicly-owned assets there is another associated concern about privatization that should not be overlooked. Library officials talking about getting rid of books are at the same time discussing digitizing and relying on digital content sometime in the future even if their plans are not yet ready for prime time).

But we must be wary that there are many who see the digitized future in terms of an increasingly privatized future where corporations pushing for various plans expect to make a lot of money by controlling digitized information, in many cases, by charging the public for what's already owned by the public in public collections that are being put out of reach.

Many consider that this was the principal motivation behind the sickening 1995 hollowing-out of the San Francisco Public Library collections, which was underwritten with big-ticket contributions from telecoms and Silicon Valley.

Digital activist Aaron Swartz warned about this disturbing trend:

The world's entire scientific ... heritage ... is increasingly being digitized and locked up by a handful of private corporations.... The Open Access Movement has fought valiantly to ensure that scientists do not sign their copyrights away but instead ensure their work is published on the Internet, under terms that allow anyone to access it.

In the future we may expect that after the libraries have contracted out to privatize content we will be charged exorbitantly high fees for what was once publicly owned. The further irony in all of this is that much of the transcription and other work to create digitally available content may have been crowd sourced so that the public will be charged for what it once freely owned and for the result of its own freely contributed work product and intensive labor creating privatized content.

Sincerely,

Citizens Defending Libraries

- **Library Journal:** [ALA vs NSA: Reflecting on Libraries and Social Media](#), by Woody Evans, June 14, 2013.

... Edward Snowden is drawing lots of attention at the moment. ... but here I'd like to consider something that happened way back in the last decade. Forget Snowden for a minute.

Remember with me a time when librarians were freshly militant and radical. Remember January 2002, when, just a few months after the attacks we suffered, the ALA proposed [this response](#) to the USA PATRIOT Act. [Includes "RESOLVED, That the American Library Association urges librarians everywhere to defend and support user privacy and free and open access to knowledge and information."] A year later, the proposed resolution would be adopted by the ALA Council, and library staff have been since emboldened to take such "radical" steps as to fail to keep patron book checkout records.

Edward Snowden remembered, like the militant librarians defending privacy and the 4th Amendment that came before him, that the government is for the people. But PRISM represents the kind of program that reminds us: government is not by the people any longer. ...

... we could start by finding something to praise in Edward Snowden's decision. ... he, like us librarians, took a stand for patron privacy-for citizen privacy. Snowden's action give us a moment to ask some overdue questions.

If a citizen's data really is hers, shouldn't she get to say who sees it? ...

No matter how "radical" a librarian you may or may not have become over the last 12 years, you know the answer by now.

A comment posted on the article:

A few weeks ago, I attempted to use my county library's online book reservation system to reserve the latest Percy Jackson book for my daughter, and was more than a little horrified to see this:

"The feature you have selected is associated with personal data in your patron account. Such data may be accessed by law enforcement personnel without your consent. Do you wish to continue?"

- **BuzzFeedNews:** [Publishers Know You Didn't Finish 'The Goldfinch' - Here's What That Means For The Future Of Books- The publishing industry's uneasy embrace of Netflix-style analytics](#), by Joseph Bernstein, January. 21, 2015.

How did [Book publisher] Kobo know this? Like every e-reader and reading-app maker today, the company, a subsidiary of the Japanese e-commerce titan Rakuten, has access to a comprehensive suite of data about the reading behavior of its users. In a white paper titled "Publishing in the Era of Big Data" and released this fall, the company announced that "with the onset of digital reading . it is now possible to know how a customer engages with the book itself - what books were left unopened, which were read to the very last word and how quickly." In other words, if you read books digitally, the people who serve you those books more than likely know just what kind of reader you are, and just how little effort you made with Infinite Jest.

* * *

Amazon and Apple - that know the most about how you read are ferociously silent about that knowledge. Both Apple and Amazon declined to comment for this piece.

- **The Guardian:** [Big e-reader is watching you](#), by Alison Flood, July 4, 2012.

... Would Orwell have been amused or disturbed by the development that Big Brother now knows exactly how long it takes readers to finish his novel, which parts they might have highlighted, and what they went on to pick up next?

Because your ebook, as a recent article in the Wall Street Journal put it, is now reading you right back.

* * * *

Back to Orwell. Nineteen Eighty-Four, says Amazon, is the 608th most-highlighted book it sells. "'Who controls the past, ' ran the Party slogan, 'controls the future: who controls the present controls the past'" has been marked by 349 Kindle users, while "If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face - for ever" has been highlighted by 195. What would George have said?

- **New York Times:** [Amazon Erases Orwell Books From Kindle](#), by Brad Stone, July 17, 2009.

In George Orwell's "1984," government censors erase all traces of news articles embarrassing to Big Brother by sending them down an incineration chute called the "memory hole."

On Friday, it was "1984" and another Orwell book, "Animal Farm," that were dropped down the memory hole - by Amazon.com.

In a move that angered customers and generated waves of online pique, Amazon remotely deleted some digital editions of the books from the Kindle devices of readers who had bought them.

* * * *

Of all the books to recall," said Charles Slater, an executive with a sheet-music retailer in Philadelphia . . . "I never imagined that Amazon actually had the right, the authority or even the ability to delete something that I had already purchased."

* * * *

Amazon appears to have deleted other purchased e-books from Kindles recently. Customers commenting on Web forums reported the disappearance of digital editions of the Harry Potter books and the novels of Ayn Rand . . .

- **New York Times:** [How to Survive the Next Wave of Technology Extinction](#), by Farhad Manjoo, February 12, 2014.

If you own a Nook, the fate of your books may now be up in the air. Sorry, you bet on the wrong horse.

The Nook's fate isn't unusual these days. Technologies have always gone belly up, but tech extinctions may become even more common over the next few years.

- **National Notice :** [Snowden Revelations Considered: Is Your Library, Once Intended To Be A Protected Haven of Privacy, Spying on You?](#), By Michael D. D. White, March 8, 2015 .

During the McCarthy era there was also concern about what books were available in the libraries, how readily available certain books were and concern about the political leanings of librarians working in the libraries.

* * *

. . . the surveillance state is interested in something else: The surveillance state wants to know what you think and for that reason the surveillance state believes that libraries should tell the government what you read.

Librarians in Connecticut were the first to successfully challenge the PATRIOT Act when the FBI, along with an accompanying perpetual gag order to keep its actions secret, demanded broadly that the Connecticut librarians turn over to the bureau library records concerning what their patrons were reading and their computer use.

* * *

Now consider this: Changes are being implemented at libraries, and the changes are particularly apparent in New York City, that would make the heroism of these librarians wanting to protect their

patrons' privacy virtually meaningless except for its symbolism.

Citizens Defending Libraries

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August 18, 2015

Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams
Brooklyn Borough Hall
209 Joralemon Street
Brooklyn, New York 11201

Re: Proposed sale and shrinkage of Brooklyn's central
destination downtown library, the Brooklyn Heights
Library on Cadman Plaza, corner of Clinton and Tillary

Dear Borough President Adams:

One of the great glorious things about libraries is that people come to them wanting to know things. I think that is also why there is a long history that civilizations that dismantle their libraries fail.

I think that you as Borough President also want to know what you need to know, one of the reasons for holding this hearing. Because of the extreme lack of transparency on the part of the Brooklyn Public Library in formulating and rolling out its real estate plans, there is much that you, and we as the public, don't know about this transaction that ought to be freely available information.

That includes much that is just plain embarrassing not to know yet. Correct me if I am wrong, but I don't think you know whether a private school, Saint Ann's will be taking home more free and clear cash from this transaction than the city and the BPL will net from selling and shrinking this valuable library. *Do you know the answer to that question?*

Similarly, the idea that BPL was secretly planning to sell this library going as far back as 2007 or further, but didn't publicly reveal it until 2013 is appalling. Similarly, the fact that the BPL continues secretly, refusing to respond to Freedom of Information requests to furnish its "*strategic real estate plan*," the "*Revson Study*" and other documents that could reveal which libraries are next on the list.

Do we really know what the cost of repairing the mysteriously broken air conditioning in this library is? Not one of the Community Board 2 Members who voted (either way) on the proposed sale and shrinkage of this library for a pittance ventured that they knew the answer to this question even though that is a primary reason the BPL cites to sell the building. We have made FOIL requests that would shed a lot of light on this question, but the BPL has improperly stonewalled.. . But who after all would be so silly as to sell their home because their air conditioning was on the fritz?

Some other things we don't know:

- The true and complete costs to the public of selling and shrinking this library as proposed. This recently enlarged and fully upgraded library, a sturdy building in good shape, would cost at least \$60 Million to build from scratch and the land and right to expand the public uses on the site is assuredly worth at least another \$60 million, over \$120 million all together, but the BPL may net virtually nothing or even wind up in a financial hole selling it.
- Information about the historic nature of the building, including BPL communications with Landmarks.

- How much the BPL is spending on high-priced lobbyists and PR firms to push for the sale of libraries.
- Information about book counts: what they have been, what they are now and what they are intended to be in the future. For instance, the BPL and the architect representing it and the developer in this regard have not been able to state what the book shelf capacity of the entire Brooklyn Heights Library is or what it will be reduced to in the future.

I know that as Borough President you have been thinking about what your constituency wants. In that regard you have been wondering about whether the Brooklyn public would prefer more expensive digital books in place of physical ones for which circulation has gone up. I think you'll find the answer is that the preference is the reverse, it's strongly for physical books, and I offer you (attached) the resource of a Citizens Defending Libraries web page with a lot of links to study up on that subject. It is also surprisingly expensive and less beneficial to keep books off-site from the libraries.

There is a lot more to study on the subject of these proposed library sales and so I will also submit to you as an attachment hereto prior testimony from Citizens Defending Libraries given before the City Council.

Are our libraries underfunded right now? Yes, and that underfunding dates back to the plans to convert our libraries into real estate deals. Libraries cost relatively little to fund, but the lure of these deals has become a perverse incentive to underfund libraries as an excuse to sell them off. That said, it is the ultimate in short-sightedness to sell off irreplaceable long-term capital assets to deal with short-term funding deprivations.

Mr. Adams, we have written to you before, but it is worth saying again: Selling, shrinking libraries, putting their resources out of reach, leads to a vicious cycle of decreased democracy and opportunity, leading to greater political and wealth inequality.

Sincerely,

Michael D. D. White
Co-founder,
Citizens Defending Libraries

From: Michael D. D. White <mddwhite@aol.com>
To: mddwhite <mddwhite@aol.com>
Subject: Physical Books vs. Digital Books
Date: Tue, Aug 18, 2015 3:14 pm

Physical Books vs. Digital Books

[Back To [Main Page](#)] In addition to the main resource page, here are some extra useful links about physical vs. digital books. This page will be updated.

This page is just about physical, printed books vs. digital books. The links on this page were (and most still are) part of another Citizens Defending Libraries page about libraries in general ([Extra Useful Links About Libraries In General](#)), but it finally got to the point that, with more and more updates, the links on the subject of the benefits of physical books vs. digital books got to be so numerous it was time to put up a page just for the purposes of linking to articles on this subject alone.

Let us say at the outset, that Citizens Defending Libraries is *not* against digital books. It is just that we think that physical books (for many of the reasons you see in the articles linked to below) still need to be found in, and a primary focus of our libraries. . . . Instead, in New York City library and city administration officials have been denigrating the value of physical books as they have moved forward to remove them from the city's libraries . . . *Why? We think it is clear that the answer is because physical books take up real estate and developers are clamoring to have that real estate transferred to them notwithstanding that library usage is way up.*

Here are the links to those articles.

- ***Scientific American:*** [The Reading Brain in the Digital Age: Why Paper Still Beats Screens \(Why the Brain Prefers Paper\)](#), by Ferris Jabr, November 2013.

IN BRIEF: Studies in the past two decades indicate that people often understand and remember text on paper better than on a screen. Screens may inhibit comprehension by preventing people from intuitively navigating and mentally mapping long texts.

* * *

Preliminary research suggests that even so-called digital natives are more likely to recall the gist of a story when they read it on paper because enhanced e-books and e-readers themselves are too distracting. Paper's greatest strength may be its simplicity.

* * *

. . . reading a then popular electric console book . . . prevented the three-year-olds from understanding even the gist of the stories, but all the children followed the stories in paper books just fine.



- **New York Times:** [Is E-Reading to Your Toddler Story Time, or Simply Screen Time?](#), by Douglas Quenqua, October 11, 2014.

... new studies suggest that reading to a child from an electronic device undercuts the dynamic that drives language development.

"There's a lot of interaction when you're reading a book with your child," Dr. High said. "You're turning pages, pointing at pictures, talking about the story. Those things are lost somewhat when you're using an e-book."

- **The Gothamist:** [Park Slope Parents Say Library Has Too Much Technology](#), by Lauren Evans, March 26, 2013.

Josh Skaller, father to a 12-year-old and a 3-year-old, told DNAinfo that while he appreciates the resources offered by the library's Park Slope branch, he worries that his children may not be able to locate books under the heaps and heaps of gleaming technology. (Which, for the record, no longer includes iPads, which were taken off the floor after one of the library's four was stolen promptly after the branch reopened in September.)

"It's not so easy to peruse the stacks because the tables with the computers are right there," Skaller said. "There's not a lot space away from those screens... For the 3-year-old, there's an immense opportunity to discover new things to read, and anything that's pulling her away from that gets in the way of the purpose of the trip to the library."

- **The Huffington Post:** [Sorry, Ebooks. These 9 Studies Show Why Print Is Better](#), by Maddie Crum, February 27, 2015.

... A slew of recent studies shows that print books are still popular, even among millennials. What's more: further research suggests that this trend may save demonstrably successful learning habits from certain death. Take comfort in these 9 studies that show that print books have a promising future:

* * *

Students are more likely to buy physical textbooks.

A study conducted by Student Monitor and featured in *The Washington Post* shows that 87 percent of textbook spending for the fall 2014 semester was on print books. Of course, this could be due to professors assigning less ebooks. Which is why it's fascinating that...

Students opt for physical copies of humanities books, even when digital versions are available for free. . . .

- **The Washington Post:** [Why digital natives prefer reading in print. Yes, you read that right](#), by Michael S. Rosenwald, February 22, 2015.

Textbook makers, bookstore owners and college student surveys all say millennials still strongly prefer print for pleasure and learning, a bias that surprises reading experts given the same group's proclivity to consume most other content digitally.

* * *

Earlier this month, Baron published "Words Onscreen: The Fate of Reading in a Digital World," a book (hardcover and electronic) that examines university students' preferences for print and explains the science of why dead-tree versions are often superior to digital. Readers tend to skim on screens, distraction is inevitable and comprehension suffers.

. . . Pew studies show the highest print readership rates are among those ages 18 to 29, and the same age group is still using public libraries in large numbers.

* * *

most important . . . is "building a physical map in my mind of where things are." Researchers say readers remember the location of information simply by page and text layout - that, say, the key piece of dialogue was on that page early in the book with that one long paragraph and a smudge on the corner. Researchers think this plays a key role in comprehension.

* * *

. . . there has been "pedagogical reboot" where faculty and textbook makers are increasingly pushing their students to digital to help defray costs "with little thought for educational consequences." . . .

"We need to think more carefully about students' mounting rejection of long-form reading," . . .

- **Wall Street Journal:** [The Reader on the Prowl- Even the smartphone-toting, text-messaging generation prefers to study using real books. It makes things easier to remember](#), by Steven Poole, February 19, 2015.

. . . it turns out that the smartphone-toting, instant-messaging young generation still prefers to study at university using printed material if it can. What is driving the adoption of electronic textbooks is not any preference of students or teachers but simply the fact that they are cheaper. . .

Students forced to study using e-texts complain about eyestrain, distractibility and poorer recall of material.

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. . . Amazon's latest Kindle, the Voyage, has a high-resolution e-paper screen but still a tiny collection of ugly typefaces, while paragraphs are forcibly "justified" by a brute algorithm (so that the right-hand edge of a paragraph is straight). Compare this with a beautifully typeset physical book: I'd wager that the typographical difference is more impoverishing to the reading experience than the difference between screen and paper itself.

- **School Library Journal:** [Pew Study: Teens Still Love Print Media, 'Traditional' Library Services](#), by Karyn M. Peterson, June 25, 2013.

Tech-savvy American young adults are more likely than older adults to have read printed books in the past year, are more likely to appreciate reading in libraries, and are just as strong supporters of traditional library services as older adults, a new national report from the Pew Research Center shows. According to the survey of Americans ages 16-29, a majority of young adults believe it is "very important" for libraries to have librarians and books for borrowing, while relatively few think that

libraries should automate most library services or move most services online.

* * *

"Younger Americans' reading habits and library use are still anchored by the printed page," says Kathryn Zickuhr, research analyst at Pew's nonprofit Internet & American Life Project and a co-author of the report.

* * *

85 percent of 16–17 year-olds read at least one print book in the past year, making them significantly more likely to have read a book in this format than any other age group.

- **Toronto Star:** [Kids, teens still prefer books to digital readers](#), by Michael Oliveira, November 22, 2013.

Based on the results of online surveys conducted for Booknet Canada, a non-profit industry organization that tracks sales and trends, it appears parents and children aren't eager to give up on the time-honoured tradition of flipping through paper books in favour of clicking around in digital content.

* * *

. . . few indicated they actually prefer digital books or could see themselves eschewing paperbacks for good.

Only one per cent of the parents polled said their kids aged 13 and under were at the point of reading more ebooks than print books.

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Only about one in four parents said they read ebooks with their kids. And only four per cent of parents said they preferred that their children read ebooks, while 63 per cent favoured old-fashioned books.

Among teenagers, 29 per cent said they preferred reading ebooks, 37 per cent chose print . . . The surveys suggest teens aren't rushing to embrace ebooks.

- **Economist:** [The future of the book](#), October 11, 2014.

Books are not just "tree flakes encased in dead cow", as a scholar once wryly put it. They are a technology in their own right, one developed and used for the refinement and advancement of thought. And this technology is a powerful, long-lived and adaptable one.

* * *

What is the future of the book? It is much brighter than people think.

Even the most gloomy predictors of the book's demise have softened their forecasts.

. . . The much ballyhooed decline of the physical book has been far from fatal. . . The growth rate of e-books has recently slowed in many markets, including America and Britain. Publishers now expect most of their sales to remain in print books for decades to come-some say for ever.

There are a number of reasons. One is that, as Russell Grandinetti, who oversees Amazon's Kindle business, puts it, the print book is "a really competitive technology": it is portable, hard to break, has high-resolution pages and a "long battery life". . . Sales of e-readers, the most popular of which is the Kindle, are in decline. "In a few years' time," a recent report by Enders Analysis, a research firm,

predicts, "we will look back at e-readers and remember them as one of the shortest-lived of all consumer media devices."

Cynthia Pyle's erudite letter to the editor in amplifying response: [Letters to the editor- Scholars like books](#).

- **NPR:** [Pew Study: Many Technophiles Also Love Libraries](#), by Lynn Neary, March 13, 2014.

You might think that in a world of Google and Wikipedia, people who love technology wouldn't care much about the musty old local public library. But, according to , you'd be wrong.

* * *

In its latest study, Pew set out to determine what types of people use and value public libraries. It compared highly engaged, "library lovers" and "information omnivores" to those who have never used a library . .

Not surprisingly, library lovers . . tend to be better educated, have higher incomes and are more involved in social and cultural activities than people with little or no engagement with libraries.

. . the Pew study finds that the most highly engaged library users are also big technology users.

Report:

. . . 90% of Americans ages 16 and older say that the closing of their local public library would have an impact on their community..

. Deeper connections with public libraries are often associated with key life moments such as having a child, seeking a job, being a student, and going through a situation in which research and data can help inform a decision. .

. . Members of these high engagement groups also tend to be active in other parts of their communities. They tend to know their neighbors, they are more likely to visit museums and attend sporting events, and they are more likely to socialize with families and friends.. . .

. .those who have used a library in the past year, adults living in lower-income households are more likely to say various library services are very important to them and their families than those living in higher-income households..

. . Many of those who are less engaged with public libraries tend to have lower levels of technology use, fewer ties to their neighbors, lower feelings of personal efficacy, and less engagement with other cultural activities.

- **The Guardian:** [Why our future depends on libraries, reading and daydreaming](#), speech by Neil Gaiman, October 15, 2013.

I do not believe that all books will or should migrate onto screens: as Douglas Adams once pointed out to me, more than 20 years before the Kindle turned up, a physical book is like a shark. Sharks are old: there were sharks in the ocean before the dinosaurs. And the reason there are still sharks around is that sharks are better at being sharks than anything else is. Physical books are tough, hard to destroy, bath-resistant, solar-operated, feel good in your hand: they are good at being books, and there will always be a place for them.

- **Noticing New York:** [The Library of the Future Envisioned- "The 21st Century Library". . . And Beyond- Questions Floating In Science Fiction's Crystal Ball](#), by Michael D. D. White, January 26, 2015. Monday,

In 1989 Isaac Asimov, speaking to the American Booksellers Association:

made a passionate defense of the survival of the book when he asked his audience to imagine a device that "can go anywhere, is totally portable. . . . Something that can be started and stopped at will [and] requires no electric energy to operate." This dream

device is, of course, the book. "It will never be surpassed because it represents the minimum technology with the maximum interaction you can have."

- **Melville House:** [Citizens Defending Libraries](#) calls the Central Library Plan "a real estate grab" and "contrary to the public interest", by Claire Kelley, February 19, 2014.

Are you concerned that libraries are moving towards privatization and that there is a move to replace physical books with digital resources?

. . . Libraries are an essential public commons, and should continue as such.

The issue of ownership is a good segue into the second part of your question. There is much evolving right now with respect to digital rights that hasn't been resolved: Copyrights are being extended and made stricter; so-called "orphan works" are in serious jeopardy; content providers are consolidating into monopolies that raise prices while much of what is available digitally is made available through time-limited subscriptions that have a potential ephemerality that never applied to books on the shelves. Technology busily shifts too: The New York Times had a sentence in a tech section article recently, "If you own a Nook, the fate of your books may now be up in the air."

We favor, and we are not against, adding digital resources, but right now we think that the benefits of digitization, partly fad, and partly, to an extent, legitimate future, are being seized upon and exaggerated to excuse a rush to get rid of physical books because books take up real estate and the focus of too many people running the libraries is selling real estate. The public, all of its generations, like physical books. For the most part the public hasn't switched away from physical books. Scientific American just did an interesting review of the science literature indicating that the human brain may be hard-wired to learn and retain information better with physical books. Many books aren't available digitally. Making them available would be a massive undertaking at which it is easy to fail. Nicholson Baker's "Doublefold" and his tales of the unutterable destruction that occurred at San Francisco's library provide serious cautionary tales. It doesn't serve to banish books in a precipitous experiment undertaken by people with questionable motives who lack library credentials. Working for a hedge fund doesn't qualify you to curate mankind's store of knowledge.

NYPL President Tony Marx reads a physical copy of the New York Times, so do I, and that's the way I read many books. Physical media shouldn't be the exclusive preserve of a lucky privileged few.

- **The Washington Post:** [Where are the books? Libraries under fire as they shift from print to digital](#), By Michael S. Rosenwald, July 7, 2015.

"Some of the clashes have been heated. In New York, protesters outside the city's main branch have shouted: "Save the stacks! Save the stacks!"

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More than anything, this rhetoric reveals the fundamentally anti-democratic worldview that has taken hold at the library. It is of a piece with what the new Masters of the Universe have accomplished in the public schools, where hedge funders have provided the lion's share of the backing for privatization, and in the so-called reforms to our financial system, where technocrats meet behind closed doors to decide what will be best for the rest of us. .

- **Noticing New York:** [Internet Guru Clay Shirky Speaking At Brooklyn Heights Association Annual Meeting Says We Need Libraries Because Of Holes In The Internet](#), by Michael D. D. White, March 5, 2014.

. . . Tim Wu and Lewis Hyde, two names . . . that Mr. Shirky would have to know, who both write about the impoverishment of the public sphere, Wu writing about how it occurs when media industries inevitably trend toward monopoly and Hyde talking about the disappearance of the public commons through increasingly privatized ownership of the ideas and information we consume. . .

- **Citizens Defending Libraries:** [Testimony By Citizens Defending Libraries At June 27, 2013 State Assembly Committee Hearing On Selling New York City Libraries](#), June 27, 2013, (see also similar testimony before the New York City Council [September 30, 2013](#) and [March 11, 2014](#)).

Dear Committee:

While many of us are well aware that these proposed library sell-offs represent real estate deals that privatize publicly-owned assets there is another associated concern about privatization that should not be overlooked. Library officials talking about getting rid of books are at the same time discussing digitizing and relying on digital content sometime in the future even if their plans are not yet ready for prime time).

But we must be wary that there are many who see the digitized future in terms of an increasingly privatized future where corporations pushing for various plans expect to make a lot of money by controlling digitized information, in many cases, by charging the public for what's already owned by the public in public collections that are being put out of reach.

Many consider that this was the principal motivation behind the sickening 1995 hollowing-out of the San Francisco Public Library collections, which was underwritten with big-ticket contributions from telecoms and Silicon Valley.

Digital activist Aaron Swartz warned about this disturbing trend:

The world's entire scientific ... heritage ... is increasingly being digitized and locked up by a handful of private corporations.... The Open Access Movement has fought valiantly to ensure that scientists do not sign their copyrights away but instead ensure their work is published on the Internet, under terms that allow anyone to access it.

In the future we may expect that after the libraries have contracted out to privatize content we will be charged exorbitantly high fees for what was once publicly owned. The further irony in all of this is that much of the transcription and other work to create digitally available content may have been crowd sourced so that the public will be charged for what it once freely owned and for the result of its own freely contributed work product and intensive labor creating privatized content.

Sincerely,

Citizens Defending Libraries

- **Library Journal:** [ALA vs NSA: Reflecting on Libraries and Social Media](#), by Woody Evans, June 14, 2013.

... Edward Snowden is drawing lots of attention at the moment. ... but here I'd like to consider something that happened way back in the last decade. Forget Snowden for a minute.

Remember with me a time when librarians were freshly militant and radical. Remember January 2002, when, just a few months after the attacks we suffered, the ALA proposed [this response](#) to the USA PATRIOT Act. [Includes "RESOLVED, That the American Library Association urges librarians everywhere to defend and support user privacy and free and open access to knowledge and information."] A year later, the proposed resolution would be adopted by the ALA Council, and library staff have been since emboldened to take such "radical" steps as to fail to keep patron book checkout records.

Edward Snowden remembered, like the militant librarians defending privacy and the 4th Amendment that came before him, that the government is for the people. But PRISM represents the kind of program that reminds us: government is not by the people any longer. ...

... we could start by finding something to praise in Edward Snowden's decision. ... he, like us librarians, took a stand for patron privacy-for citizen privacy. Snowden's action give us a moment to ask some overdue questions.

If a citizen's data really is hers, shouldn't she get to say who sees it? ...

No matter how "radical" a librarian you may or may not have become over the last 12 years, you know the answer by now.

A comment posted on the article:

A few weeks ago, I attempted to use my county library's online book reservation system to reserve the latest Percy Jackson book for my daughter, and was more than a little horrified to see this:

"The feature you have selected is associated with personal data in your patron account. Such data may be accessed by law enforcement personnel without your consent. Do you wish to continue?"

- **BuzzFeedNews:** [Publishers Know You Didn't Finish "The Goldfinch" - Here's What That Means For The Future Of Books- The publishing industry's uneasy embrace of Netflix-style analytics](#), by Joseph Bernstein, January 21, 2015.

How did [Book publisher] Kobo know this? Like every e-reader and reading-app maker today, the company, a subsidiary of the Japanese e-commerce titan Rakuten, has access to a comprehensive suite of data about the reading behavior of its users. In a white paper titled "Publishing in the Era of Big Data" and released this fall, the company announced that "with the onset of digital reading . it is

now possible to know how a customer engages with the book itself - what books were left unopened, which were read to the very last word and how quickly." In other words, if you read books digitally, the people who serve you those books more than likely know just what kind of reader you are, and just how little effort you made with Infinite Jest.

* * *

Amazon and Apple - that know the most about how you read are ferociously silent about that knowledge. Both Apple and Amazon declined to comment for this piece.

- **The Guardian:** [Big e-reader is watching you](#), by Alison Flood, July 4, 2012.

. . . Would Orwell have been amused or disturbed by the development that Big Brother now knows exactly how long it takes readers to finish his novel, which parts they might have highlighted, and what they went on to pick up next?

Because your ebook, as a recent article in the Wall Street Journal put it, is now reading you right back.

* * * *

Back to Orwell. Nineteen Eighty-Four, says Amazon, is the 608th most-highlighted book it sells. "'Who controls the past,' ran the Party slogan, 'controls the future: who controls the present controls the past'" has been marked by 349 Kindle users, while "If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face - for ever" has been highlighted by 195. What would George have said?

- **New York Times:** [Amazon Erases Orwell Books From Kindle](#), by Brad Stone, July 17, 2009.

In George Orwell's "1984," government censors erase all traces of news articles embarrassing to Big Brother by sending them down an incineration chute called the "memory hole."

On Friday, it was "1984" and another Orwell book, "Animal Farm," that were dropped down the memory hole - by Amazon.com.

In a move that angered customers and generated waves of online pique, Amazon remotely deleted some digital editions of the books from the Kindle devices of readers who had bought them.

* * * *

Of all the books to recall," said Charles Slater, an executive with a sheet-music retailer in Philadelphia . . . "I never imagined that Amazon actually had the right, the authority or even the ability to delete something that I had already purchased."

* * * *

Amazon appears to have deleted other purchased e-books from Kindles recently. Customers commenting on Web forums reported the disappearance of digital editions of the Harry Potter books and the novels of Ayn Rand . .

- **New York Times:** [How to Survive the Next Wave of Technology Extinction](#), by Farhad Manjoo, February 12, 2014.

If you own a Nook, the fate of your books may now be up in the air. Sorry, you bet on the wrong horse.

The Nook's fate isn't unusual these days. Technologies have always gone belly up, but tech

extinctions may become even more common over the next few years.

- **National Notice** : [Snowden Revelations Considered: Is Your Library, Once Intended To Be A Protected Haven of Privacy, Spying on You?](#), By Michael D. D. White, March 8, 2015 .

During the McCarthy era there was also concern about what books were available in the libraries, how readily available certain books were and concern about the political leanings of librarians working in the libraries.

* * *

. . . the surveillance state is interested in something else: The surveillance state wants to know what you think and for that reason the surveillance state believes that libraries should tell the government what you read.

Librarians in Connecticut were the first to successfully challenge the PATRIOT Act when the FBI, along with an accompanying perpetual gag order to keep its actions secret, demanded broadly that the Connecticut librarians turn over to the bureau library records concerning what their patrons were reading and their computer use.

* * *

Now consider this: Changes are being implemented at libraries, and the changes are particularly apparent in New York City, that would make the heroism of these librarians wanting to protect their patrons' privacy virtually meaningless except for its symbolism.

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From: Michael D. D. White <mddwhite@aol.com>

To: MDDWhite <MDDWhite@aol.com>

Subject: Previous testimony before New York City Council

Date: Tue, Aug 18, 2015 3:54 pm

February 24, 2015

James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Council Chambers
City Hall
New York, NY 10017

Re: *Oversight – Supporting Public Libraries in the City's Ten-Year Capital Plan.*

Dear Committee:

Since March 2013 we at Citizens Defending Libraries have been [testifying at](#) City Council hearings raising issues about proposed library sales and shrinkages, the elimination of books and librarians and the underfunding of libraries as an excuse for plans that benefit the *private* real estate industry, but not the *public*.

We have raised many still unanswered and important questions.

We have, I think, in multiple ways, proven ourselves ultimately to be right as facts were disclosed. The [Donnell sale](#) and the fact that the [Central Library Plan](#) was finally estimated to cost more than a half billion dollars, [more than \\$200 million beyond](#) what the NYPL had previously publicized are just two examples. I don't think that any facts show us to ever have been far off the mark.

In connection with the [June 3rd-June 9th hearings](#) of this committee on these subjects we furnished City Council members and made publicly available ([now on the web](#)) many specific questions that need to be asked about these matters. Yet, aside from a few questions asked by the Public Advocate, whose time was restricted, most of those questions were and now remain unasked. (We incorporate into our testimony here the record of our submission and testimony at that June 3rd-June 9th and those previous hearings.)

There is serious lack of transparency on the part of library administration officials and the city real estate officials who are directing themselves to selling off libraries. We [have requested, by FOIL](#), documents to which we are entitled, but have been stonewalled and furnished with nothing but meager and obfuscating information. Where is the BPL's Strategic Real Estate Plan hailing back to 2007, or the Revson Study calling for turning libraries into real estate development? Where are the facts and book census information about how many books are disappearing from our libraries?

Since June a "study" by the Center for an Urban Future and the Architectural League of New York about "Re-Envisioning New York's Branch Libraries" has been promoted, but whatever good ideas were mixed into it, we could not help but hear during the presentations how libraries were to be considered tools for development with the public " *placatingly*" told that they would be able have better libraries if consent was given to increased density, development, and upzonings otherwise likely to be rejected. . .

. . . . Study architects also spoke of plans to reduce books according to the advice of two librarians, one of whom expressed favor for removing books from the libraries, saying that eight-year-old children should be scolded if they came into the library to research Black History Month or women's history, looking for related biographies without first calling to say they desired such books to be at the library. That librarian, who said that professional researchers should be treated the same way, doesn't seem to understand how research is really done. These kinds of "studies" are in no way a substitute for the investigation it is incumbent upon the City Council to pursue.

It is exceedingly troubling that we have not yet restored library funding to pre-Bloomberg, pre-library sell-off plan levels. [By contrast](#), Austin, Texas, one of the nation's preeminent tech-based cities, is doing what its voters want:

They are properly funding libraries which means enlarging them and increasing the number of books. It is a shame that we in New York are not similarly doing what the voters want and deserve.

Sincerely,

Michael D. D. White
Co-founder,
Citizens Defending Libraries

* * * *

December 10, 2014

James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Council Chambers
City Hall
New York, NY 10017

Re: *Oversight - New York City Public Library Systems' Capital Needs & Planning.*

Dear Committee:

Libraries have had hundreds of years, actually thousands, to get what they do right, and New York City's Libraries, despite unconscionable underfunding, are a success story. They are packed with people already, something you don't need to slap glass windows on to their sides to see, even if that is the latest architectural fashion.

There is nothing wrong with experimentation or new ideas, but it is potentially extremely foolish and financially wasteful to rush to overhaul, with new so-called "models," many system libraries all at once, shutting out any chance for public reaction as we proceed, and increasing the danger of damage from ill-considered fads.

There are already identifiable problems: Basement libraries in mixed-used developments (usually vastly shrunken libraries in the first initiatives we've seen) are perpetually sentenced to grow no further while departing from the 'monumental' tradition of library architecture that declare libraries as important in and of themselves, beacons to their community.

Promoted somewhat deceptively as "*economic*," "*redeveloping*" libraries is frequently the opposite, far from cheap, with much to be lost. Selling and vastly shrinking the beloved, destination Donnell Library, the NYPL netted less than \$38 million. Alternatively, the NYPL would have lost *millions* on this "*redevelopment*" if it were replacing Donnell full scale. Similarly, a self-cannibalizing sale of the Brooklyn Heights Library is proposed to "*raise funds*," but we can only believe that the reason the BPL wants to reduce this central destination library to such a tiny size (essentially the same as what's now proposed for a new Sunset Park Library) is that otherwise the uneconomic character of the sale would be blatantly clear to everyone.

We are not going to say that video games (increasingly recognized as a respected cultural art form) or cooking schools don't have a place in libraries. They may if libraries grow, but we are going to say that such things should *not replace* the time-perfected, traditional and basic functions libraries have long served. Also, do we really think that libraries are Swiss Army knives needing to be all things to all people?

Further, when it comes to "mixed-use" projects, let's be aware of how bundling benefits to be dispensed to the public (affordable housing, artist studios or cooking schools, fill-in-the blank), with libraries which were once considered, all on their very own, a basic essential public service, forces the public to start viewing these as competing goods. What can be dressed-up as a "*win win*" scenario can actually be a "*lose or lose*," divide-and-conquer scenario with everyone eating up everyone else's subsidy. The public can thereby be drawn into expecting sacrifices, especially of our libraries, more of this city's escalating spiral of political and wealth inequality. We admonish you to remember that all the initial proposals to surface involved *shrinkages* of libraries. One 'for instance' in this vein, is how the private Spaceworks company was set up to shrink library space (like Red Hook and Williamsburg) based on the view that NYC library space is "*underutilized*."

The second, recent Center for an Urban Future report is far from gospel. NYPL President Marx expressing reservations about the report to his board said the *"old isn't necessarily bad. . . Some of our most beautiful libraries are some of our oldest and they've been beautifully renovated, and some of them are close to our hearts. I can think of some that really are gems."* - We should remember that the Center for an Urban Future did not do its own real estate analysis: They got it from the libraries who, in turn, in the case of BPL, got it from a former Forest City Ratner Sr. Vice President Karen Backus, who prioritized for the BPL deals adjacent to Forest City Ratner property. Also, the proposed escalating priority of *'programming'* over *'books'* results from a reversal of the statistics from the Center for an Urban Future report provided a year prior. (By the way, running supplemental electric service through a building to provide additional electric outlets is not difficult, not a reason to rebuild a library.)

We are pleased that the recently released proposal for the Sunset Park Library is the first plan since Citizens Defending Libraries has been in existence that looks to increase, not shrink, the size of that library, in this case to 20,600 square feet. However, even this proposal has flaws:

- The branch library will lose, in perpetuity, any options for future growth
- The community will have to go through a period of disruption and not having a proper library (with Donnell it's verging on a 7.5 year period), which disruption would be unnecessary if the library shifted to an alternative nearby site
- The public is subject to division as competing benefits are dangled
- Competitive bids are being sidestepped
- Especially given the uncertainties of the funding estimates and vagaries of construction the chances of being forced into accepting a bait-and-switch are severe.

Citizens Defending Libraries is reluctant to make any proposals for the *"redevelopment"* of libraries so long as we perceive that such proposals are likely to be abused, but if libraries are, in fact, to be redeveloped and the land they sit on recycled, *"leveraged"* into real estate sales, the way to do it when it is truly necessary and appropriate is to first build new, bigger, better libraries at nearby comparable sites. This could be funded with a revolving fund, primed with city capital dollars, that in the scheme of things would not be very large sum, which would be replenished as the older library properties are then vacated and sold. Libraries would be redeveloped in sequence, not pell mell and en masse. This would also avoid community disruptions and a multitude of other problems, including the need for getting into the thicket of *"partnerships."* As much as the private sector vaunts so-called *"public-private partnerships"* they are a stew presenting too many risks of crony capitalism.

Sincerely,

Michael D. D. White
Citizens Defending Libraries

We attach the following for guidance and reference. The attached indicates much of what needs to be considered if libraries are to be *"redeveloped"* as well as pitfalls we face if such *"redevelopment"* is infected with the wrong mind set and motivations:

1. [Citizens Defending Libraries Letter of Support](#)
2. [A Proposed Statement of Principles](#) that applies to the Sunset Park Plans or and potentially to the redevelopment of any library.
3. [A Noticing New York article from August](#) indicating some of the things that ten years worth of minutes of Brooklyn Public Library disclose about the history and genesis of the BPL's real estate plans.
4. [An Open Letter to Brooklyn Public Library President Linda Johnson](#) (October 15, 2014) requesting an answer to a question concerning the unrecognized cost to the public of selling and shrinking the Brooklyn Heights Library
5. [Press release](#) about Citizens Audit and Investigation that Citizens Defending Libraries is conducting.

Testimony of Veronika Conant**New York City Council - Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations and Select Committee on Libraries Oversight - New York City Public Library System's Capital Needs & Planning,****December 10, 2014, Council Chambers, City Hall
Testimony by Veronika Conant**

Thank you for calling this hearing. I am Veronika Conant, a retired academic librarian, member of the Committee to Save the New York Public Library, and past Pres. of the West 54 - 55 Street Block Association, active during the disastrous sale of the Donnell Library.

Recommendations, inspired by the Center for an Urban Future Report:

- o Create a 10 year, \$1.1 billion capital fund for NY's public libraries
- o Create a prioritized list of capital funding needs.
- o Group by types: HVAC repairs/replacement, boiler repairs/replacement, roof re-pairs/replacement, etc. and go in order of highest priorities first
- o Get approval from the City to do each type jointly and try to lower the cost for the combined projects. Streamline these and do the same for each, wiring, etc.

Priorities:

1. Get the 42nd Street Library back to normal functioning as soon as possible:
 - a) Upgrade the already existing HVAC and sprinklers in the seven floors of book stacks, and return the 3 million books from off-site storage. Even at the high estimate of \$46 million for 160,000 square feet of stacks, the unit cost is \$287.50 per square foot. If DDC can do it for \$150 per square foot, the cost would be \$24 million.
 - b) Repair the Reading Room, now closed for over 1/2 year, and restore the excellent and architecturally significant unique book delivery system for readers as soon as possible. While it is appreciated that NYPL will reconfigure the space in other parts of the 42nd Street Library, we want to be assured no space will be taken away from what is needed to allow the book delivery function and to provide air conditioning, humidity controls and sprinklers for the book stacks.
2. Complete the second Bryant Park Stack Extension (BPSE), started during Vartan Gregorian's Presidency, with the goal of doubling storage for the collection. Even at the high estimate of \$20 million for storing there 1.8 million items, unit cost is about \$11 per item. At the lower, \$9 million estimate, we originally heard, unit cost is \$5.50 per item, more cost effective than ReCAP. 42nd Street has room to store 3.5 million books inside the building and 3.1 - 3.2 million in the two BPSEs, totaling 6.6 - 6.7 million items stored with easy access in the most cost effective way.
3. Renovate and, using available air rights, enlarge Mid-Manhattan, creating additional, valuable space in a beautiful new library for NYC.
4. Do not sell SIBL (the Science, Industry & Business Library) at 34 St & Madison Ave, created in 1996 for \$100 million, expensively furnished, already wired and equipped with hundreds of computers. It can become a perfect Computer Center. Five floors had already been sold for over \$60 million. All it needs is longer opening hours than the present 51 hours per week, a relatively inexpensive investment. (By comparison, Mid-Manhattan is open 88 hrs per week).

Do not sell any public libraries at a time when more people than ever use them.

5. Streamline branch library needs and repair HVAC systems and boilers first, to keep libraries open year round, then do roof, elevator repairs and wiring, also make every library building accessible to the disabled and elderly. DDC has done very good work, if streamlining can bring prices down and shorten completion times all the better.
6. The Donnell Library, is still under construction. Can it be enlarged, and if that is not possible, can the 28,000 square foot space be redesigned to a better configuration, providing adequate seating, quiet space, room for the collection and staff, wired for many computers and technology, plus an auditorium. It functioned very well as a regional library, an idea, recommended by CUF.

There is need for several major libraries in Midtown where population density is very high:

Donnell, SIBL, Mid-Manhattan and 42nd Street serve a very large population, they are also very accessible by public transportation and close to several colleges, schools.

Andrew Carnegie donated in 1905 \$ millions to build 65+ free, circulating branch libraries in NYC on the condition that the City agrees to pay for utilities, and rent if the land is not owned, and maintain them in perpetuity. This agreement has not been kept for decades, there is a great deal of deferred maintenance, leading to major capital needs. Having a baseline capital funding established for regular preventive maintenance could avoid the state of deterioration currently existing and would be much more cost effective with benefit to all. Thank you.

Veronika A Conant, M.L.S. retired from Hunter College Libraries
45 W 54 St, 7C, New York, NY 10019 212 581-1895 vaconant [at] yahoo.com

I have two strong disagreements with the Report:

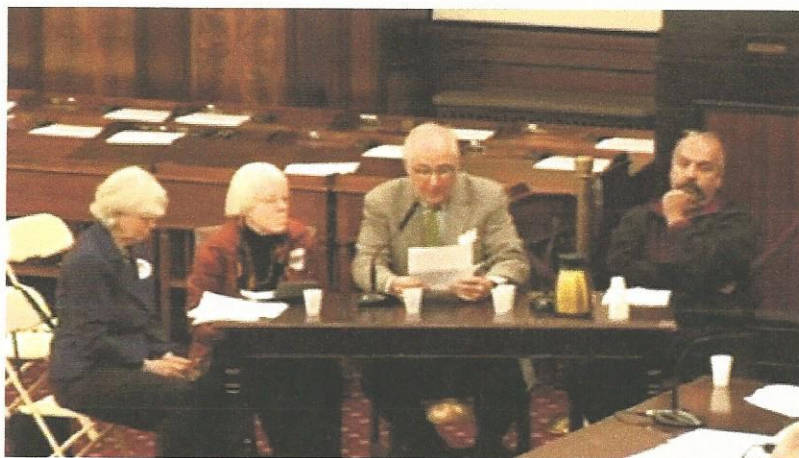
1. Maximize Public Space.

What matters in a library is not public space but its content, the collection, how many people can be seated at tables and workstations, the number of librarians and support staff, computer access, use of technology, having both quiet and meeting space and hours open. Space is needed for both the collection and staff, they are the essence of a library. Librarians need peace and quiet to think, work, learn and develop, allowing them to assist library users in the best possible way. It is also important for staff morale.

2. Floating Book Ops is a bad idea. There are too few resources present for local pa-trons, they need to order most of what they want and wait for its arrival. This is ineffec-tive and discourages library use. It is good to have centralized cataloging and preserva-tion, imaging. But local librarians know their collection and the specialized interests and needs of their users. Therefore, they should remain active in book selection. Having every request go through the Library Service Center, LIC, is not necessarily a cost effective operation in a large, congested city. If a book, requested at 79th Street is at 96th Street, then the book has to be packed, taken by truck to LIC, go through an enormous book sorter, get packed again and sent to 79th Street and then back. Can a cost benefit study be done about Book Ops? Fairway on W 74 St sometimes delivers my food to W 54 St by bicycle.

Testimony of Charles D. Warren of the Committee to Save the New York Public Library

([Available](#) on the site of [Committee to Save the New York Public Library](#))



Picture [from](#) the [site](#) of the Committee to Save the New York Public Library

Testimony of Charles D. Warren of the Committee to Save the New York Public Library before the New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations, jointly with the Subcommittee on Libraries. December 10, 2014

I am Charles Warren and I represent the Committee to Save the New York Public Library (CSNYPL), a citizens group that has sought to keep the popular Mid-Manhattan Branch as a library rather than a real estate deal, keep three million books in the stacks of the Central Library at 42nd Street, and maintain the Science Industry and Business Library (SIBL), the library closest to the CUNY Graduate Center.

With the support of thousands of New Yorkers, students, librarians, celebrated authors, union leaders, elected officials, and others we insisted that the \$300 million price tag for the Central Library Plan (CLP), which escalated to \$500 million, was too high. Thanks to our efforts and the elected officials who recognized the wasteful folly of this plan, we have stopped it.

The election of 2013 brought a new energy to our city government and the abandonment of NYPL's destructive and extravagant Central Library Plan gives us all the opportunity to set a better course for the future. Base-line budgeting for the operating budgets of the three library systems is a positive step. And now, we welcome the opportunity to rethink the capital spending budget for our city's libraries. As you know the many years of under-funding have left a pressing need for intelligent planning and stable funding.

The Center for an Urban Future has performed a great service in its careful study of the branch libraries and I want to add to that with some comments about what NYPL is calling the Midtown Campus, a scheme that encompasses its research library on 42nd Street and the popular Mid-Manhattan Library across 5th Avenue. I urge you to see that these two libraries are intertwined with and complimentary to the citywide network of neighborhood branches. Their central location and unique resources extend their importance beyond NYPL's three borough system - they serve the whole city.

Public money and Private control - Is that a public/private partnership?

To citizens of New York it seemed the \$151 Million contributed by New York City to the Central Library Plan was conjured from thin air; \$100 Million from the Mayor; \$50 Million from the City Council; \$1 Million from the Manhattan Borough President. This money was granted when NYPL claimed it did not yet have even schematic designs. There were no public hearings, there was no public input. Now, most of this sum remains in the adopted FY 2015 capital budget. What is it for?

The NYPL Midtown Campus includes the Central Library at 42nd Street and the Mid-Manhattan Branch, but it fails to mention the Science Industry and Business Library, (SIBL) just a few blocks away.

Will the city council follow the old pattern where it grants \$151 Million for a vaguely described plan being developed in secret? We need to know what our tax dollars are paying for. We must not stand for a partnership where the money is public and the decisions are private.

Just last week NYPL conducted a survey about plans for the Midtown Campus, but the survey omitted key questions. They did not ask:

- Does it make sense to leave the stacks empty for want of modern climate controls?
- Which Midtown Campus building is best suited to which library service?
- Should SIBL be sold or made part of the Midtown Campus?
- What balance should we strike between books and electronic services?

Instead, all the poll questions were skewed to avoid these important choices and reinforce a narrow set of pre-determined outcomes. This cannot be presented as meaningful public consultation.

If NYPL will not ask difficult questions, we must. And we must add a budget question: What is the best, most resilient, least destructive, and most economical way of achieving the public's objectives for the library and the city? Long term capital plans should encompass all parts of all NYPL buildings.

Mistakes made with an insular process

NYPL is a not-for-profit corporation with a \$ 1.1 Billion endowment. I often disagree with its president, Tony Marx, but I have no doubt that he is motivated by the same devotion to the library and the city that motivates the CSNYPL. I know the NYPL trustees are similarly well intentioned. We should applaud their extraordinary generosity and hard work. But insular decision-making at NYPL has led to a series of bad consequences:

- Ten years and countless millions wasted on the Central Library Plan.
- The fiasco of Donnell Library, where the anticipated real estate bonanza for NYPL has not been realized. Money from the sale of this beloved and busy neighborhood library has been chipped away at by bad deals, long delays, and millions spent to rent substitute space for years. In the end an

irreplaceable neighborhood library of about 90,000 square feet will be replaced with a largely subterranean space 1/3 its size.

- SIBL was built at the cost of about \$ 100 Million. It is a commercial condominium owned by NYPL, not by the city. But many costs associated with this facility were funded with NYS bonding authority. Should NYPL now be free to sell it without city approval? NYPL is now silent on the future of this huge investment in the "library of the future" (focused on CD-ROMs and an object lesson for those thinking they can predict the course of fast changing technology).

An on-going example of private planning with consequences for public funds is the Research Collections and Preservation Consortium (ReCAP) in Princeton, New Jersey. NYPL continues to spend its capital funds to construct and expand its remote storage facility there. These substantial capital investments are represented as "private funds." and they are being made outside of New York City. Meanwhile, NYPL refuses to invest in its stacks, the uniquely efficient shelf system at the heart of its city owned 42nd Street building. Without public input, it has decided to leave the stacks empty, warehousing this space like a landlord waiting for an uptick in the real estate market.

Is it efficient to shuttle books back and forth from Princeton on a continuous basis? Is it environmentally responsible? Is it good for the preservation of the books? Is it good for New Yorkers? The answer seems to be that ReCAP is paid for with "private funds" and so it is not subject to city oversight. But "private funds" spent in New Jersey are dollars that are not spent on New York City facilities, and this means fewer jobs in New York. That leaves more needs to be met by city taxpayers and a bigger hole in the capital budget.

The public was barely consulted on these decisions, or consulted after they were set in motion. They have real consequences for library services and a real impact on the city's capital expenditures. We need reform.

Make all information available to all

In order to make informed decisions about capital projects, the City Council and the public need access to cost and other information for past, present, and future projects. Decision-making is hobbled when public cost data are disclosed, but private cost data are concealed. NYPL leaders promise openness but fail to disclose important information.

For example: At the June 27, 2013 hearing before State Assembly Committee on Libraries, NYPL CEO Anthony Marx testified about CLP:

.. we understand that this plan needs an independent cost estimate and we will provide one as soon as we have an actual architectural design that can be assessed. We are as eager to [do] that as quickly as possible.., but we have to get it right. We also understand the public interest in having a cost estimate done by independent actors of what it would instead cost to make the current stacks work at state of the art preservation or for that matter to renovate the current Mid-Manhattan on site.. We will provide that information. We would love to do it sooner it looks at this point like we won't have all of that complete till the fall. As soon as we have it we will make it public.

What was finally disclosed in the Wall Street Journal, as CLP was being scrapped, was that its cost had ballooned to \$ 500 Million, that fitting out the unused storage under Bryant Park would cost \$24 million (rather than the \$ 8.5 Million NYPL estimated earlier) and that the cost to provide proper environmental controls in the stacks was estimated at \$ 46 Million. No estimates were supplied for renovating the Mid-Manhattan Library, no professional cost-estimator was identified, nor was detail supplied. Indeed, the plans and specifications that formed the basis of these estimates have never been disclosed.

The failure of NYPL to fulfill its promise leaves the City Council and the public in the dark. We are deprived of important information and cost data needed to assess alternatives or estimate present capital plans for these buildings.

A closed book from an institution devoted to information access

Partial, selective disclosure of information is a pattern with NYPL. Its trustees' meetings are open to the public, but much of the substance of those meetings is hidden within the briefing books provided to the trustees and not made public. I have asked Carey Maloney, the Speaker Mark-Viverito's new representative to the NYPL trustees, to make

his copy of these briefing books public, I have made the same request to the Comptroller's staff. It should not require a quarterly Freedom of Information Act request to make public the substantive information underlying public meetings. Failure to disclose this information makes a mockery of open board meetings.

Pass-through contracts and NYC Department of Design and Construction

As this Committee knows, there are existing tools to require greater disclosure for the construction of city owned buildings. In a hearing held by this committee on April 28, 2014, the role of the NYC Department of Design and Construction (DDC) in library construction projects was examined. Testimony by Commissioner Peña-Mora and his deputy David Resnick emphasized the safe-guards and requirements for transparency in the DDC process. Under questioning, they compared this openness to the lack of transparency when pass-through contracts are used.

At the September 17, 2014 NYPL trustee meeting Anthony Marx claimed that pass-through contracts allowed the NYPL to deliver library projects at half the cost in half the time (compared to DDC). If this can be verified, it is a remarkable record of efficiency (even considering the lack of Wicks law requirements in pass-throughs contracts) and the city might want to fill vacancies at DDC from the staff of NYPL. But only NYPL has the data to support their claim.

We need to reform the rules for pass-through contracts so the use of some "private funds" does not cast a veil of secrecy over public building projects. I urge you to use the expertise within the DDC to find a more transparent process for these contracts. Absent greater transparency, our tax dollars are spent without sufficient public scrutiny or safe-guards.

Our Position on the capital budget

We support base-line budgeting. We support increased funding for NYPL and the other library systems. We support budget reform that allows for long term planning. These measures are needed to strengthen New York's libraries.

But reform must accompany these increases and improvements in funding.

When we met with Peter Hatch from the Deputy Mayor's office he indicated relations between the city and NYPL had entered a new era. But we cannot rely on better inter-personal relationships alone. With increased funding for operations and capital projects we must have greater openness, accountability, and transparency at NYPL. Citizens must be able to participate in decisions about both long and short term plans and we need mechanisms within the government to oversee library expenditures of both public and private funds. These libraries are our buildings. In return for more a more consistent stream of public funds, we must demand a more public planning process.

We urge the following reforms:

- Make increased and long-term capital funding contingent on greater openness and better oversight of NYPL.
- Require advance notice and periods of public comment on NYPL capital expenditures whether funded by the NYC or "privately" by NYPL.
- Reform pass-through contracts to provide better oversight and transparency.
- Use the government's three appointed representatives as a conduit of information between the NYPL trustees and the public.
- Require a quarterly public report from the Speaker's representative providing an independent account of NYPL plans.
- Require the disclosure of all information presented at NYPL trustee's meetings.
- Require disclosure of past cost estimates relating to the Central Library Plan

Testimony of State Senator Velmanette Montgomery



State Senator Velmanette Montgomery

25th New York Senatorial District

Ranking Democratic Conference Member, Children & Families

December 10, 2014

Comments to the NYC Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations Regarding Capital Needs and Funding

Chairman Van Bramer and Members of the Committee:

I thank you for the opportunity to address you this afternoon as you consider not just the upcoming annual budgets for our libraries, but in a larger sense their future purposes.

I am a very strong proponent of libraries. I believe they are one of the most vital elements of an informed electorate and educated society. Making information available free of charge to all people regardless of age, race, citizenship, education, or economics, is central to a thriving democracy. This has been their purpose for hundreds of years and I am confident they will serve this necessary function for centuries to come...if we, as elected officials, are wise stewards of this public asset.

We must establish a steady funding stream for our libraries. We cannot continue to allow the executive branch to propose a figure in the budget and then depend on the Council to scramble to restore necessary funds. In recent years we have seen our library budgets repeatedly slashed, and then been told the only way to save our libraries is to sell them. Or to just sell part of them for purposes that will undercut the primary focus of the libraries. If we were to substitute the word "children" for libraries, what would that say about our custodial skills? To save them we have to sell them? Really? To save libraries they have to become rehearsal studios and theaters? For libraries to continue, they must become something other than libraries?

Committees: Children & Families (Ranking Member), Crime Victims, Crime & Correction,
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I do not oppose progress, but I do oppose change based on dubious assertions offered by parties who stand to benefit from certain changes. Libraries are for books and studying. They are not rehearsal studios. Those are not a good fit. I am not persuaded that traditional books are obsolete. And neither are scientists, who have repeatedly shown in studies that the experience of reading from a book is profoundly different than reading from a screen, and far superior for transmission and retention of information. And children prefer books!

We have heard this song before when publishers were assuring us that the future was audio books. Thank God we didn't listen to that!

I urge you to exercise caution in your funding considerations. We have to save our children, and save our libraries. We have to save the future and not throw away precious public assets in favor of fads and unproven but well-funded theories.

We have to endow our libraries. They are tools for our citizens, and not tools for bargaining. I have every confidence that you will weigh carefully the many options available to you and the seriousness of the responsibility with which you have been charged.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sen. Velmanette Montgomery

Sen. Velmanette Montgomery
25th District.

State Senator Velmanette Montgomery
25th New York Senatorial District
Ranking Democratic Conference Member, Children & Families

December 10, 2014

Comments to the NYC Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International

Intergroup Relations Regarding Capital Needs and Funding

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Sincerely,

Sen. Velmanette Montgomery
25th District.

* * * *

Hearing Testimony of Michael D. D. White

June 11, 2014

James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

Costa Constantinides, Chair

Subcommittee on libraries

Julissa Ferreras, Chair
Committee on Finance

City Council Chambers
City Hall, New York 10017

Re: June 3rd-9th, 2014- New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Executive Budget Hearings

Dear Committee:

I begin my Citizens Defending Libraries testimony here for this City Council's Finance and Library subcommittee hearing on the library budget by noting the following, a fact that's most odd and significant about this hearing. . . something that cries out for City Council examination. .

. . . On Monday, just one day before the City Council would commence and 'take testimony' at this hearing from the three library presidents about the library system budget needs of the city, copies of The New York Times arrived on the public's doorstep with a major story about New York City library system budget needs, apparently fed to the Times by the New York Public Library, intentionally at the very last minute:

- [Library Reveals Details and Costs of Upgrade Plan](#), By Robin Pogrebin, June 1, 2014.

According to the Times: *"officials, for the first time, revealed that the original plan, mostly scrapped last month in large part because of questions about the price tag, would actually have cost more than \$500 million, according to independent estimates they commissioned last June."*

"Last June?"- And this news was coming out a day before the hearing?

Melville House was able to quickly relay the Times report with its own article bearing an appropriately sarcastic title:

- [Now they tell us: NYPL admits that the Central Library Plan would have cost \\$200 million more than estimated](#), by Sal Robinson, June 2, 2014.

The Monday revelation in the Times confirmed something that reports of the demise of Central Library Plan the previous month also confirmed: *That Citizens Defending Libraries, and other critics of the Central Library Plan were right, that we have been more than right, as we insisted that there was a panoply of questions imperative to ask about this expensive and obvious real estate boondoggle plan to sell off, shrink and destroy New York City libraries, banishing their books.*

Even as the Times report confirmed how extremely on target the questions that we long demanded be asked were, it raised formidable new questions as it reported how, *s uspiciously, just in time for the hearing*, the NYPL had a new vaguely described (and not yet examined) "revised" set of plans with an "anticipated budget" that just so happens *"matches what the library had originally suggested [in] its previous plan — to insert a circulating branch at its main library at 42nd Street — might cost."* Yes, that's right, a new "black box" from the people who brought you the Central Library Plan (and Donnell) . . . The people who fought to convince the public to accept this scheme for five years, engaging high-paid lobbyists and consultants to help.

The Melville House article pointed out some of the other questions now standing out in stark relief by virtue of the Times report:

*Among the many questions this revelation raises is when library officials knew this information and why it wasn't made public earlier. Did the library have these numbers even as it went ahead with emptying the stacks, and trying to drum up or lobby into being support for the plan? Pogrebin's article is mum on this, nor do the estimates appear to have been made available for public scrutiny. In short, it's an admission very much in keeping with the way the NYPL conducted the entire renovation program to begin with: **move along folks, there's nothing to see here, except that***

\$200,000,000+ we might have accidentally been about to spend.

That Melville House article noted that among the “*numerous questions left*” are four listed by Scott Sherman in his “*post mortem*” of the Central Library Plan in *The Nation* on May 14, 2014:

First, will Marx repair the decrepit Mid-Manhattan Library, or will he let it deteriorate even further so as to sell it down the road under a more developer-friendly mayor? Second, in 2013 the NYPL hastily removed 3 million books from the stacks in preparation for their demolition. The Wall Street Journal has reported that the stacks will remain empty, an unacceptable outcome for a building that was designed as a splendid machine for book storage and delivery. Marx should convene a public meeting in the library's Celeste Bartos Forum to discuss the future of the stacks and the various alternatives for them. (He must also clarify how many books and photographs were damaged when the stacks were emptied.) Third, Norman Foster has already received \$9 million for a design that was partly scrapped—a reckless disbursement of funds from a library system in chronic financial difficulty. Marx has refused to reveal the source of that money. Did it come from the NYPL, or from one or several of its trustees? Last, will the NYPL's eighty-eight branch libraries, many of which are in poor neighborhoods, now receive the funds they need to flourish?

(See: [The Battle of 42nd Street- The demise of the New York Public Library's Central Library Plan is the end of a Bloomberg-era castle in the sky](#))

Obviously there are many, many hard, delving questions the City Council should be asking of the library heads in order to properly acquit itself of its responsibilities in providing and overseeing budget funds to the New York City libraries this year. Attached, and made part of this testimony, is a far from entirely inclusive list of the kinds of questions City Council Members should have been directing to the library heads at this hearing, but almost entirely failed in doing so. In addition, I am including and incorporating by reference the [Citizens Defending Libraries testimony given at the earlier March 11, 2014 hearing](#), also in connection with preparation of this budget, which likewise serves to raise all of these sorts of questions for asking.

What the City Council did instead of asking any of these imperative questions should be regarded as a disgrace. Setting aside approximately a half hour of time for the heads of the libraries to testify and be questioned about budget matters, the City Council allowed more than ten minutes of that time to be taken up by the library heads playing a highly-produced, PR-style video that ran and churned up more than 10 minutes of hearing time. The theme of the video that had been up on the internet for at least a month?: That libraries are good. (See- Vimeo Video: [Libraries Now: A Day In The Life](#), by Julie Dressner and Jesse Hicks, May 16, 2014.)

Rather than ask the necessary questions, the substitute of showing the film ran out the clock and worse.

We all agree that libraries are good. There is no controversy about any points the film made to that effect, but the film provided little edification and was so inconsequential to the key issues now needing to be considered with respect to New York City libraries and serious jeopardy they are in, that Citizens Defending Libraries did not circulate the video to our members when it appeared.

The film, is actually more deceptive than anything else. With its focus on local library branches, beginning with the opening sequence shots of libraries in Brooklyn and Queens, it likely provides a sense of false security to the public that this is the direction in which city budget funds are being directed, rather than acknowledging how we were instead on the verge of misdirecting a half billion dollars into the Central Library Plan boondoggle and how other real estate boondoggles now threaten to rob the public of significant assets.

When I delivered my oral version of this testimony at the hearing I was chastised for saying that the City Council had not done its job by a City Council member who suggested that the City Council had actually had a hand in investigating and killing the Central Library Plan. Is that actually true and did that City Council member mean to take any personal credit for doing the right thing? Any evidence to that effect that is openly available and public is to the contrary.*

(* For instance, City Council Member Brad Lander is considered a “progressive” leader in the City Council. On April 24, 2014, at political club meeting where I questioned Mr. Lander about his position about selling and shrinking libraries Mr. Lander said he still didn't know enough about the

Central Library Plan to have any idea of whether that plan was a proper use of the proposed massive amount of funds involved or whether those funds being used sell and shrink would better used elsewhere for other purposes. That was less than two weeks before abandonment of the Central Library Plan was finally forced and, at the time, other key City Council Members were also claiming noncommittal ignorance. It is anomalous that, at such a very late juncture City Council Member Brad Lander was too ill-informed to oppose the Central Library Plan, yet he, as a general proponent of library sales, considers himself well enough informed about the proposed Brooklyn Heights Library sale, another similar plan for library shrinkage to generate a real estate deal to promote it. This is something he did at this hearing. He did it while City Councilman Steve Levin, in whose district the library lies, was out of the room.)

Later in the hearing that same City Council member who had just chastised me told Carolyn McIntyre of Citizens Defending Libraries that the Donnell Library sale was inexcusable and would never be repeated. But past is prologue and it's vitally important and urgent to understand the past in order to understand and properly deal with the present. Nevertheless, this same City Council member defending the City Council said that the council shouldn't be asking questions about Donnell or its investigation even though the City Council has never investigated or figured out what happened with respect to the sale of that important, destination library.

That council member specifically dismissed the questions provided herewith as not worth asking. Maybe it's not fair to think that every City Council Member ought to believe that every one of the questions suggested below is worth asking, but surely at least a fair number of these question should be considered worth asking as Public Advocate Tish James did.

Citizens Defending Libraries and our fellow critic of library sales have been right in asking the questions we asked before, and because we were so very right the questions we ask now should be considered with equal seriousness and urgency. . . . Plans are afoot to sell and shrink New York City libraries, to exile books from the premises of our libraries and banish librarians. Why city and library administration officials would do this for the purpose of creating real estate deals, not for the benefit of the public needs to be investigated and deeply scrutinized by the City Council. Among other things, it is essential to a proper administration of the city's budget. But the City Council has fallen down on the job, neglecting its duty to protect and represent the public.

Sincerely

Michael D. D. White
Citizens Defending Libraries

* * * *

Testimony of Cynthia M. Pyle

Testimony at the Hearing held by the New York City Council Committee on Finance Jointly with the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations and the Select Committee on Libraries Tuesday, June 3, 2014 and Friday, June 6, 2014 (Public Comment)

Cynthia M. Pyle, New York City (Active Independent Scholar; Fellow of the American Academy in Rome; Co-Chair, Columbia University Seminar in the Renaissance; Life-long user of the Main Research Branch of the New York Public Library)

Chairwoman Julissa Ferreras, Chaiman Van Bramer, Chairman Constantinides, Members of the City Council:

Having testified in the past on the importance of our formerly great and inspiring Public Research Library, I have only questions today -- questions relevant to the funding of the Library's Main Research Branch in the Budget of the City of New York.

---Why is an individual with no scholarly or research interests -- who was quoted in The New York Times (June 1 & 2, 2014) as saying he "never felt a reason to come into this building" as a young person -- why is such a person now presiding over the management of a cultural institution which, when it functioned properly, attracted millions of people, young and old, from our City, and from around the World, to bathe in its inspiration and resources?

I myself was first deeply inspired by the Library as a high school student, when the Library employed binders to bind paperbacks and conservators to repair damaged books, when it employed erudite curators of its great collections, when it employed armies of dedicated reference librarians -- when it held at least 4 million books for ready access.

---Why are the books -- the essential core of a humanities research library -- being neglected, left unbound, unrepaired when they are falling apart? Yet the budgets requested are never for those fundamental books, but only for capital projects?

---Why are curators of collections and expert librarians of the Main Research Branch excluded from Board Meetings -- i.e. the "Executive Sessions" when the general public is asked to leave?

---Why has the staff of expert curators and librarians and technical binders and conservators been cut?

---Why has a person who let 250 people go from the Harvard University Libraries been hired by the New York Public Library's Main Research Branch?

---Why are people in Real Estate and Finance making decisions about professional resources they never use, in a professional area foreign to their own?

---Why are those on the Board of Directors with some intellectual pretensions -- editors of important journals of opinion, for example -- so silent?

---Why are not at least one-half of the members of that Board appointed by the New York City Government, since the Government pays 50% of the Library's Budget?

And, closely related: Should the NYPL be allowed to raise private monies, when such independence makes it ever less responsible to the Citizens of New York for whose benefit it was founded?

---Why is there so little New York City Oversight (by the Department of Design and Construction, for example, a thoroughly qualified body), of this institution, which was founded for the good of the Citizens of New York?

---What happened to the 1999 Architectural Plans to rebuild the Mid-Manhattan Branch, including high-rental income spaces which would support the Mid-Manhattan and the Main Research Branches of the NYPL?

---The Stacks in the Main Research Branch are in perfect condition, were upgraded in the 1980s and 1990s, and would cost a pittance of what is being requested for capital improvements (largely cosmetic) to return to perfectly functioning order, with re-renewed air conditioning and sprinkler systems. Why is this easily affordable solution, which could restore this great research library to its full and proper function, with 7 million books on site, not the plan?

---Why did a chunk of ceiling fall (after hours, so no one was hurt) just days before this budget hearing? Who has seen or photographed this chunk? Did it make a noise when it fell (like the hypothetical tree in the forest of the well-known philosophical conundrum)?

If it did indeed fall, one recalls other documented instances of non-maintenance in order to enable begging for money.

---Who exactly is conducting the inspection during these weeks of closure of the Main Reading Rooms

and the Catalog Room? (Where apparently another chunk fell 10 years ago -- also after its restoration -- and has still not been repaired.)

The City should and must withhold monies for any capital projects at the NYPL -- especially at the Main Research Branch -- until all questions about the use of funds, including Operational Funds, by this Board have been satisfactorily answered, and until City Governance has been put in place on the Board to perform the City's Oversight responsibilities.

Thank you.

C. M. Pyle
Intellectual and Cultural Historian
Co-Chair, Columbia University Seminar in the Renaissance
(Ph.D. Columbia University;
Fellow, American Academy in Rome 1978;
NSF Individual Grant 1988-89;
Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts iii-iv2001;
Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study 2002-3)
<http://sites.google.com/site/cynthiampyle/>

Testimony of Peter Rooney

This testimony is submitted to the New York City Council, regarding its hearing of June 6, 2014, on library budgeting.

I am a book indexer by profession. In the past, I've relied on the 42nd Street Main Library to fulfill my research needs when working on a new indexing project. I look for sources in which to check my author's terminology and to get ideas for indexing the new book. Starting about December 2012, I have found there is very little use in going to the Main Library because most of the books I will be looking for have been moved offsite to New Jersey, as part of the so-called Central Library Plan. The Main Library has become quite hopeless as a source of ready information on any deep level.

Why is this happening? It's quite apparent that this is a real estate deal in the works, part of a larger movement to sell off public assets to the benefit of the few. In May, the NYPL reversed itself, saying it has abandoned the Central Library Plan, but does a leopard really change its spots? The New York Public Library was founded on the basis of advancing knowledge - not as an asset to be mined. Moreover, the Brooklyn and Queens library systems are quite unaffected by the NYPL action, and are continuing on the same path of selling assets to developers.

Re the City Council hearing on libraries of June 6, here are my thoughts:

- 1- Tony Marx and the top-level administrators of NYPL should resign. They have shown themselves to be incompetent to budget and spend money wisely.
- 2- Most if not all of the trustees should be dismissed, for the same reason.
- 3- the 42nd St. stacks should be upgraded, if necessary. (Doubtful it costs as much as they say.)
- 4- the books in New Jersey must be returned to 42nd St.
- 5- a funding stream needs to be established.

And here's a controversial idea, perhaps:

6- there should be a yearly charge for a library card. This would be subsidized for students and low-income people - they might pay nothing. But I think the average citizen or family could well afford a modest fee. This would stabilize the income and free the library from budget games.

Peter Rooney

Testimony of Therese Urban

Written testimony submitted June 10, 2014 via email to the NY City Council
Hearing on Budget considerations for the New York City, Brooklyn & Queens Public Libraries

By Therese Urban
member: East Pacific Block Association
Boerum Hill Association

Regarding the need for financing repairs and ongoing maintenance of our libraries with taxpayer funds and private donations, rather than the permanent disposal of land:

I want to impress upon all City Council members why they should be insisting that all our library caretakers, Brooklyn, Queens and New York City, continue to value our presently threatened libraries with the same honorable egalitarian foresight that created them, and why it's important to keep those libraries open, well-maintained, and, especially noted in this testimony, situated on the land they already own.

I particularly address the current plan to demolish 2 library buildings in Brooklyn (The Pacific and Brooklyn Heights branches) and sell the land under them to private developers. The most obvious public disadvantage to our libraries selling off their land is that once sold, the library will never get it back; it's gone forever. That should NOT be an option.

The 'Public/Private Partnership' Model is Not A One-Size-Fits-All Model.

The plans for these land sales look to follow the pattern that has been implemented in recent years: "public/private partnerships". This model threatens to become the politically favored method of funding all public services in New York City, services that have traditionally been provided by taxes. We currently have library directors and boards who believe in and apply this model to our most valuable free institutions; they have skewed their budget estimates and funding solutions to support the prevailing corporate vision of a future based on a need to show a profit center in all corporations, even those distributing public services.

You, as elected public servants, should not reward the destruction of already existing public services that simply require a return to an ethically sound City Council response, to wit, a return to tax- and donation-based support for the ongoing maintenance and necessary upgrading of our public libraries.

The City does not have to profit from public services like libraries; developers do have to profit from their buildings. That competing interest should be avoided.

Corporate interests are always going to be aligned with profits. Placing libraries in a space that's owned by private enterprise will inevitably subject a vital public service to changes in future management and business strategies as decided by that enterprise. Today's promises are profit-driven; tomorrow's will be too. There will be no guarantee of meeting a library's financial needs, 20 years, 30 years, 100 years from now, any better than there is now, when they own their own sites. Why should we take that risk?

Case in point: After selling the site to a developer, the rebuilding of the new Donnell Library space is delayed for several years due to certain private business decisions made by the developer in the owner's self-interest. Also, the Donnell has permanently dissolved its children's and young adults collections because they don't fit into the new digital model of library space, as it is drastically reduced from the lovely space it used to inhabit. The City itself is now admitting the error of that sale.

The allowances of greater density (FAR), various taxpayer subsidies and City property tax abatements to developers in exchange for public space has been questionably negotiated by the City in the past. While new public amenities may be worth the exchange, many agreements benefit the private sector much more than their 'donations' deserve, while abatements further erode our future tax base instead of increasing the taxes these desirable new properties should be remitting to sustain a civilized city - and our libraries. One look at the true economics of the disastrous (only for the public sector!) Donnell Deal is sufficient proof of that!

The exchanging of tax relief and greater FAR for public amenities might indeed serve to enhance the public good if these were new services; but these libraries are not, they are replacements being touted as 'new'. And with all the extra density developers negotiate for, NEW public services should be required for the population expected, not replacement ones, especially not smaller replacements, and especially not replacements which will require the re-investment of the funds the Library reaps for the sale of the land in the build-out of the facility!

The developers wind up with everything they want - taller buildings with more profitable luxury apartments in the sky and low taxes for years - and we get the library facility we should have had anyway, but now without owning the land.

To sell a library's land and award substantial benefits to the private sector for re-supplying one, all in the name of finally serving a great public need, after political interests have intentionally cripple the library system for years, is abhorant to intelligent New Yorkers, rich and poor. Prior short-sighted economic manipulations must be considered as causing the current scrutiny of library land values, and the City Council must not allow more of the same to erode this unique legacy.

Libraries were built on valuable land because they were meant to inspire people to reach for personal excellence.

We all understand the first 3 criteria of real estate value: "location, location, and location". Land in New York City is finite, and has always been coveted by people who envisioned future demand. And the land under both the Brooklyn Heights and Pacific libraries is admittedly very valuable. And why should they not remain the proud owners of it?

Carnegie libraries were placed in highly visible and accessible locations, and given formal architectural prominence in order to accomplish their several missions: to augment expansion of free education to the general public and the social advancement of minorities and the underprivileged, and to heighten public understanding of the particular needs of children in society.

Carnegie libraries had a very important function, a very new function in a time when allowing the public to browse through stacks of books and freely choose to read whatever sparked their interest was unheard of, when only wealthy people had such open access to information.

Social Engineering wears many faces, has many arguable practical considerations, but the Carnegie Foundation's idea in providing unique spaces to move inspiration to aspiration is one of our country's finest philanthropic legacies, and should not be hijacked to current monetization trends.

The Pacific Library has served that purpose for 109 years. The Carnegie mission is as relevant now as it was in 1905. Nothing has changed - except that now, what masquerades as 'philanthropy' in NYC negotiates a price: influence, zoning overrides, tax breaks.

Current promotional media reminds us that Andrew Carnegie is dead, that all possibilities for Profit must be pursued, that Profit is now required of all enterprises, and thus all public service deliverables should now be monetized. My community says "NO".

The Pacific Library land should be held in the public trust, not monetized.

We have a building boom of mostly luxury housing going on in Downtown Brooklyn. It is internationally recognized.

The massive Atlantic Yards Project (although it is now being sold to the Chinese government without having achieved any of its promise, only the arena's profit), controls the land across Pacific Street from the Pacific Library site, known in their plan as 'Site 5'. It has not been developed yet. Additionally, the Church of The Redeemer is looking to monetize its site on the opposite corner. Understandably, developers are salivating for this library's valuable land, the same as they're coveting the land under the Brooklyn Heights branch! In fact, the same developer also owns property adjacent

to the Brooklyn Heights site.

The Pacific Library sits on 1/3rd of the block fronting on 4th Ave; the remainder of that block has very recently been bought by a developer. Coincidentally, I understand the City of New York leases it, and that lease will expire in time for the Two Trees development, the "BAM South" building, to be realized across Atlantic and Flatbush Avenues.

That developer already has an 'approved plan' to give space to the Pacific Library in exchange for whatever benefits were on sale that day. Supposedly this is a "done deal". The plan calls for 'moving' the Pacific Library into a new space, but the sale of the land under the present library will have to pay for the build-out. So it's only ground floor space, in return for potentially massive profits, literally 'sky high'.

Aside from other considerations, it is worth noting that at the last Council hearing I heard the Brooklyn director present an opinion that the land under the Pacific Library wouldn't bring in very much money - not enough money to actually fully build out a large new space because it was 'a small footprint'; additional money would have to be found to complete moving this library. Such misrepresentation of that parcel's value exemplifies the behind-the-scenes effort to obscure the financial negotiations. This same spin continues to be presented by the Research Library, the Midtown Manhattan one, and in Brooklyn Heights.

While it is true that Pubic Advocate James, when she was a Councilmember, had received some vague assurances as to the 'safety' of the Pacific Library after that hearing, no real estate is 'safe' in this climate. We all know representatives and representations change, how competing agendas can be decided by economic expediciencies. We cannot discount that Two Trees says it has an 'approved plan'!

We need the City Council to budget for the necessary repairs and maintenance for our libraries, so that we can be assured of a firmer guarantee of 'safety' for all our library land.

The Pacific Street Library is especially significant as it is.

The architecture of this beautiful building is symbolic in the way of all Carnegie architecture: the impressive doorway is designed to impart the idea that learning elevates one's station in life, and it's flanked by lamp posts symbolizing enlightenment. Maybe that's hokey in the 21st Century, but all architecture uses visual notes to make its music and the music of the past is not irrelevant to the present. It should inspire, if only as a reminder that someone long ago thought underprivileged people deserved to be fed at a beautiful table, and we should demand that today's caretakers still value and promote that public ideal.

Several attempts have been made by Park Slope and Boerum Hill community groups within the last 15 years to landmark it, but the applications suffered pocket vetoes by people with other agendas. Again this year, the Park Slope Civic Council has voted unanimously to have the library landmarked, and across 4th Avenue, we in Boerum Hill joined in that application and again hope for success. We have never heard anything encouraging for our efforts.

I have heard Linda Johnson, BPL Director, say that the Pacific Library's structure is just plain unusable, with small 'rabbit warren' rooms. Well of course it is! Because this particular library, the first Carnegie Library in Brooklyn, had an interior designed specifically for children! And an exterior designed to impress and inspire them to excellence. It was built for children, and one size does not fit all: The street façade is straight, but behind that classic façade, the building is rotund. On the main floor, stacks radiate in from the curved walls toward a central librarian, so children can be easily helped, taught and supervised. The lower and upper floors are large windowed rooms, presently used for and by numerous community groups. There's a grassy surrounding yard, and a rear driveway entrance. This library is intimate, charming, and inviting - and it doesn't fit adult users.

We need to keep the Pacific Street Library where it is. Thousands of new apartments have been built or are in the Downtown Brooklyn pipeline, and all residential services in the area will certainly need to

be expanded. In exchange for the increased FAR they dearly desire, because profits must be maximized, the developer should trade space for a new library that serves the new population; the Pacific "children's library" doesn't have to be a part of that conversation. The developer shouldn't be concerned with which library is housed, only that they can trade public space for the more valuable higher floors.

Let us keep ours! Within a 5-block radius to the south and southeast of this library, in the neighborhoods of Boerum Hill and Park Slope, we already have 3 NYCHA public housing developments (Gowanus South Colony Houses, Wyckoff Gardens Houses, and Warren Street Houses) and 5 public schools (PS 216, 38 and 133 elementary, Middle School 447, and the Brooklyn H.S. of the Arts). Almost all of these children already live in the neighborhood. And more are moving in every month!

We need this library working for us, not a replacement in another neighborhood. These children, independently or in school groups, shouldn't have to cross the 2 busiest intersections in Brooklyn (Atlantic Ave and Flatbush Ave) to go into Ft Greene for their library. That's just another impediment for them to overcome. Ft. Greene has its own library, and now they can have another one in BAM South. It will house the BAM archives at least! Let it be part of the Cultural District. But we deserve our own neighborhood library.

Additionally, the NYC and BPL central plans for replacement services all entail reducing actual book space to complement an increase in digital access. It's a cost-cutting measure being sold as a benefit to the public.

Digital books are not inspiring to children. Picture books, storybooks, books you can hold, carry and share, books you're inspired to read in bed by flashlight - those are necessary for children. Symbols you can see and feel add understanding, help form ideas, and the physical space that welcomes children, that makes them feel like important people, nurtures lifelong learning habits.

Digital media has its place and libraries should provide it, but many of our children can't afford home computers, can't afford monthly internet fees. They shouldn't be expected to buy e-readers that, in yet another 'partnership', require accounts with Amazon or Barnes & Noble to borrow an e-book from what used to be the free public library! Even if e-books are free, access requires an investment.

Instead of destroying this one, the Pacific Street Children's Library could be the jewel of the Brooklyn system! Returning it to its original service, updating it with the technology our children truly do need, this 1905 legacy could shine as a continued promise.

Just imagine! How wonderful it will look, left at its own original corner; what a beautiful counterpoint the old building will be to the modern ones sure to rise on the other corners, and all over Downtown. Anyone who sees it will thank us for keeping it as a reminder of what our great-great-grandparents cherished, and how well this generation nourished Carnegie's public trust.

Thank you for your attention. And long live private philanthropy not tied to government subsidies!

Submitted June 10, 2014 by Therese Urban, Brooklyn, NY

Testimony of Lucy Koteen

Wednesday, June 11, 2014

Subject: library sell-off
financetestimony@council.nyc.gov

Public libraries belong to the public. They are not real estate assets that are to be used as pawns serving at the pleasure of the library trustees or at the hands of ambitious City Council members anticipating where donations will come from for their next political campaign.

The sell-off of the Donnell Library set the stage for future sales. It was planned in the dark of night and sold under cover for a pittance of what it was worth. It's low selling price benefited the developer

allowing him to make a large profit. It did not benefit the library patrons. The sell happened after the recent expenditures at the Donnell of millions of tax payer dollars used to improve the Donnell Library, which was a highly used facility. These tax dollars were wasted money when spent only to serve a building that would be soon sold.

Now we see the same model being used at the Brooklyn Heights Library; a plan hatched in secret long before the public got a whiff of the odor to sell a highly used library composed of two different libraries. We see highly inflated repair costs with no public dialogue as to how those costs came to be, we see the removal of books, we learn of RFP responses that are not shared with the public. How is it that the council has not asked to see the responses to the RFP, that they will not share the price range that the developers offered for the space? How can the council members evaluate the benefit of selling the library if they haven't a clue as to what the library will be sold for, what are the costs of a temporary library and then a new library and the amount of money going to Forest City Ratner who owns 50% of the air rights over the Brooklyn Heights library? How can you weigh a cost/gain benefit with no information.

The council at the hearing on June 3rd asked no hard questions. They allowed for a dog and pony show staged by the three library executives starting with a PR stunt of a movie. With so little time to question the library executives why on earth did they permit this showcase to go up, giving up control of the hearing to the library executives? The only person who asked any challenging questions of the library executives was the Public Advocate.

We need our city council members to ask hard questions. With Tony Marx receiving a salary close to \$800,000 aren't the members a little bit curious as to what he does to deserve a salary six times that of their own? Is there no curiosity as to whether he gets his car and luxury house on top of that salary? How is it that the day before the hearing we see in the press, that although the library has put aside the Central Library Plan, which indeed would cost more than \$500,000 million, they would still need \$350 million for other modifications. They knew that there has been pressure to re purpose the \$150 million of public money in the City budget to share with other library systems. Why did no one mention that they had just squandered at least \$18 million dollars on an ill-conceived plan and therefore need exceedingly careful scrutiny before they are permitted to spend the public money on the next fool hardy plan? Where is the oversight?

There are 100s of serious questions that could be asked of the library executives, none of which were asked. Please can someone explain that to me? Are hearings just showcases for the executives to ramble on about how wonderful their work is without question?

[Five Citizens to Council \(Paula Glazer, Marsha Rimmler, Vera Conant, Rita Bott and Greg Homatas\): Audit Library Finances, Hold Accountable \(click through to YouTube for best viewing\)](#)

Testimony from Veronika Conant

New York City Council Finance Committee, Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergration Relations and Select Committee on Libraries

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Executive Budget Hearings - Libraries
Tuesday June 3, 2014, Public Comments Friday June 6, 2014
Testimony by Veronika Conant

I am Veronika Conant, a retired academic librarian and member of the Committee to Save the New York Public Library. I am also past President of the West 54 - 55 Street Block Association, a group active during the disastrous sale of the Donnell Library.

It was good to hear that the book stacks at the 42nd Street Library will not be demolished and that the Mid-Manhattan Library will be renovated. However, we are concerned about transparency, accountability and oversight.

There are still many unanswered questions regarding the way the \$151 million capital funds from the City Council will be used for the renovation plans. Has NYPL asked for a budget modification for the \$151 million and if yes what is the breakdown?

In March 2013 over 3 million items were removed from the book stacks in secret, and moved to a distant location in the Bronx where they been stored ever since. The plan is to keep the stacks empty even though they are an integral part of the 42nd Street building's structure, and a remarkably efficient book delivery system to the Rose Reading Room above. They are in working condition, were air conditioned in the '80s and received a sprinkler system in the '90's. According to Tony Marx their upgrade to current standards would cost \$46 million - a price he considers too expensive.

The stacks provide 160,000 square feet of shelving space. At the cost of \$46 million, the unit price is \$287.50 per square foot - a bargain.

Is NYPL quoting an independent estimate they have received for the upgrade in writing? According to the DDC's figures of \$150 per square foot for interior renovation, the cost would be \$24 million. Has DDC given an official estimate, and if so, what was the value?

While it is appreciated that NYPL will reconfigure the space in other parts of the 42nd Street Library, we want to be assured no space will be taken away from what is needed to allow the book delivery function and to provide air conditioning, humidity controls and sprinklers for the book stacks.

DDC stated that since the NYPL plans are pass through, they do not have control over the funds until after a contract has been signed. The plans can be modified by NYPL only prior to the signing of a contract. After that they are locked in. We recommend the budget modification include the cost of the above upgrades and also the renovation of Mid-Manhattan. We ask all of you to please make sure no contract gets signed for the NYPL plans without these.

Additional recommendations:

- Develop the second BPSE storage area, started during Vartan Gregorian's presidency with the goal of doubling the available storage space at 42nd Street from 3.5 million to 6.7 million . Cost estimates are \$8 - \$20 million.
- Do not sell SIBL, do not allow the sale of public libraries in any library system at a time when more people than ever use libraries. SIBL was created for \$100 million in 1996, has been wired for technology, with hundreds of computers, and comfortable and expensive furniture. It functions extremely well as a technology center. All it needs is longer opening hours than the present 51 hours per week, a relatively inexpensive investment. (By comparison, Mid-Manhattan is open 88 hrs per week)

Other comments:

On Tuesday PA Tish James asked Tony Marx (TM) was Stephen Schwarzman's \$100 million donation used for the renovations. His answer was no, it was used for the operating budget. However, Robin Pogrebin's NYT article on March 11, 2008 states it otherwise. Please read it at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/11/arts/design/11expa.html?pagewanted=1&emc=eta1> !

TM's statement at the hearing that pass though projects which get some private support take half the time at half the cost of publicly funded projects, needs proof. The examples of DDC's library projects I looked up for cost indicated otherwise. I sent this list to the Library Committee after the April 28, 2014 hearing. Can we see his list?

TM also stated \$280 million capital funding has been spent on the branches since 2002. Can we see the detailed list, with break down to public vs privately funded projects?

Finally, the news of plaster falling from the ceiling of the Rose Reading Room has led to a temporary closing for several weeks, speaks loud and clear about the importance of protecting this 103 year old beautiful interior space, used daily by researchers from all over the world. A \$15 million interior restoration project, including re-plastering, was completed in late 1998. Please practice your oversight function to make sure inspections are done and the monumental room is restored for use as soon as possible.

Thank you.

Veronika A Conant, M.L.S. retired from Hunter College Libraries
45 W 54 St, 7C, New York, NY 10019

Testimony of Gregory Homatas

Executive Budget Hearing Fiscal Year 2015
Committee on Finance
Testimony of Gregory Homatas
avid library user of all three systems
June 6, 2014

Good afternoon and thank you for letting me speak. This is the first time I have spoken in front of this august body. My name is Gregory Homatas and I am a lifelong resident of Brooklyn and an avid user of all three library systems. I would like to address the Brooklyn Heights Project in my testimony.

I am appalled at the lack of transparency and lack of public participation in the process of this Project. The existing Citizens Advisory Committee in my opinion, does not reflect a representative cross section of different viewpoints on this Project.

Second, it appears that the Brooklyn Public Library is in the process of selling off the Brooklyn Heights Branch due to a Heating Ventilating and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system that does not work. Would you sell off your house or coop due to a broken HVAC system rather than fix it or replace it? Think about it.

Third, the Brooklyn Public Library should share the Request for Proposal responses and range of bids received for public vetting for the Brooklyn Heights Project. I urge the NYC Council to look into this Project, stop the process and investigate whether or not this is the proper approach given the fact that a petition of over 16,000 citizens signatures were delivered to former Mayor Bloomberg opposing the sale of this and all libraries. This petition was delivered on October 22, 2013 on the steps of City Hall.

Fourth, the Brooklyn Public Library should fix the currently installed HVAC system or provide temporary air conditioning units ("spot coolers") as the advent of hot weather is approaching which will cause the Brooklyn Heights Branch to be shut down again during the hot days of the coming summer months due to lack of cooling.

I urge the highly qualified New York City Department of Design and Construction (DDC) to renovate the Brooklyn Heights Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library and the New York City Council to appropriate monies to the DDC as they are qualified to do this task. This is preferable to a pass through project which would not be managed by DDC as they have less oversight on a day to day basis which would not be in the public interest. The fact is that DDC can do the job far cheaper than farming it out to an outside entity. This was testified by the current Deputy DDC Commissioner David Resnick in a City Council hearing on the Capital Budget of April 28, 2014.

I would like to urge you to investigate why Brooklyn Heights Branch various building services have not been maintained such as the public bathrooms to make this library a less desirable place to read and study so that an excuse can be made for the selloff by the Owners rather than doing their due diligence and maintaining these public assets so that they would be functional.

I would like to share a spread sheet that I developed from publicly available sources using the Google

search engine (listed on the last three pages as items 1 through 51) as I understand you are interested in possible conflicts of interest regards public library trustees. This spreadsheet in particular is for the Brooklyn Public Library and the questions that I would like to raise are as follows:

1) Seated on the board of trustees of the Brooklyn Public Library is Lucille Cole who is immediate past president of the BPL and is currently a trustee. She has a library science degree and various awards as per my spreadsheet. Why is the only qualified librarian no longer the president? Why is the current CEO a fundraiser rather than a qualified librarian and shouldn't fundraising be left to a separate department? A library is a public good not a profit making company. It should be treated as such.

2) It appears that some trustees are involved with digital media. Libraries are appearing to be transitioning to digital media as per following quote in the Gowanus Lounge article about the current President. She states as follows in the below cited article:

Any new library would not be a repository of books by any stretch. It's really about the programming. It's really about how to use the spaces we have to meet our patrons' needs.

See the below weblink:

<http://www.gowanuslounge.com/brooklyn-public-library-linda-johnson/>

it appears that some of these trustees may make a killing off of digital media if the library system goes digital media wouldn't you think? Should they really be trustees and can we trust them? The fact of the matter is that statistics have shown that people want and love the feel of real paper books not e books.

3) One trustee's husband is a hedge fund manager and many others are involved in real estate and investments. What business do they have as trustees of our library systems?

As per my chart, 7 out of 23 BPL Trustees live in Brooklyn Heights. If they build a new tower in place of the existing Brooklyn Heights Branch of the BPL whose real estate value will go up? Is this not a possible conflict of interest to support such a venture?

In short, there are many questions regards the management of our public libraries that need asking that have not been asked by our New York City Council and I would like to urge you to ask these questions. Thank you very much for listening to me.

	First Name of Trustee	Last Name of Trustee	BPL Board Title	Employer of Trustee	Employment Position of Trustee	Affiliation of Trustee	Remarks	Residence	Ref. See sheet 2
1	Peter	Aschkenasy	Treasurer	Concert Funds	Owner	BAC board member, member Mayor Kochs inner circle owner Gage and Tailors Restaurant	Wife Pamela Reier	Bklyn Hts	1,2,3
2	Gindi	Levie	Trustee	Candle Nati	Editor in Chief	PNMF board of directors	Husband Howard Bernstein	Upper West Side	4
3	Kyle	Kimball	Trustee	NYCEDC	President NYCEDC	Former Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan Chase	Has been endorsed by Mayor Bill De Blasio to stay over in current position that he was appointed by Mayor Bloomberg	Midwood Bklyn	5,6
4	Jordan	Barowitz	Trustee	Dorst Organization	Director External Aff	Former 1st deputy press secretary to Mayor Bloomberg, Exe Director GROW NYC and Steering Committee Member ADNY, Mayor Di Blasio inaugural committee	Wife Erica Beth Zaritsky	Bklyn Hts	7,8
5	Miriam	Katowitz	Former Trustee?	CUNY	Controller	CFO Safe Haven, Board member Alliance for Non Profit Governance	Arthur Rafkin, Husband	Home in East Hampton LI	9,10,11
6	Jeff	Gemette	Trustee	Macys	President			Bklyn Hts	12
7	Michael	Best	Trustee	Michael Bloomberg LP	Chief of Staff	Former NYC Dept of Ed General Counsel NYC Host Committee RNC	Wife Jenny Blascovich	Midwood Bklyn	13,14, 23,24
8	Susan	Marcinek	Trustee	New Narratives	Founder	Member Board Berkeley Carroll School	Husband Dave Marcinek	Park Slope	15

					Appointed in 2013 to 6 year term in NYC Conflict of Interest Board, Board of Directors Citizens United, Former Counselor to Mayor Bloomberg, Commissioner NYC Charter Revision Committee	Former Chair BPL Board	Bklyn Hts	15
9 Anthony	Crowell	Trustee	New York Law School	Dean				
10 Nicholas	Gravante	Chair Board of Trustees	Boles, Schiller and Flexner	General Counsel Partner	Co hosted campaign event for Mayor Di Blasio, co chair 12/13/10 cocktail reception for Di Blasio at Waldorf Astoria, Wife Evelyn Klinge	Represents Bilem Son and brother who were accused of fraud in hedge fund that went sour.	Bay Ridge	17,18, 19,20, 21,22
11 Kwanza	Butler	Former Trustee?	Time Warner	Sr Counsel and Asst Corporate Secretary	Board of Directors NY Womens Foundation, Faculty Practicing Law Institute, City Bar Justice Center-Board of Directors		Letters Gdn	25
12 Nina	Collins	Trustee		Literary Agent	Recently bought a Bklyn Hts brownstone worth \$8.5M highest price paid at time of publication.	Husband is Marek Flutinski Founder CVO Thales Fund Mgt, Hedge Fund Has PhD Theoretical Physics Princeton U	Bklyn Hts	26,27
13 Robin	Shanus	Secretary	Hudson River Park Trust		General Practice Lawyer, Board of Directors Brooklyn Bridge Park, Fair Elections for NY	Husband is Stephen Marcus Metcal	Bklyn Hts	28,29, 30
14 Christina	Tettoni	Trustee	Hellenic Classical Charter School	Principal	Helped organize save our shelves campaign! Got award from Murty Golden	Husband is Mark	Bay Ridge	31,32, 33,34

15 Lucille	Cole Thomas	Trustee			First and only African American President of NY Library Assn, World Library and Role of Libraries paper in LJFA Journal, Has Library Science degree, Freedom to Read Foundation, ALA liaison, President St Marks Day School	Immediate past president BPL	Jamaica Queens	35,36
16 Antonia	Yuille Williams	Trustee	Con Edison	Director Public Affairs Bklyn Queens Customer service	1st Vice Chair Red Stuy Restoration	Vice Chair of Red Stuy Restoration is David Offensend	Red Stuy	37
17 Sandra	Schubert	Trustee	Goldman Sachs	Vice President	Broker		Prospect Hts	38
18 Alice	Fisher Rubin	Trustee	NYC Civil Court	Judge	President Brooklyn Womens Bar Assn, Officer CUNY Tech Foundation		Midwood Bklyn	39,40
19 Gino	Menchini	Trustee	SNJ NYC	Managing director	Former Commissioner NYC DOT under Mayor Bloomberg,	Chair CEO CFO and Principal Accounting Officer at Cnarept Digital, Article in Bloomberg.com that he sees strongest growth online	Windsburgh, Bklyn	41
20 Joseph	Douek	Trustee	Willoughby	Owner	Former Director NYCEDC	Griffin Ward is a marketing firm committed to growing proprietary products, managing live events and promotion marketing consulting.	Kensington, Bklyn	42,43, 44
21 Michael	Liburd	Trustee	Griffin Ward LLC	Founder	Board of Directors ERIC		Bronx	45

22 Hank	Gutman	Trustee	Simpson, Thacher and Bartlett LLP	Chair Intellectual Property Practice Group	Co Vice Chair NY League of Conservation Voters, Key player for initiating Brooklyn Bridge Park, Board Member Brooklyn Bridge Park and Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation, Resigned from BILA over HIP dispute St Ann lawsuit, Contributed to campaign fund raising for di Blasio	Simpson, Thacher and Bartlett represents Blackstone group involved in private equity, hedge funds and buyouts. Lecturer on intellectual property and computer litigation subjects	Bklyn Hts	46,47, 50,51
23 Kim	Thu Postnett	Trustee	Goldman Sachs	Managing director	Broker	Husband Michael Pastor? Park Slope		48

8/18/2015 3:55 PM

What is the cost of transportation and insurance for books shuttled between the storage areas and 42nd Street? Has any assessment been made of the damage to books in transit? One might guess that improving the climate control and fire safety mechanisms at 42nd Street would save money in the long run, i.e. over the next hundred years. Incidentally, fire safety has not been a problem in the past century. Cellulose in books was regarded as a fire retardant, and some insulation from heat was required for steel structures.

3. Whom will the City appoint as Ex-Officio Trustee to the NY Public Library Board of Trustees? The City should require continuous and complete accountability for public funds.

4. Has the Department of Design and Construction evaluated the figures for constructing storage space under Bryant Park, and for improvement of current air-conditioning and fire safety? It should do so, or the City should employ a fully independent cost assessor to do so.

Exactly what number of books can be stored under Bryant Park? How many books does the 42nd Street building own? (These figures will help you to see how economical the Bryant Park storage proposal is.)

5. Please require the Library to disclose details of the Library's cost estimates so that both your Council colleagues and ordinary citizens can see that City money is going to be spent prudently.

6. In view of the proximity of Mid-Manhattan to the 42nd Street building, will lending services at 42nd Street unnecessarily duplicate services at Mid-Manhattan? To draw the public into 42nd Street, that building can continue to house exhibitions and welcome tourists to the major rooms.

7. Does it make budgetary sense to increase youth and children's facilities at 42nd Street rather than in residential neighborhoods? We all want young people to feel welcome at 42nd Street, but few actually live nearby. I have seen many teenagers using the research facilities and computers at 42nd Street, so they do seem to know already about what's available to them there.

Even if lending services remain at Mid-Manhattan only, the formal school-centered pupil and teacher educational services could be offered in the lowest floor at 42nd Street, as recently proposed.)

Respectfully submitted,

Carol H. Krinsky

Testimony of Rita E. Bott

Testimony of Rita E. Bott on Proposed Fiscal Year 2015 Executive Budget for Libraries, 6/6/2014, City Council of New York

My name is Rita Bott. I am a retired Supervising Librarian and Unit Head whose career was spent providing frontline public service at the New York Public Library, first at the much-lamented, now destroyed Donnell Library Center and then at the recently-retrieved but collections-decimated Mid-Manhattan Library.

First, with respect to the New York Public Library, I would like to call attention to the "Finance Division Briefing Paper" that was distributed at Tuesday's committee hearing on Libraries. On p. 5 we find,

"...Plan highlights include \$151 million for the Central Library Master Plan which is currently on hold..." That \$151 million is parked under "New York Public Library," meaning the branch system, but part of it needs to be shifted by the Council to the category "New York Research Libraries" for the following purpose:

The NYPL has said that state-of-the-art climate control and fire suppression systems are needed for the 42nd Street Library's central stacks. They had tried to create the impression that there were no such systems but there are existing, 1980's-vintage systems that may need an upgrade. The library is claiming the project would cost \$46 million. I have not seen any written documentation of that estimate and given the gross inaccuracy of the CLP estimate which the library administration repeatedly said would cost \$300 million but which actually turned out to be a whopping \$500 million, I strongly urge that the Council prudently demand independent, written documentation for this and any other such budgetary assertions by the NYPL. I ask that the documentation be shared with all interested parties, including the taxpaying public.

If the documented amount really is \$46 million or however much it might be, I request that the Council transfer that amount from the NYPL budget to the NY Research Libraries budget, specifying that, as quickly as possible, any work needed in the stack area be performed before any other so that the shelves there can be refilled ASAP with the three million books that were previously removed from them.

Right now, the Council urgently needs to take steps to repair the badly-shaken confidence of the NYPL's users, supporters, and concerned citizens in general by making it a priority to get the nonprofit to put its books back where they belong--in the structural stacks that were designed for them and built by the taxpayers at NYC's world-famous reference library.

From the same document: "In the Brooklyn Public Library's Executive Capital Commitment Plan, there is \$93 million shown for BPL capital plans (including city and non-city). Roughly \$7 million is planned for the BPL Central Library Renovation and an additional \$4 million for a youth services library. Majority of the funding is various critical borough-wide infrastructure improvement projects." \$93 million less \$11 million is \$72 million. There is nothing is specified about fixing the A.C. at the Brooklyn Heights Branch with the entire borough's Business and Career Library present there. The A.C. being broken is the exact same pretext used by the NYPL's former President Paul LeClerc to justify the Donnell Library Center sales and shrinkage debacle-and there too, to my knowledge, there was no evidence presented that funding for this capital need had been requested, per procedure, and denied. I have a question: There is a shiny "BAC" (Baltimore Air Coil Co.) air conditioning unit sitting on the roof of the Brooklyn Heights Branch. The company has a website with numerous replacement parts available for purchase. May we please see a copy of the written statement from BAC that you've been provided with by the BPL, stating that the Brooklyn Heights unit cannot be made operable? If it can't be, how much does BAC say a replacement unit of theirs would cost?

In her testimony, Linda Johnson piled on that the Brooklyn Heights Branch building is "uninspiring." It's an interestingly exact echo of non-architect President LeClerc who suddenly decided in 2007 that Donnell's architecture allegedly wasn't okay on its block and pronounced it as another reason Donnell just had to go. At this time, the BPL's CEO is attempting to continue Bloomberg's third term. She is pushing for the sale and shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights Branch rather than following procedure and requesting capital budget funds from this Council to fix any problems. Councilpersons, can you please get more involved on this and take some concrete steps to disabuse President Johnson of her peculiar, wrongheaded idea that cannibalizing her system's assets, allegedly to pay bills elsewhere, is an acceptable strategy for a library president to advocate. Thank you.

Rita E. Bott
Brooklyn, NY

Testimony of Ruth Eiss

Linda Johnson was trucked in to oversee turning the Cadman Plaza Branch Library into a cash cow with the stated purpose of funding the other Brooklyn branch libraries; selling public land and assets

for high rise development with truncated library facilities. Her testimony was long on platitudes but short on details. These should have included (among other things) an inventory of assets, development rights that could be traded, the process for determining to sell the CPBL versus other branches, names and budgets of responses to the RFP already let, alternate plans to tearing down the library and alternate revenue streams." What is between two covers? Brooklyn Public Library and real estate." Has the Council documented who is profiteering from this sweetheart deal?

Dr Marx indicated that "Queens was well-represented in the house." But what about Brooklyn? Councilman Steve Levin visited briefly but was mute in defense of our library. He had formerly been told that attending a function of an advocacy group, Citizens Defending Libraries, would be "a mistake." Was he made an "offer he couldn't refuse?"

The exalted mission of the Brooklyn Public Library is to be "...accessible 24 hours a day..." The sad reality, however, is of (CPBL) a sweltering facility currently open FOUR hours a day with reduced staff.

One Friday, I visited the CPBL, where a book sale was in progress. For the sum of \$1.00, I purchased a circulating book of heartfelt poetry and inspiring illustration in fine condition. Who was the arbiter of the decision to excess this gem? Surely not a librarian or anyone with literary or artistic acumen! And who is tracking where the proceeds go?

Linda Johnson fancies herself "rolling up her sleeves" to provide funding for the balance of the borough's branches by selling the CPBL for high rise development. She asserts that her plan would make CPBL among "the largest in Brooklyn." Reality speak of a library 25%-33% of the current space.

The 16,000 signatories of CDL's petition and the vast number of it's needy patrons have spoken: WE WON'T BE THE SACRIFICIAL LAMB!

* * * *

April 28, 2014

Testimony of Charles D. Warren

Oversight Hearing, April 28, 2014

City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and Intergroup Relations & City Council Subcommittee on Libraries.

I am Charles Warren. I am an architect. I co-wrote the 2-volume study titled: Carrère & Hastings, Architects. (with Kate Lemos, William Morrison, and Mark Alan Hewitt, 2006; ISBN-13: 978-0926494428). This firm designed the 42nd Street Library building.

Hovering over this Hearing are the events now unfolding at the Queens Public Library. That should be an object-lesson to all of you. Council Member Elizabeth Crowley asked for Transparency. Council Member Stephen Levin asked for Alternatives. Both of them should be heeded. We have heard testimony from the DDC [Department of Design and Construction], which is entirely competent in delivering public projects.

The New York Public Library (NYPL) is owned by all of us; it belongs to the City, not to the NYPL trustees. The DDC is the appropriate agency to carefully monitor any construction project there, they are the ones to explore alternatives, provide independent cost estimates (or at least check them). It is an agency representing the People of New York City. We should be able to rely on DDC to look after our interests. Pass through projects escape their full scrutiny and prevent needed transparency.

We have been waiting for nearly a year for a promised analysis of costs for the Central Library Plan [and its successor plans] and information on alternatives to this wasteful, destructive plan. We have been waiting a year, and still NYPL Trustees stall and stonewall. The Alternatives and Transparency called for earlier by members of your Committees are absent from this process.

It is incumbent upon this Committee, upon all of you, and upon us as citizens, to demand that this proposed desecration of one of the great buildings in the City of New York, this emptying out of its resources and sending them out to another state, be carefully examined, prospectively, not retrospectively. You have the power to withhold the \$151,000,000 of our money. Withholding that money will stop this process cold. You have the power to compel NYPL to maintain this building - our building. It is a civic resource and cultural treasure that must be protected.

It is incumbent upon you to make this a transparent process, so that our cultural resources are protected and maintained for future generations. They do not belong to the NYPL Board. They belong to the City of New York. I insist, and it's time now, that you demand transparency in this process from the NYPL. You must no longer accept their method or their assurances: "We're going to produce some new plans, and we'll let you know." Or, "We're going to analyze these costs and we'll let you know." They must do better than: "We've looked at all the alternatives, and we've picked the best one. Trust us." That is not the way this should work.

They should be before this Committee. They should be asked every question that you have asked the DDC. The DDC -- a great resource of this City in analyzing construction costs should be part of this process, now, prospectively, during the process, and retrospectively -- should help our government and our citizens analyze this opaque proposal. They should be looking after our pocketbooks. And you should be looking after our cultural resources.

Respectfully Submitted,

Charles D. Warren
New York, NY 10025

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

Oversight: Tracking how the Department of Design and Construction spends, monitors and discloses capital funding for library and cultural projects

Monday, April 28, 2014

Testimony by Veronika Conant.

I am Veronika Conant, a retired academic librarian and a member of the Committee to Save the New York Public Library. I am also past President of the West 54 - 55 Street Block Association, a group active during the disastrous sale of the Donnell Library in 2009.

Thank you for holding this very interesting hearing. The DDC is doing a great deal of useful work on libraries. It was the first time that we heard actual cost estimates, breaking down costs to units of cost per square foot. According to DDC, for libraries the average cost of a simple interior renovation is \$150 per square foot; the average cost of new construction is \$700 - \$850 per square foot.

NYPL's Central Library Plan (CLP) will create an about 100,000 square feet new circulating library in place of the current book stacks at 42nd Street. The plan will destroy the research library's book delivery system (7 floors of historic and functional book stacks, which can hold millions of research materials, and hold up the Rose Reading Room above), sell off two popular public libraries, shrink their contents into the new space created, and move millions of research materials off-site. The estimated cost is \$350 million, with \$151 million from City funds.

The cost of \$350 million for 100,000 square feet of library space means \$3,500 per square foot, an outrageously expensive undertaking compared to DDC's \$150 per square foot cost for interior renovation and \$700 - \$850 per square foot cost for new library constructions.

The 7 floors of book stacks at the 42nd Street Library are in working condition, were air conditioned in the '80s and received a sprinkler system in the '90's. Using DDC's figures of \$150 per square foot for interior renovation, their upgrade to current standards would cost \$24 million (for 160,000 square feet densely placed existing shelving).

Using DDC's figures, the close to 160,000 square feet present Mid-Manhattan Library's interior renovation would cost \$24 million (at \$150 per square foot) while a new Mid-Manhattan library of the same size would cost, using \$850 per square foot, \$136 million. It could even be larger, leaving space for growth.

Both versions are significantly less expensive (\$48 million for simple renovations or \$160 million, including a new Mid-Manhattan) than the present estimated \$350 million. They would preserve the historic book stacks, filled with over three millions of books, allowing them to continue to serve researchers all over the world as they have done for over 100 years. Two popular public libraries would continue to remain in use, serving the needs of millions of library users.

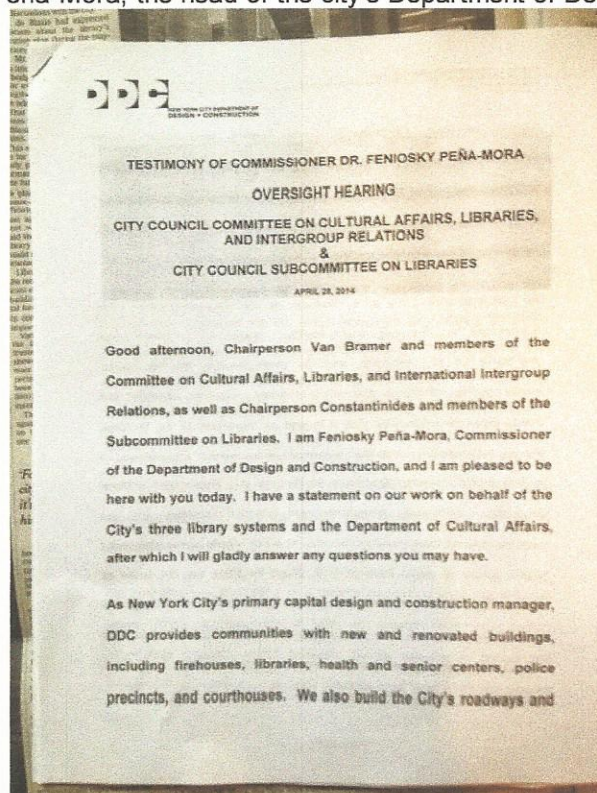
We would like to get an estimate from DDC for the plans mentioned, and would very much appreciate if you could explore the alternative plans now.

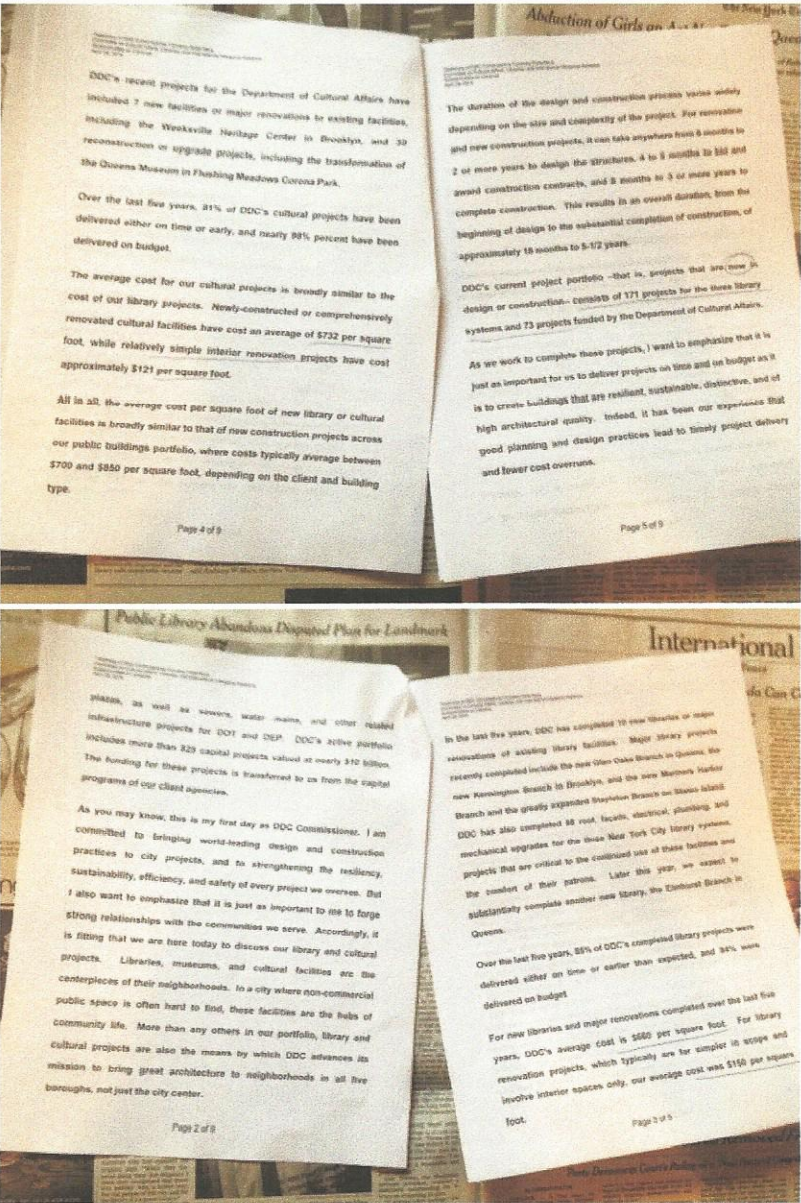
DDC stated that since the NYPL plans are pass through, they do not have control over the funds until after a contract has been signed. The plans can be modified by NYPL only prior to the signing of a contract. After that they are locked in. We would like to make sure no contract gets signed for the present plans.

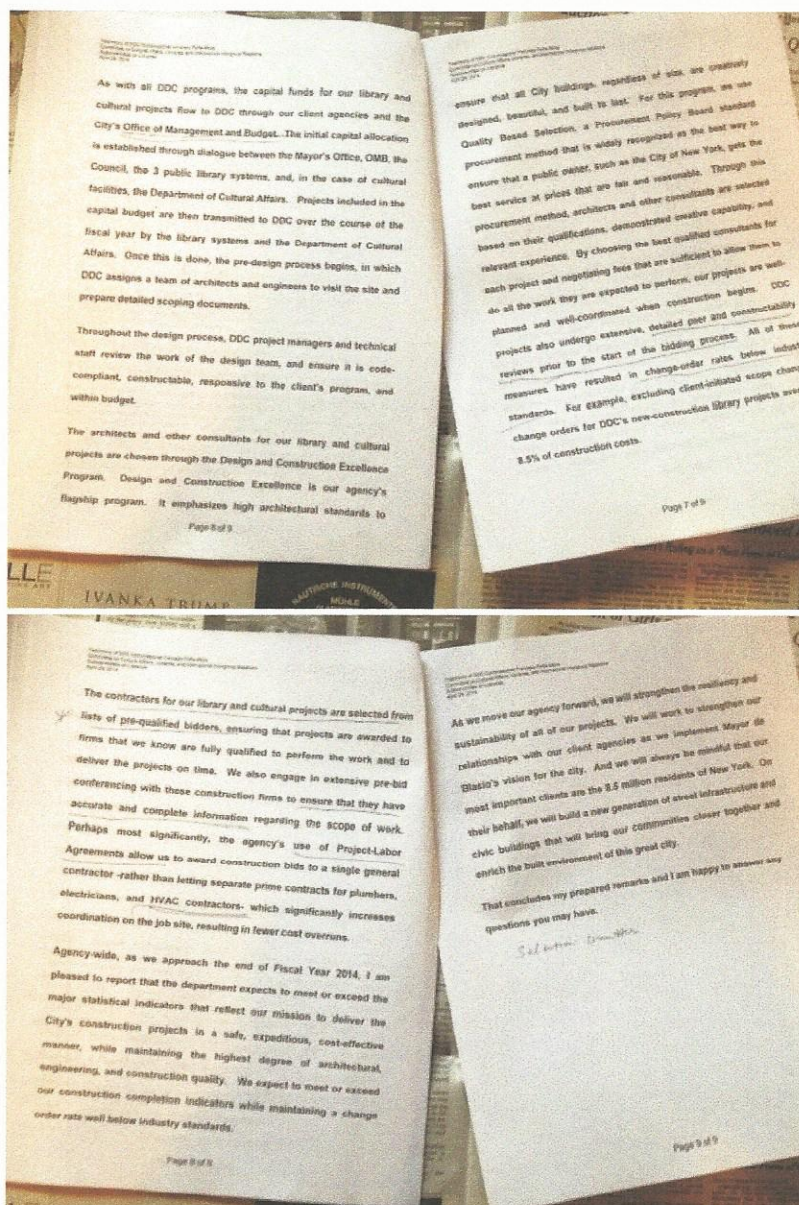
Thank you.

Veronika A Conant, M.L.S. retired from Hunter College Libraries
New York, NY 10019

Below- Testimony of Feniosky Peña-Mora, the head of the city's Department of Design & Construction (DDC).







Testimony of CDL co-founder Michael D. D. White: Bloomberg interposed between public and the libraries, imposed self-cannibalizing sell-offs and shrinkages



Michael D. D. White on right- one of four more panelist delivering testimony against library sell-offs
March 11 2014

James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

The public wants its libraries and is absolutely willing to pay for them: Ask the community boards about their priorities. Or, you can do any kind of poll or "people's budget" and confirm exactly the same thing.

Libraries cost little in the scheme of things, are heavily used and because they are so important to the economy of a growing city, they more than pay for themselves.

Now let's deal with the fact that the Bloomberg administration did something that is the opposite of what elected officials should do: It interposed itself between the people and the libraries they want, deliberately underfunding them, and acting in coordination with library administration officials (whose dedication and commitment to the public good we are now beginning to properly challenge), to impose a program of self-cannibalizing sell-offs and shrinkages. Why? We note how these deals benefit real estate developers, not the public.

It is wasteful to destroy and sell valuable libraries, like the Donnell Library, that can't be replaced. Donnell was sold for an as yet unexplained, as yet uninvestigated pittance, netting the NYPL less than \$39 million for a five-story, 97,000 square foot library when the penthouse apartment in the 50-story building replacing it is on the market for \$60 million.

Some of these absurd schemes make especially easy targets: The NYPL's Central Library Plan diverts at least \$350 million dollars in library funds (perhaps ultimately as much as a half billion dollars) to sell and drastically shrink libraries and get rid of books and librarians, with at least \$150 million of that being in the form of new money the taxpayers are being asked to come up with to add to the waste. We are speaking of libraries that were last expanded for lack of space at taxpayer expense recently, as recently as 2002, and libraries like the Mid-Manhattan library that the Giuliani administration proposed to nearly double in size.

I suggest to you the imperative that Libraries be funded by the mayor and City Council with the specific condition that the money not be used wastefully to sell and shrink libraries. You must insist because if that is not made so, we all face a conundrum in giving to the libraries, guessing how our money will be wasted. This kind of waste by the

Trustees of money and assets provided by the taxpayers must be investigated as the Comptroller, among others, has promised.

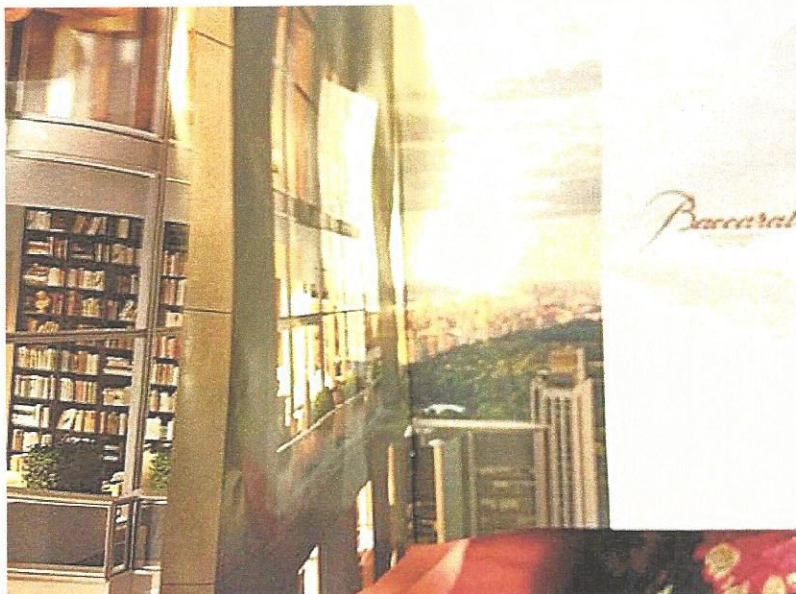
What should this city budget this year look like? The Bloomberg administration, wanting to sell and shrink libraries, underfunded them for years. That's funding that should now be made up, but it is important to recognize that the accumulation of capital expenditures needing to be caught up with can be spaced out over a number of years. That's the nature of capital expenditures.

Do we have as much catching up to do as we think? It's important to recognize that, in generating excuses to advocate for the sale of libraries like Donnell and for sales and shrinkage of the system, library administration officials have suspiciously inflated the cost of repairs reported to be necessary for Donnell, Mid-Manhattan, Pacific Branch and Brooklyn Heights Library. So don't assume. Skepticism is essential along with greater transparency, and we must replace the existing trustees and library administration officials with more trustworthy and reliable individuals or there can be no assurance that funds will be used as they ought. That is why it is critical to halt the CLP, and essential to halt the other similar proposed library sales and shrinkages, a halt to continue at the very least through the entirety of the next budget year and a great deal of investigation.

Libraries equal democracy and books should not just be for the wealthy! I leave you with a picture advertisement from the Sunday New York Times Magazine. Its message worth a thousand words?: The luxury apartments in "The Baccarat" tower replacing the Donnell will have more books than libraries in the NYPL system!

Sincerely

Michael D. D. White
Citizens Defending Libraries



Picture attached to testimony. It was previously Tweeted: "[Wrong w/ this picture? Luxury apartments replacing Donnell Library have more books than NYPL #NYCLibraries! pic.twitter.com/r9yvBuEtx6](#)" and was also made available by CDL on [Facebook](#)



Same picture being held up during testimony

Testimony of Peter Rooney: Vanishing of the Research Books

March 11 2014

James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

I wish to submit the following testimony for the March 11, 2014 hearing on
"New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings."

It is an email I sent to one of the NYPL trustees, Robert Darnton. The trustees are meeting today. My letter is a "view from the trenches" about how research at the library is being impacted by the "Central Library Plan."

To: robert.darnton@harvard.edu Date: March 11, 2014

Dear Dr. Darnton

I'm writing because you are on the Board of Trustees of the New York Public Library. Also, I've read a couple of your books: of particular note, *The Case for Books*. In it, you argue against the trend among librarians to dispose of - indeed, destroy - physical books and newspapers, trusting that their contents will be preserved in perpetuity in a digital format.

Therefore, I hope that you, given your interest in the book, can protest the current plan to move the research collection offsite and replace the emptied space with a circulating library, with many fewer books and much less space.

I am a book indexer by profession. In the past, I've relied on the Main Library to fulfill my research needs when I am working on a new project. Starting about December 2012, I have found there is very little use in going to the Main Library because most of the books I will be looking for have been moved offsite.

Here's a live example. Currently I've been indexing a biography of Eddie Rickenbacker, the World War I ace pilot. I compiled a list of nine titles that I wanted to consult, and went to the Main Library to look for them. Of these nine titles, six were offsite (meaning New Jersey). Two were in the circulating collection at Mid Manhattan, and they

happened to be available. The most important one - Rickenbacker: an Autobiography - was available for "use in library". I called that up and referred to it onsite. Since my work is on a deadline, I judged it would be fruitless to order the six offsite volumes to be delivered in a day or two.

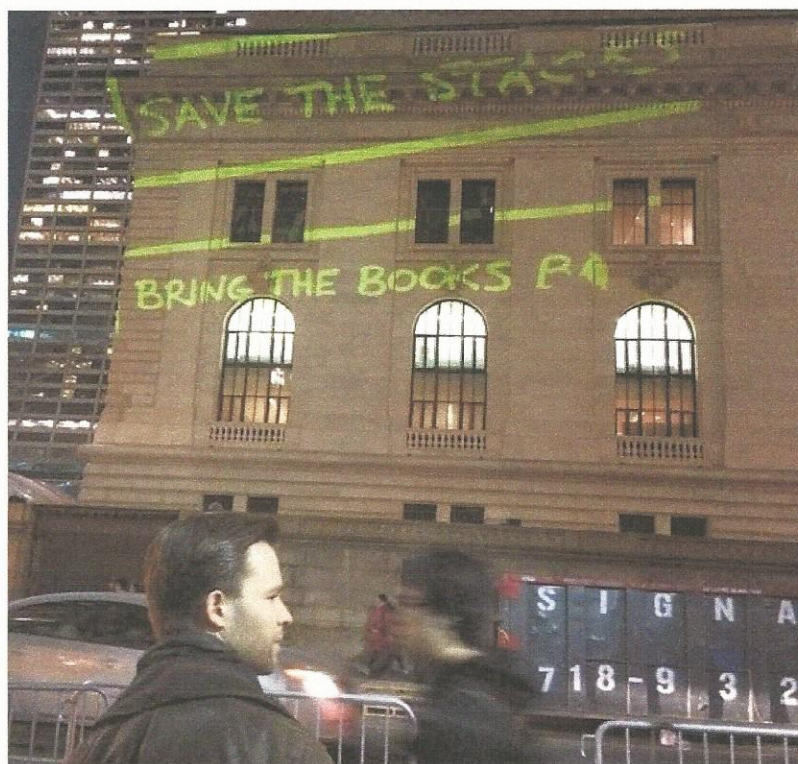
This is the way it goes these days. The Main Library has become quite hopeless as a source of ready information on any deep level. I am thinking of subscribing to another research library at a considerable yearly expense.

Why is this happening? It's quite apparent that this is a real estate deal in the works, part of a larger movement to sell off public assets to the benefit of the 1%. The new city administration may stop the deal for the time being - but wouldn't it be a neater outcome if the NYPL trustees come to their senses and decide the issues on the merits? The New York Public Library was founded on the basis of advancing knowledge - not as an asset to be mined.

Yours truly

Peter Rooney

For further information: citizensdefendinglibraries.blogspot.com



The night of City Council hearing Mr. Rooney's message, calling for the books to be brought back was reiterated by [The Illuminator](#) on the walls of the Central Reference Library. [Tweeted](#). It's the night before the NYPL Trustees meeting and a [big protest against it](#).



Also [Tweeted](#)

Testimony of Lucy Koteen: Ignorance Is More Expensive

March 11 2014

James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

The saying "*If you think education is expensive, try ignorance*" applies here. In New York City everyone uses the library. It is the most democratic of institutions that is used in a multitude of ways. It serves as a place to educate all; to keep children and teens safe after school, as a resource for the elderly who have no place else to go, a meeting place for girl scouts, a place to host reading groups and so many other things that serve all people.

As the usage went up over the last few years, the budget went down enabling the library officials to cut staff, hours, and to allow for libraries to fall in disrepair.

Now it is time for the new administration and this new "*progressive*" council to make amends and provide the budget that is needed to keep this amazing gesture of Democracy, our libraries, in full repair without selling, closing and shrinking any of them. It is time for this administration to remove our libraries from the clutches of the voracious real estate industry that has taken over the leadership of our libraries. Throw out the real estate moguls and hedge fund executive that now sit as trustees and throw out the library strategy group, who only exist to sell libraries. Throw out the CEOs with their \$400,000 salaries and \$2 million dollar severance packages. Throw out the expensive lobbying and PR flack that now receive the money that should go to the salaries of credentialed librarians. Throw out the reckless mentality that has put real estate needs before the needs of all people. That is where our public money has gone.

It is too late for that treasure of a library, the Donnell, but it is not too late for the rest of our libraries.

It is time for the mean spirited environment that has existed in this city against the regular people for the last 12 years, to be cleansed.

For what we get in return and the number of people served, we pay a very small price for our libraries in the big scheme of things. Fund our libraries and all our public assets that serve all the people. Once these jewels are gone there is no going back.

Sincerely

Lucy Koteen



Four panelists testifying against selling and shrinking libraries: Right to left, Lucy Koteen, Carolyn McIntyre, Vera Conant, Christabel Gough

Testimony of Cynthia M. Pyle of the Committee to Save the New York Public Library: Neglect of Management and Underfunding Will Cripple Institutions, Our Society

March 11 2014

James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

Chairman Van Bramer, Chairman Constantinides, Members of the City Council, thank you for holding this hearing.

New York City must return to funding its Public Institutions on behalf of the People who live here and pay taxes for those institutions. And on behalf of those highly qualified former employees who have been let go from these institutions. I think of the Municipal Archives, whose staff has been cut to less than 1/3 of what it was 25 years ago, and whose records and ability to serve the people of our great city suffer from those cuts. The "corporate model" is not applicable to Public Institutions (Cf. WSJ, 24ii14, on Non-Profit Boards), unless we wish to follow -- as we seem to, in so many of our underfunded public cultural institutions -- the example and path of Late Ancient Rome, like lemmings over the cliff.

So too, the Public Libraries of our City. Their funding has been cut drastically and ruthlessly during the past two administrations. With concomitant rises in unemployment of highly qualified and dedicated librarians, including reference librarians, cataloguers and curators. Instead, we have a Public Library System run by a Board of so-called "Trustees" (a number of whom are active in Real Estate Development and Finance, rather than Research and Librarianship) who hire -- at the cost of those now absent qualified librarians -- expensive public relations managers as administrators, thereby crippling a once-vital public library system, essential to the people of our great

city.

When I was called upon to found the Renaissance Studies Program at the CUNY Graduate Center in the late 1980s, having been trained at Columbia University and lived and worked in Europe for 15 years, I felt that New York must become the American center for Renaissance Studies, because of its library facilities. The situating of the Graduate Center on 42nd Street in the Grace Building had, in fact, been based on the immediate proximity of the Research Branch of the NYPL. The existence of the New York Public Library just across the street, was a strong argument in my application to the New York Board of Regents for Certification. The Main Research Branch was then still functioning like a beehive of experts: cataloguers in particular fields, book binders and conservators. Its collections in Slavonic Studies and other specialties were still run by full-time curators in those fields. This is how the Great Research Libraries of the World are run.

The Mid-Manhattan Branch Library, another example, is a model of the General Reference and Circulation Library, as was the Donnell in my youth. It caters to huge numbers of people from all over New York City, and it has a well-stocked foreign-language section, as well as audio, visual, and internet resources. It also hosts lectures, and even movies on Sundays. This is a Neighborhood Library on a grand scale, serving the People of our entire City. Of course, like other neighborhood libraries, it has been allowed by recent administrations to fall into disrepair -- creating the false argument that it is too expensive to rescue.

The Board's proposal, however, seems to be to sell this public success story to a private individual (who may own abutting lots), so he can make as huge a profit from City-owned property as has the present owner of the former Donnell Library site (one apartment of which was recently on the market for more than one and a half times the price that was paid to the NYPL for the whole site). The proposal seems, further, to cram the facilities of, and people using, the Mid-Manhattan Library and the Science, Industry and Business Library (SIBL) into the Book Stacks of the Research Library. The resulting congestion is unimaginable. And it goes along with the extreme inconvenience to researchers attempting to use the Research Library, most of whose books are now stored, as you know, in New Jersey and Upstate. [That inconvenience was detailed in my September 30th, 2013 testimony to this Committee.]

What is astonishing now is that the simple alternative of directing the taxpayers' \$150,000,000 to rebuilding (within the shell of the Arnold Constable Building) the Mid-Manhattan Library as a State-of-the-Art Circulation and General Reference Library, with all the built-in internet power needed for the foreseeable future -- and then some! -- has apparently been discarded by the Board. This, despite the Architectural Contest held, judged, and won, at considerable expense, in 1999. (The NYPL's argument that they cannot move a whole library for the few years it would take to build -- either within the Arnold Constable building or from scratch -- is belied by the fact that they have already moved -- without consultation or oversight -- some four million research books to storage sites in New Jersey and Upstate New York, thereby largely eviscerating the Research Branch.) The Board has discarded these perfectly feasible plans in favor of destroying a formerly Great Research Library, which has always been, in deep reality, a "people's library" -- a place where anyone from any stratum in the City could better his or her education and/or fulfill his or her most sophisticated research needs. A rentable tower -- even a green tower -- could be built (after requesting a zoning easement) above the 6 or 7 stories needed for the State-of-the-Art Library. It could also retain the easily visible, inviting and easily accessible ground floor entrance to the Mid-Manhattan Library, as well as housing SIBL. This would serve the People of the City's needs, and provide steady income for both the Mid-Manhattan and SIBL Libraries, and the World-Renowned Main Research Library.

It would also save our City's face internationally.

Thank you.

C. M. Pyle

Intellectual and Cultural Historian

(Ph.D. Columbia University; FAAR 1978;

CASVA iii-iv2001; NIAS 2002-3)

<http://sites.google.com/site/cynthiampyle/>

Testimony of CDL co-founder Michael D. D. White- City Council is unable to competently oversee capital expenditures for libraries given pervasive lack of transparency

March 11 2014
James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

The profound lack of transparency with respect to the capital budgets for New York City libraries hampers and makes virtually impossible the City Council's job of properly administering and overseeing the provision of city capital funds to the libraries, just as that lack of transparency is also a barrier to those others, private citizens and organizations, who might join with the city in providing funds to our New York City libraries to pay for capital expenditures that would benefit the public.

Here are examples of that lack of transparency:

- In June of 2007 the NYPL previewed and had blessed by the Bloomberg administration plans to sell and shrink New York City library space. Similarly, in the summer of 2007 Bloomberg administration officials were looking at equivalent plans involving library real estate in the Brooklyn system. Neither the City Council nor the public were advised of these plans. If any individual members of the City Council were so informed they did not pass that information along. Instead, in November 2007, the City Council was surprised by the sudden, secretively-handled, selling off the five-story Donnell Library at 53rd Street that netted only a fraction of the value that library represented to the public. That apparently served as the first test run for future such sales. Then the Bloomberg administration started cutting back on library funding. Without being able to view these ensuing Bloomberg administration's cutbacks in the context of the planned sell-offs of library real estate (which the Bloomberg underfunding would be cited as justifying) the City Council and the public could not properly evaluate that underfunding or its motivation.

- A Request for Proposals has been issued by Bloomberg administration officials working with Brooklyn Public Library officials to sell The Brooklyn Heights Library. Ostensibly, that library, a significant and important capital asset for the public, is being sold and shrunk to raise dollars for the BPL's capital budget. There is of course the problem that any sale proceeds would not go to the BPL, but to the city, because it is the city that owns the library. Setting that aside, there is a bigger problem that was not mentioned to the public or to the elected officials theoretically being informed about and overseeing the transaction: *There is very little left to net any proceeds for the public because in 1986 most of the 10 FAR development rights were transferred out to Forest City Ratner.* Even worse, analysis indicates that, if the library were sold, most of the benefit, perhaps even most of the sale proceeds, would be going to Forest City Ratner, *not* the public. And yet, in promoting this transaction library and city administration officials felt they could keep this information under wraps and out of the equation.

- The City Council and city are paying for major capital assets that should last for years even as those assets wind up being quickly and unexpectedly sold off. (Real estate assets are supposed to last at least 30 to 40 years.) We saw how SIBL, the new Science, Industry and Business Library, was paid for with \$100 million that was intended to benefit the public, about half of that coming directly from the taxpayers, but more than 87% of SIBL was quietly sold off recently at what appears to be an appreciable loss, even as real estate prices in the Mid-town South neighborhood where it located with CUNY in the former Altman's building, are going up substantially. Similarly, when the Donnell Library was suddenly sold for little money, publicly paid for recent renovations of about 20% of that building were prematurely scrapped.

- How can the City Council and those wanting to fund libraries make sensible decisions about

where to invest these capital monies for the public benefit when plans to sell libraries are kept secretively kept under wraps until the last minute? The plan to sell the Brooklyn Heights Library was decided upon at least as far back as 2008, but it wasn't publicly disclosed until 2013. How many years of capital funding had intervened?

- Just as library and Bloomberg administration officials have, by virtue of their secretiveness, raised questions about the trustworthiness of the way they furnish information, data furnished by these officials purporting to estimate capital costs is extremely suspect, apparently inflating to unbelievable numbers the cost of keeping and repairing real estate that administration officials want to hand off to developers. So, in the case of Donnell we find that 15% of that library had been recently renovated for \$1 million (with perhaps 20% of the library having been recently renovated in all) including air conditioning, but library administration officials managed to estimate the remaining 80% of the building was in need of repairs that would come to \$48 million. Really? Library administration officials love to cite outrageous air conditioning renovation needs whenever they want to sell a library. That's the case in Brooklyn Heights Library where officials have gone through laughable gyrations to come up with an astronomical air conditioning repair figure, including deciding they will have to replace air conditioning that is currently working and will have to air condition a much greater amount of space than actually required.

- Capital dollars are supposed to pay for creation of buildings and space. But what is going on when colossal and extreme expenditures like the NYPL's "Central Library Plan" (recently rechristened the "42nd Street Library Renovation Plan") are paying for the shrinkage of space (and the handing off of real estate to developers). The last edition of the CLP, with expected overruns, may cost a half billion dollars, all money that is supposed to be going to benefit the public. It would be spent to pay for the reduction of more than 380,000 square feet down to 80,000 square feet of space. The NYPL does an obfuscatory dance to disguise the bottom line: Refusing to compare apples to apples, the NYPL 'reasons' that the shrunken space could be viewed as better space.

- Library administration officials seek capital dollars while leaving unexplained and unaccounted for how they have squandered (or perhaps worse) irreplaceable assets like Donnell in highly suspect transactions. NYPL officials are still refusing to answer questions about the Donnell transaction. Can the City Council consider that it is effectively overseeing the administration of the capital budget when those questions about the hundreds of millions of dollars of public benefit that were squandered remain unanswered and uninvestigated?

- The city is growing. It is a wealthier city than it has been before. The wisdom of selling libraries and shrinking library space at this time is highly questionable. The questionability of that wisdom cannot continue to go unaddressed when the city is providing the bulk of the library funds. Nevertheless, such things cannot be adequately addressed unless and until library administration officials have disclosed their complete city-wide ambitions in a comprehensive fashion enabling a proper economic impact analysis and City Council review. In the greater scheme of things, libraries cost little considering all the economic benefit they provide. There is also the civic benefit. As Walter Cronkite is often quoted: *"Whatever the cost of our libraries, the price is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation."*

- The lack of public review has been part of the overall lack of transparency and part of that must fall at the feet of the City Council. It is extremely problematic that the plans for the sell-offs of these libraries involving hundreds of millions of public dollars has progressed this far and for so many years and have not yet been the subject of through scrutinizing reviews by the City Council. This hearing should be just the first step of a much more thorough process.

In the end it is not merely a lack of transparency. In the end the pervasive lack of transparency must also raise questions about the priorities and motives of those who are not being transparent.

Sincerely,

Michael D. D. White

Library sales are shocking and the shocks are only just coming to light

March 11 2014
James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

People are shocked when they find out that library administration officials are selling libraries, shrinking the library system and that libraries are being deliberately underfunded to create real estate deals that benefit developers, not the public. Who would have thought that they would sell off the public libraries when usage is way up? How can the public defend itself against those who would think to do so?

The public is mostly still just finding out about these plans. Much of the plan to sell libraries is not yet fully unveiled or has been done so quietly that the public hasn't yet found out about it. How many people know that most of the SIBL, the Science and Industry Business Library, built at a cost to the public of *\$100 million* in 1996, has been sold for a mere *\$60.8 million*? That sale, part of the consolidating shrinkage of the Central Library Plan involving three major Manhattan libraries (four if you count Donnell as you probably should) is only part of what's happening overall.

Despite the public's disapproval, the Brooklyn Public Library is plowing ahead with its plan to sell the Brooklyn Heights Library, closely replicating the unpopular sale-for-shrinkage of Manhattan's Donnell library, which was closed for shrinkage in 2008 to be replaced by a 50-story building, a luxury hotel and condominiums. The Donnell sale netted the NYPL *less than \$39 million*!

If you want to know what may be in store when plans like this are not transparent, direct your attention to what those plan-makers do first and what they can do when they do things *in secret*. Look at the top-down plotted Donnell sale, shrinking the library down to less than one third size (from 97,000 square feet to 28,000 square feet), where it will be mostly underground and sadly bookless, demolishing that five-story building that was recently the beneficiary of publicly paid for renovations. Fifteen percent of the building was the extensively renovated media center paid for by the city and state. In addition, there was the capacious and beautiful auditorium and the new Teen Center.

The same people who brought us Donnell say they consider it a model for what to do to other libraries in the future and are now in charge of the fire sale to sell Mid Manhattan and SIBL and destroy the research stacks of the fabled 42nd Street Central Reference Library. All of the Brooklyn Public Library's real estate is up for "*leveraging*" in similar deals, including the Brooklyn Heights, and Pacific Libraries. *They are selling the most valuable libraries first.*

Libraries should represent the best of our democracy. To sell them off in deals benefitting a few at the expense of the many is democracy's antithesis. We are starving our libraries out of existence, but keeping them would cost a relative pittance and reflect the public's true priorities.

If we can't stop the developer-driven sell-off of our libraries, we won't be able to stop any transfers of public resources for *private*, not *public*, benefit.

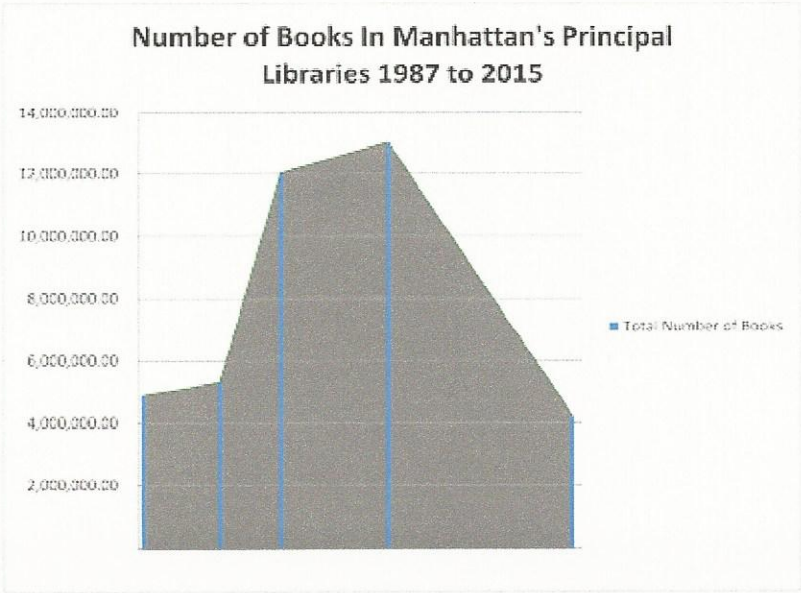
Sincerely,

Citizens Defending Libraries

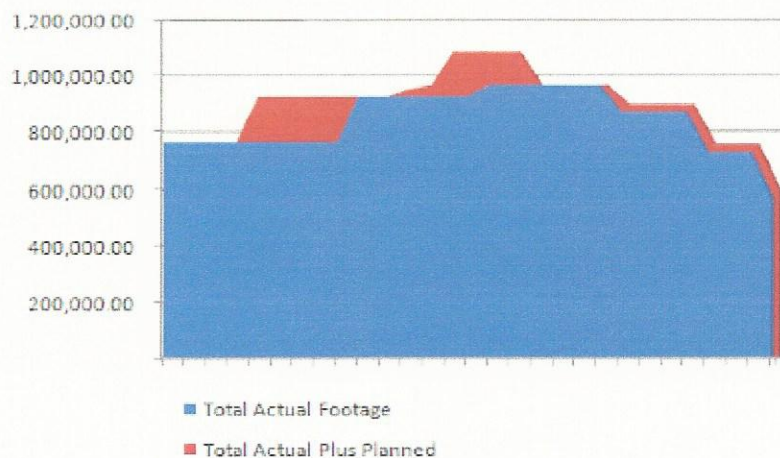
PS: As part of this testimony here we are supplying herewith a list with links of various articles Noticing New York articles about the sell-off of the city's libraries including, how comparatively little value the public is getting for their sale, how disappointing and unlibrarylike the planed new libraries are, and how discriminatorily anti-democratic these sales are. The links will also inform you how dramatically books available in Manhattan's flagship,

destination libraries are being reduced (with NYPL Trustees exercising no note), from one the order fo 13 million or more books to perhaps as few as 3.5 million. It will also inform you how recently things pivoted: The Guillian administration, at taxpayer expense, expanding libraries that lacked space that the Bloomberg administration sought to shrink.

- Saturday, June 22, 2013, [On Charlie Rose NYPL Trustee Stephen Schwarzman Confirms Suspicions: His \\$100 Million To The Library Was Linked To NYPL's Real Estate Plans](#)
- Saturday, June 15, 2013, [SIBL, NYPL's Science, Industry and Business Library Sold At An Unreported Loss To The Public \(And an Elucidating Sideways Look At The BAM South Library Real Estate Games\)](#)
- Friday, May 24, 2013, [Previews Of The Proposed New Donnell Library: The NYPL Unveils Its Version Of The "Silk Purse" Libraries It Envisions For Our Future](#)
- Monday, May 27, 2013, [More Thoughts On Valuation And What The NYPL Should Have Received As Recompense For The Public When It Sold The Donnell Library](#)
- Tuesday, May 14, 2013, [A Consideration of Race, Equality, Opportunity and Democracy As NYC Libraries Are Sold And The Library System Shrunk And Deliberately Underfunded](#)
- Saturday, July 13, 2013, [Deceptive Representations By New York Public Library On Its Central Library Plan: We're NOT Shrinking Library Space, We Are Making MORE Library Space!](#)
- Saturday, September 14, 2013, [Empty Bookshelves As Library Officials Formulate A New Vision of Libraries: A Vision Where The Real Estate Will Be Sold Off](#)
- Friday, September 20, 2013, [Forest City Ratner As The Development Gatekeeper \(And Profit taker\) Getting The Benefit As Brooklyn Heights Public Library Is Sold](#)
- Thursday, March 7, 2013, [Tossing Dwarfs?: It's Time To Demand That We Change The Way We Fund Libraries . . . End The False Political Theater](#)
- Wednesday, November 27, 2013, [Are NYPL Trustees Flying Blind on The Basics? Numbers To Inform Them About The Drastic Dwindling of Books In Manhattan's Principal Libraries Are Missing From Their Minutes](#)
- Thursday, November 21, 2013, [Drastically Reducing Manhattan's Main Library Space \(At City Expense\). The NYPL Was Only Just Recently Increasing Its Space \(At City Expense\)](#)



Graph from one of the articles above: From 1987 to an envisioned 2015 (with an implemented Central Library Plan), how total number of books in Manhattan's principal libraries is declining drastically. Over 12 million books in 1996 and 2003 to perhaps 4.2 million books (or even far fewer?) when CLP is implemented. Starting figures in the graph for 1987 and 1992 are graphed lower than they actually should be because they don't include unknown numbers for Mid-Manhattan and Donnell



Graph from one of the articles above: From 1987 to an envisioned 2015 (with an implemented Central Library Plan), total actual midtown Manhattan Library destination space actual and planned, first going up and then going lower than ever before

Testimony of CDL co-founder Carolyn McIntyre

March 11 2014
 James G. Van Bramer, Chair
 Committee on Cultural Affairs,
 Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
 250 Broadway
 New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

I am here today to shine a light on what is happening to our public libraries. I appreciate that this City Council Committee is providing this opportunity for those of us who love libraries and respect the place they have in our democracy. I am not a librarian, a hedge fund manager or a real estate developer. I am a therapist and a concerned citizen who could not watch these sacred spaces continue to be exploited and the librarians devalued.

I became aware of the attempts to close and sell my library, the Brooklyn Heights Library, in January 2013 at a community meeting at the library. Our branch is a very well used and loved branch. It is the most well used branch apart from the main library in Brooklyn because of its location and staff. The library sits right where all the major subway lines converge and where multiple bus lines stop. The Brooklyn Heights Library draws about a half million people a year from all over Brooklyn, Manhattan and the Bronx. No other library is accessible by so many subway and bus lines.

At the meeting BPL spokesman, Josh Nachowitz, said they were going to sell the building to a private developer, let him tear it down and build a high-rise that would house a much smaller library, about 1/4 the size. He also said they would remove the Business and Career services. We were stunned and told him it was a bad idea.

I might have walked away doing nothing about the news except that I found out from a study by the Center For An Urban Future that use of libraries has gone up 40% and circulations up 59%. More people want to learn than ever. The report says the users are teens, seniors, immigrants, freelancers, job seekers, nannies and parents with young kids.

This report says that funding has gone down about 30% since Bloomberg started his third term. I heard from library staff that they have had to cut over 1,000 positions. They have provided an increasingly used service with decreasing staff! We owe them our gratitude.

I began asking people coming into the Brooklyn Heights Library why they use it. Just like in the report: Teens find it's safe, they can be with friends while their parents are at work, nannies congregate with kids, parents come for the art programs and story time, business owners get help growing their business, job seekers get help with their resumes, now people are coming to get help with doing taxes.

I met a woman named Celeste who started a baking business using the Business and Career Services library. She came to research on different ways of baking and she entered a contest for small businesses which offers cash prizes. Her two sons were with her and I asked them why they come. They said to check out books and DVDs and it's a quiet place to do homework. I talked with lots of seniors and retirees who come almost every day.

There is a line a block long outside this branch when it opens at 10:00 AM. Inside the library there is a giant sign that says "the line starts here." It's to use the computers. They want to close and shrink this branch? It makes no sense.

I started a [petition](#) a week after the meeting to stop the public policy of defunding libraries in order to sell the real estate to private developers. We now have about 14,000 signatures, mostly online, and you can easily find Citizens Defending Libraries on the web.

Since starting the petition it has become increasingly clear that a corporate-style takeover of the NYPL and the BPL leadership is being followed by the selling of significant library system assets, rushing to do this before the end of Bloomberg's term in spite of growing public opposition. Nothing they are doing makes sense in terms of what is best for the library or the public, but makes total sense in creating lucrative real estate deals for private investment companies and developers in real estate.

The new corporatist leadership under individuals hailing from Wall Street, Steven Schwartzman and David Offensend, may conceive of themselves as "leveraging" the real estate. New highly paid groups called "*strategy groups*" concentrate their time on pursuing real estate deals while librarians who have always done the real work of the libraries are being eliminated and replaced with lower-paid clerical staff.

Does this pattern sound familiar? Aren't we also seeing this happen to our schools, hospitals, and parks? This exploitation of public resources at the end of Bloomberg's term benefitting the one-percent while reducing resources and opportunities for the rest of society sends the message that a few count for everything and the rest count for practically nothing. If this exploitation and plundering is not stopped we stand to lose much more than real estate; we stand to lose all that made our democracy great. After taking all that they can that our ancestors and generous donors gave, what will be left?

We are either moving towards a more caring society or away from a caring society. Citizens Defending Libraries is demanding better from our elected and library administration officials. We need to affirm that all New Yorkers are worthy and deserving of these important public services.

Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

Citizens Defending Libraries

Which Libraries Are In Danger? Might Yours Be Next? Library Officials Divide-and-Conquer Strategy

March 11 2014
James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

The question arises from the public: Which New York City libraries are at risk from the current program of selling off and shrinking libraries as real estate deals?

We need library administration officials to disclose the entirety of their sell-off plans to the public and there needs to be an independent economic impact analysis of their plans.

As of now all the City's libraries are adversely affected due to the underfunding of all the libraries, which makes them vulnerable to be sold off.

Because decisions about the selling of libraries are made in secret, it means that every New Yorker needs to wonder if his or her library is next on the list. Is it just Donnell, the Science and Industry Business Library, Mid-Manhattan, 42nd Street's Central Reference Library at Fifth Avenue, the Brooklyn Heights library incorporating Brooklyn's Business and Career Library and the historic Carnegie Pacific Branch that will be subject to sales and these significant shrinkages? How did those libraries end up on the chopping block? There was no public discussion. There was no oversight from the City Council. What is being decided behind closed doors impacts all our neighborhood and city-wide libraries.

It appears to be by design that the library administration wants to keep us in the dark about their plans. In true divide-and-conquer fashion library administration officials don't want you to know whether your library or another library that you care about will be next on the chopping block. The strategic plan for the Brooklyn Public Library in their own words says that the plan is to "*leverage*" (a fancy word for "*sell*") all of the real estate. The BPL: "*will leverage its over one million square feet of real estate by launching partnerships . . .*" When the NYPL unveiled its system-wide real estate plans in March of 2008 which states a goal of having "*fewer service points*" to provide "*better service to users*" it envisions making changes in Northern Manhattan and Staten Island. In other words, they want to consolidate the libraries. This is the antithesis of the concept of the neighborhood library allowing for easy accessibility for all citizens to libraries.

In reality, anybody's library might not be too far down the list, but library officials rather you did not know if it is. One woman, while leafleting outside and canvassing against library sales was called inside by library administration officials to specifically tell her that her library was not being looked at for sale. This was contrary to what the real estate press said. In response, library officials told her that was just a developer with whom they had no connection taking initiative on their own. Nevertheless, that particular library was included in a list of libraries that at least one developer was given to look at for development in the summer of 2007.

Evidence shows that library administration officials don't tell the public which libraries they are looking at to sell until the very last minute as was seen with Donnell, Brooklyn Heights and the Pacific Branch.

In what looks like a divide-and-conquer strategy, one community is told that their own community library could receive money if someone else's library is sold, little caring about the accuracy of such representations. Residents of Dyker Heights are told (article: Library Vital to Immigrants Squeezed by City Budget, by: Norman Oder, June 18, 2013) that their McKinley Park branch could be renovated (*implying it won't be sold*) if libraries (like the Pacific Branch) in "*gentrifying*" neighborhoods are sold, and while residents of Fort Greene are told that proceeds from selling Pacific Street will partially pay for outfitting a new BAM South library. The truth is that the money received from the library sell-offs must go to the city general funds and there is no way to assure any funds will go to any of the libraries.

The library administration officials have publicly said their intent is to sell off the most valuable real estate first. But what is most valuable to a real estate developer is probably also the most valuable and irreplaceable to the public for much of the same reasons. It means that this looting of the system stands to do a lot of damage swiftly and up front. Once an asset is sold there is no reversing the damage it has done. Once the administration views the selling off of these assets as a success, they will continue to work their way down the list.

Because uncertainty of the future of a library's existence creates an unstable environment for the staff and the

patrons of that library, it is imperative that the library administrators reveal to the public their short and long term plans for library restructuring. Exposing library sales in a piecemeal way prevents any oversight body and the public from analyzing in a comprehensive way the impact on all city residents of the end game of these sell-off plans.

Libraries are one of the most profound instruments of Democracy. We see these library reductions and shrinkages as part of the consistent erosion of all people's access to information and knowledge. These decisions are in the hands of a few men and women of great wealth and power who lack comprehension of the importance of neighborhood and other libraries. They have undisputed ties to the real estate industry. Their motives, based on their actions, are clearly not in the interest of the everyday man, woman and child.

Sincerely,

Citizens Defending Libraries

How Much Are Libraries Being Downsized and Library System Assets Shrunk?

March 11 2014

James G. Van Bramer, Chair

Committee on Cultural Affairs,

Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

250 Broadway

New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

With Donnell, the Central Library Plan and every library sell-off plan the details of which have actually seen the light of day, including the Brooklyn Heights library, there has been a consistent and substantial diminishment of the publicly owned assets (usually by 2/3rds to 3/4ths) with no benefit to the public while others are benefitting in nontransparent top-down concocted deals that, like Donnell, benefit connected players in the real estate industry.

- **Donnell Library:** Reduction of public library space by more than two-thirds (from 97,000 square feet to 28,000 square feet- NY Times figures, though by other calculation it is more extreme). A library worth perhaps \$120 million to the public in terms of continued ownership (based on recent transactions) is sold to net \$39 million!

- **Central Library Plan:** Reduction of public library space by more than two-thirds or about three-quarters (from more than 380,000 square feet down to 80,000 square feet- That's the 139,000 sq/ft Mid-Manhattan plus the 160,000 sq/ft SIBL plus the 80,000 sq/ft of stacks being destroyed. In the very recent past, before the real estate guys took over administering the libraries, it was proposed to *nearly double* Mid-Manhattan's space, increasing it by 117,000 square feet for more library services). The cost of this more than 380,000 square foot shrinkage is \$350 million or more. It is not paid for by the real estate sales because they bring in less than that amount (Marx referred to bringing in \$300 million at least a \$50 million loss). Another cost to the public?: Most of the recently built *\$100 million* SIBL has been sold off for *\$60.8 million*. Instead, the shrinkage is justified because it is asserted by Marx and the NYPL that a smaller library (with fewer librarians) might cost \$15 million a year less to run. Most savings of this sort involve personnel cost reductions, not brick and mortar. (The libraries being destroyed are not just physical assets.)

- **Brooklyn Heights Library:** Reduction of public library space by more than two-thirds (from 62,000 square feet to 15,000 or maybe now 20,000 square feet). Cost benefit to the public this time? Not out yet, but it's supposed to be a "partnership" arrangement rather than a request for bids arrangement and likely with Forest City Ratner with a record of abusing those relationships. (The no-bid arrangement for the BAM South library to "replace" the historic Pacific branch- hearings were Tuesday morning- started out as an RFP to build a "parking garage" which through partnership has become something extravagantly different and more generous for the developer.)

The proponents of these shrinking libraries will never refer to them as smaller. They will call them "*state-of-the-art*" and quibble, speaking about the spaces in terms other than apples-to-apples comparisons referring to '*found space*,' '*equivalent space*' and '*flexible space*,' but the fact of the matter is that space will always have its value and publicly owned space is publicly owned space and publicly owned assets are publicly owned assets.

Sincerely,

Citizens Defending Libraries

Is The Downsizing of Libraries a "Right-sizing" or Possibly a Wrong-Sizing?

March 11 2014

James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

We are downsizing our libraries with these deals that turn libraries into real estate sales. Despite increasing library use we see substantial reductions with library space decreased to as little as one-third or less its previous size. Are we right-sizing the system? Have we really thought about what size our libraries should be, whether or how much they should actually be shrunk rather than grown and expanded?

Doesn't it seem to be entirely too odd a coincidence that in the New York Public Library's Central Library Plan it is estimated (calculated?) that *ALL* the library space of the libraries the NYPL has decided to sell, the 300,000 square feet of SIBL and Mid-Manhattan combined will just happen to fit (they say) in the 80,000 square feet of space where that plan proposes to eliminate the research stacks of the 42nd Street Central Reference Library? Is it really a coincidence or was the NYPL in doing these '*calculations*' just working backward from the real estate it wants to sell? It appears so because when Citizens Defending Libraries met with NYPL Chief Operating Officer David Offensend, Mr. Offensend said that they do not yet have information about how many books they want to keep in the library when they finish planning.

What if this calculation of the space needed is wrong? Mr. Offensend said that if the space calculations of the Central Library Plan are wrong there is no way to expand and correct the space afterward. In addition, if there is a need for growth or expansion in the future there is no way to accommodate it with additional space in the future.

The previous plan for the Mid-Manhattan library, a recent one, in existence just ten years ago, was an expansion plan, an almost doubling of space, adding 117,000 square feet to the existing 139,000 square feet. Similarly recent plans for the Brooklyn Public Library existing within that same time frame (even a little bit more recently), called for a substantial addition of space with a new 150,000 square feet of library across from the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

If it was just so recently that we were increasing and expanding library space aren't we now making a big mistake by shrinking space as drastically as with the Central Library Plan, which takes 380,000 square feet of library space shrinking it down to squeeze it in 80,000 square feet with no possibility of expansion afterward?

Sincerely,

Citizens Defending Libraries

We Need A "Cooling Off" Period, A Moratorium On Real Estate Sales: A Look At Alleged Repair Costs That Look Suspiciously Inflated

March 11 2014

James G. Van Bramer, Chair

Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

We are here to say yet again we need a "cooling off" period. . .

. . . We need a moratorium on the selling off of the library system's best and most valuable assets until more is known about the questionable reasons being given for why the best real estate needs to be sold off to developers.

We need a "cooling off" period because every time they want to sell libraries, often recently renovated ones, they seem to find an insurmountable problem with the library's air conditioning system. It's highly suspicious!

Whenever library officials want to push a library out the door as a real estate deal they find air conditioning problems a handy complaint.

- The reason Donnell Library needed to be closed, sold and shrunk? An air conditioning problem! To sell a whole library? At a considerable loss to the public because the NYPL netted less than \$39 million for the 97,000 square foot library? By way of reference, much of that library had been recently renovated, the auditorium, the Teen Center, and in November of 2001 a new 14,500 sq ft state-of-the-art media center paid for by the City and State of New York. That complete and extensive renovation *included new air conditioning for about 15% of Donnell's space. It cost \$1 million.* While that much of the building had been so recently renovated for so little (and other recent renovations of more space were in place) the NYPL provided cover for the announcement its announcement of Donnell's sale in 2007 estimating that renovation of the rest of the building would cost *\$48 million!*

- Why demolish the historic research book stack system at the Tilden Astor Central Reference Library at 42nd Street? According to the NYPL. . . *An air conditioning problem!*

- Need to sell off and shrink the Brooklyn Heights branch and Business and Career library? According to the BPL . . . *An air conditioning problem!*

- Sell the historic Pacific Branch? *An air conditioning problem!* Want to sell off a lot of libraries in Brooklyn? Announce that a lot of them have air conditioning problems and start closing them in the summer! See: More libraries fall as heat nears 100 degrees, By Mary Frost, Brooklyn Daily Eagle, July 6, 2012.

Highly suspicious. We need an audit!

The Brooklyn Public Library announced that it wanted to sell the Brooklyn Heights Library because of the condition of the air conditioning this January but the plan and decision to sell the library go back to at least 2008. The air conditioning breakdown that *'couldn't be fixed'* didn't occur until summer, 2012, right in time to announce the library's sale to the public.

Although the public was told that the air conditioning was the reason to sell the library in January of 2013, library administration and city officials withheld information about exactly what was supposedly wrong with the air conditioning until mid-June, days before an RFP (Request For Proposals) to sell the library (because of the "air conditioning"!) was sent out. The withheld information finally released was simply a July 12, 2012 DDC Construction Report but even then the requested cost estimates that had been cited in the press all along were still withheld. When these documents were requested from the Brooklyn Public Library they referred our representatives over to DDC (New York City Department of Design and Construction) and when the DDC was requested to give up these documents they referred our representatives back over to the BPL. To date they haven't been produced.

In substitution therefor the BPL has produced another in a series of escalating estimates of the cost of repairing the air conditioning. A repair that was once estimated to cost \$700,000 or substantially less went to \$750,000 and from there to \$3 million, then to \$3.5 million. The official estimate has now recently escalated to between \$4.5 and \$5 million (and is apparently at odds with previous engineering assessments). You know that they are reaching to find costs because both the architect delivering the estimate and Brooklyn Public Library spokesperson are saying that one of the hard-to-meet challenges in fixing the system is all the heat that modern-day computers are throwing off. These modern-day computers are also being blamed by the BPL for making the library too expensive to repair in another way: It would be far too expensive to supply them with the electricity they need!

Further, the most recent estimate, disingenuous on its face, calls for fixing air conditioning that isn't broken and for air conditioning more space than actually required.

We need an audit and we need a "cooling off" period until that audit is completed and the mind-set of library and city officials is no longer one that prioritizes creating real estate deals for developers! Remember: These breakdowns accompanied by inflated repair estimates only came after the decision to the sell the library.

Sincerely,

Citizens Defending Libraries

The Problem of Offering 'Credible' Assurance That Money Given To The Libraries Will Be Properly Used

March 11 2014
James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

Many of us have given money to the libraries intending to see our donations benefit the system. Citizens Defending Libraries has also called for more taxpayer money for the libraries, an end to underfunding at a time of substantially increasing library use and city growth.

Unfortunately, giving to support the libraries has now become a perplexing problem for donors in more ways than one.

At City Council Budget hearings on Monday, June 3rd of last year Anthony W. Marx and Linda Johnson, the respective heads of the New York Public Library and the Brooklyn Public Library, testified that they had a problem approaching donors asking that they give monies to fund the libraries because they cannot make a 'credible' case that any money given to the libraries by such donors will not be immediately subtracted out by the Mayor of New York in budget cuts. Indeed, nearly everyone seems to acknowledge the harm of the annual city budget dance around library funding and how it involves cynical gamesmanship.

There is another significant problem in approaching potential donors to the NYPL and BPL that Marx and Johnson did not talk about but which is just as significant, probably much more so: The library heads cannot make a 'credible' case that generous gifts given to the libraries by generous public-spirited donors will not be subtracted out in the form of real estate deals that squander or plunder generous gifts given to the libraries.

John D. Rockefeller gave the land at 53rd Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenue, across from the Museum of Modern Art for the building of the Donnell Library. Ezekiel Donnell paid for the building of the five-story library 97,000 square foot building there. Over the years many other others donated to further improve that library, funds that included the investment of taxpayer dollars for state-of-the-art facilities. Did Rockefeller, Donnell or any of us suspect that the assets bequeathed the public would be virtually given away netting less than a mere \$39 million, less than two-thirds of what the 7,381 square foot penthouse in the 50-story building replacing Donnell is being

marketed for?

Similarly, the Central Library Plan involves a careless and very expensive discard of public space and assets, probably a net financial loss for the NYPL, a gross reduction of *more than 380,000 square feet of library space* squeezed down into only *80,000 square feet* counting the elimination of the 42nd Street Reference Library's research stacks. SIBL, completed in 1996 for \$100 million, has been quietly, and nearly entirely (87%), sold off for \$60.8 million. The BPL is now following suit with similar plans of sell-offs for real estate deals.

What then became of our donations and public expenditures? Those giving money to the libraries, whether regularly in the past or those wanting to in the future are loath to see our gifts squandered and thus made meaningless. In addition to donated funds, much of what is being squandering or plundered came from the taxpayers. There needs to be accountability to assure that all these monies will be used as, and in the spirit of, what was intended. There should be investigation, and new and better assurances are in order.

Sincerely,

Citizens Defending Libraries

Problematic Mind-Set of Library Trustees

March 11 2014
James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

We need to investigate. We as taxpayers pay the lion's share of the library budgets but the libraries are run by trustees with a mind-set we cannot trust.

Brooklyn Public Library CEO Linda Johnson said that Goldman Sachs CEO Lloyd Blankfein is [her idea](#) of an ideal board member for her library system board. That is indicative of a terrible mind-set on her part.

Mr. Blankfein is exactly the kind of board member one could expect to get behind real estate deals that shrink libraries while craftily conferring more benefits upon the wealthy and connected. Mr. Blankfein's Goldman Sachs took advantage of special relationships and maneuvering to procure unique real estate benefits, design overrides and subsidies for its new corporate headquarters in Battery Park City. It was written about in the New York Times. Mr. Blankfein is also a proponent of the notion that the public needs to lower its expectations about entitlements that he [firmly says](#) "*they're not going to get.*"

What better candidate to help plunder the libraries' public real estate assets for the benefit of a wealthy few?

At the same time, the biggest real estate sell-off and shrinkage of Manhattan's main libraries (the Donnell library and the three premier libraries more formally a part of the NYPL "Central Library Plan") is unfolding, Stephen A. Schwarzman is on the board of the NYPL pushing such deals for the real estate industry? Why?

Mr. Schwarzman is the Blackstone Group. That's one of the biggest real estate companies around. If you were watching PBS in June, [Charlie Rose was helping](#) Mr. Schwarzman with a lot of boasts about Blackstone:

Rose: . . . it is now the world's largest alternative investment firm with over \$200 billion under management.

* * * *

Rose: I think you're the largest real estate investor in the world, aren't you?

Schwarzman: That's true. (Nodding)

* * * *

Schwarzman: We are the largest investors in the world in hedge funds.

Schwarzman runs seven lines of business under Blackstone generating huge possibilities for conflicts of interest, including hedge funds. Hedge funds are notorious these days for making a lot of money. Schwarzman says his private equity business is bigger:

Schwarzman: ... Private equity is a bigger business... The rates on return on private equity tend to be much higher.

At the same time that Mr. Schwarzman is apparently making lots of money at Blackstone, a fair amount connected to real estate, the New York Public library seems to be transacting a series of real estate deals like Donnell, SIBL and the Central Library Plan that are very bad for the public.

Is Mr. Schwarzman interested in the public's benefit or his own? Mr. Schwarzman apparently considers himself to be part of a societal class war, and believes that if the uneven playing field advantages that favor the .01 percent at the expense of the rest of us are jeopardized by, for instance, a proposal to eliminate the carried-interest loophole (which allows executives at firms like Blackstone to pay only 15 percent taxes on much of their income), that it's an intolerable setback. He declared: "*It's a war; it's like when Hitler invaded Poland in 1939.*"

Did Mr. Schwarzman's consider that his name was being put on a boondoggle when it was put on the Tilden Astor Central Reference Library at 42nd Street which will be destroyed as a reference library under the Central Library Plan shrinkage and sell-off plan. He told Charlie Rose when he transferred \$100 million to effect the name change that he knew those plans and how the money would be spent.

We need an investigation. We need an audit. We cannot trust trustees who think with such a different mid-set to guard our precious publicly paid for library assets.

Sincerely,

Citizens Defending Libraries

Library Officials Keeping Librarians Quiet. What About?: Getting Rid Of Books And Policies Of Shrinkage That Don't Make Sense

March 11 2014
James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

Library administration officials don't want to hear what librarians have to say. They also don't want the public to hear what librarians have to say.

Did you know that:

- In 2009 the NYPL started having departing librarians sign "nondisparagement agreements."

They were written about in the New York Times where one departing librarian refusing to take money to sign the agreement referred to it as "hush money." (See: New York Times: Employees Feel Silenced on Library Project, by Robin Pogrebin, May 23, 2012.) Many librarians are being fired these days so that, with their leaving the oral history of what we have historically intended our libraries to be is also leaving.

- Library administration officials have pursued librarians still working at the libraries, seeking to have them sign similar documents (loyalty oaths).
- NYPL administration officials ended the ROAR program, a program where retired librarians could come back and work (without benefits) on an hourly basis at a reduced cost to the system.
- Whatever reason officials might give for ending the ROAR, fewer former librarians are present in the library environment, and officials have now gone a step further by banning former librarians from volunteering at the libraries, something any other member of the public is free to do.
- The number of librarians that have been laid off and fired is at an all time high.
- In addition, there has been a huge amount of shifting librarians around between libraries. Such shifting can limit the ability of librarians to know about their libraries and can be used as a tool to stifle criticism. {What was it that now allows libraries of a certain status to be transferred to the Bronx- that they are no longer union?}
- Librarians haven been transferred and/or encouraged to retire not because of their own opposition to what is being done at the libraries (like the sale of Donnell and elimination of books), but because staff working for them have expressed dissatisfaction with some of these sorts of things.
- Librarians have been told not to discuss or give out information about library "renovations."
- Libraries now run by "site managers" (a real estate sounding description) rather than "head librarians."

What is it that library administration officials are concerned librarians might be communicating about were they not thus silenced and intimidated? Librarians could be telling the public about:

- Programs of book removal and shrinkage. Did you know that NYPL librarians have been given directives from senior officials:
 - That bookshelves should always be less than 50% full.
 - That shelves should never have more than two copies of the same book. Not even Hamlet!
 - That books that are "shabby" in appearance should be thrown out? So-called "shabby" looking books just might be limited edition or out-of-print books
- Books are being thrown out in middle of night
- Librarians might tell people how very well used and popular libraries being closed down or shrunk like Donnell were.
- Librarians might have something to say about what it means to send books away to less accessible off-site locations.
- Librarians might notice and point out when valuable assets at the library go missing? Did you know:
 - Bibliographies representing years of work by librarians intended to be ready to assist the public are being thrown out?
 - The New York Times donated a substantial portion of its morgue to the NYPL? It organized research in a way modern day computers don't duplicate. It was once kept in the Annex? Does anyone know where it is now and that it wasn't thrown away?

If librarians could talk, they could tell the public what it might want to know about the way libraries should be. It should be against public policy to silence librarians and they shouldn't be abused for exercising their free speech rights in this of all environments! Aren't libraries where we are supposed to be able to go for knowledge and truth?

Sincerely,

Citizens Defending Libraries

The Lack of Reality Concerning The "Public Involvement" Library Officials Tout



BPL President Linda Johnson who got to extol the quality of 'public involvement' in the sell-off of the Brooklyn Heights Library when asked a softball question at the [September 30, 2013 City Council Hearing](#) on library sell-offs that sounded prearranged

The following testimony delivered orally by BPL President Linda Johnson at that hearing was addressed by the testimony (below) prepared beforehand by Citizens Defending Libraries:

BPL President Linda Johnson: *The most imminent project that we are working on is the Brooklyn Heights Library and we've been very open about our plans from the first steps. And we've established a community action committee which meets regularly that is comprised of members of community organizations as well as representatives of elected representatives and representatives themselves and this idea really is to get a sense from the community about what the library should be, how it should function, how it should play a role in the community, and ultimately, when we get there, what the library should look like.*

March 11 2014
James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

The public process for selling off New York City libraries, such as it exists, is confusing, deceptive and intentionally frustrating to those wishing to, in any way oppose, or question the wisdom of, selling off libraries, shrinking them, or underfunding them as a prelude to such sell-offs.

For instance:

- You hear *alternately* from those such as Brooklyn Public Library Spokesperson Josh Nachowitz or the Friends of the Brooklyn Heights Branch Library that:
 - The sale of the Brooklyn Heights Library is a "*done deal*" so that it is futile to oppose it, and
 - There will be a process in which the public can oppose the sale of the library *in the future* so it is not appropriate or worthwhile to oppose that sale at this time.

Indeed, it is discouraging to hear that the decision to sell the library was made way back, at least

as far back as 2008 but that long-held secret decision is not to be the subject of public review or criticism until years later.

- Meanwhile, those such as Josh Nachowitz and the Friends group conduct what purports to be a form of public process, convening something called the "Community Advisory Committee" (CAC). It is called the "Community Advisory Committee" although it is chaired by Mr. Nachowitz and Deborah Hallen of the Friends Group, who has circulated guidance she apparently considers her group bound by that says the so-called "Friends" group *cannot do anything except support the BPL in its goals completely and totally*. In what way can the "Friends" group ever hope to represent the community if it cannot oppose the BPL in any way: can't oppose the sale, can't oppose the shrinkage, can't demand a bigger temporary library, can't request longer hours, can't even request that the new library have a book drop? Additionally insulting to the public: The other group appointed to represent it as the CAC was originally constituted was the Brooklyn Heights Association, [which was informing us](#), *"the Brooklyn Heights Association is simply supporting the position of the librarians and the Friends of the Library."*

- It was clearly indicated to Citizens Defending Libraries in discussions we had on the subject that those setting up the CAC and designing its operations, including the Brooklyn Borough President's office, considered it inappropriate for Citizens Defending Libraries to be represented on the CAC, despite its much more significant community support (the fast-falling membership of the Friends group was below 200), because Citizens Defending Libraries opposed the sale and shrinkage of the library. In other words, the very limited and circumscribed purpose of the CAC was *to support the procession toward a contract with a developer for sale and shrinkage of the library before the end of the Bloomberg administration*.

Libraries are far too important to society to so trivialize and manipulate the attention that must be paid if and when a library is ever proposed to be sold.

Sincerely,

Citizens Defending Libraries

Investigation of AstroTurf, Impropriety of Using Public Funds To Create Appearance of Support For Real Estate Development Projects

March 11 2014
James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

Did you know our current State Attorney General's office has made headlines with what is referred to as its ["AstroTurf War,"](#) its ["Operation Clean Turf,"](#) wherein that office is investigating and combating companies that fraudulently represent the consumer community by writing fake positive reviews for the products of companies that pay them to do so. The AG may have, in this regard, slightly expanded the original definition of AstroTurf which refers to fake grassroots organizations that pretend to represent the community, but AstroTurf groups are a truly a significant problem. That said, the public ought to investigate and assess the extent to which different groups supporting the sale of libraries partake of the characteristics of AstroTurf.

Should AstroTurf activities be considered illegal, be investigated and prosecuted? The Attorney General has in the past [acted against](#) New York City development agencies like the Economic Development Corporation for illegally flowing taxpayer money into lobbying activities and public-hearing-support activities through groups like Local Development Corporations. When library administration officials transform their organizations into real estate

operations and then flow the taxpayer money they receive out to AstroTurf activity, is it really a very different thing? No matter what, it is an undesirable use of taxpayer money that should be stopped.

A recent new chapter in this story: February 26, 2014, The Brooklyn Public Library sent a "lobbying day" bus to Albany. Consider that this bus was ultimately paid for by the taxpayers. The BPL was extending invitations to the public to come aboard and ask for fund, but it pulled back on that invitation when it realized that it did not want going to Albany those members of the public who would ask for funding of the libraries so that insufficient funding could not be cited as a pretext for selling libraries.

These matters are something to which the City Council needs to direct its attention and investigate. When the Council does it will find that it is happening.

Sincerely,

Citizens Defending Libraries

Coincidences? The Mayor's Deliberate Underfunding of Libraries The NYPL's Selling Of Libraries And The BPL's Selling Of Libraries Are All Unfolding Synchronously?

March 11 2014

James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

Are we dealing with coincidences or are we dealing with planned and coordinated actions? There are those who would like to excuse the Bloomberg administration's deliberate, extreme underfunding of New York City's libraries and deem it not to be associated with the currently proposed sell-offs of the city libraries that are consequently short on funds, saying that it must, instead, be a coincidence that the two are happening at the same time.

Is it a coincidence that the New York Public Library and the Brooklyn Public Library are both selling off and shrinking libraries at the same time? That both the NYPL and the BPL started planing these sales at the same time and are now both pressing such deals forward, rushing them along at the end of the Bloomberg administration? Is it a coincidence that the current extreme underfunding of city libraries began as the plans for these real estate sell-offs got underway?

According to the NYPL's Chief Operating Officer, David Offensend, the NYPL began looking at doing its Central Library Plan in 2006 or perhaps as early as 2005. The NYPL had the sell-off and shrinkage plans previewed and blessed by the Bloomberg administration in June of 2007. The BPL was having real estate developers look at multiple city-owned properties for development at least as early as the summer of 2007. In the fall of 2007 the NYPL suddenly announced that Donnell Library had been sold. Even if the public hadn't been told there must have been a little planning of this in advance! Similarly, although the public was also not told, the BPL decided as of 2008 that evicting the Business and Career Library from its Downtown Brooklyn home in the Brooklyn Heights Library would allow that library to be sold and shrunk like Donnell.

Mayor Bloomberg, a candidate for a third term, attended the March 11, 2008 press conference where the NYPL announced plans that would entail changes to its real estate holdings although listening to the public relations statements of the time one would have had to be psychic (or a student of the Donnell debacle) to realize that what was being talked about was a shrinkage of the system and a shedding of valuable assets for far less than their value. Thereupon, the reelected Bloomberg promptly starved the libraries, each year cutting their funding back more.

Coincidences? We don't think so. And they ought not to be treated as such.

Sincerely,

Citizens Defending Libraries

The Top-Down Plotted Library Sell-offs, Lack Transparency and Accountability

March 11 2014

James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

As a new Center For An Urban Future report on library funding and usage points out, the *"libraries depend on the city for the lion's share of their budgets"* but *"they are technically independent 501(c)(3) entities, not government agencies."* The anomalous result is that while we as taxpayers are funding the library system those running the system are busy selling off its assets, crown jewels first, without accountability or transparency, in deals that create enormous private benefit for the elite of this city.

This was pointed out in 2008 in an editorial by the editor-in-chief of Library Journal after the sale of the Donnell library. That library, now only a construction site, was sold after recent, expensive, city and state-funded renovations, with the intention of shrinking it down to less than one-third size, a library that will now be mostly underground and sadly bookless. Those who got the real estate are putting up a high-end hotel and luxury condominiums.

There were all sorts of questions about the location of some of the collections with the breakup of the collections diminishing the role of Donnell as a central library. The decisions were communicated to staff (and in the case of Donnell, to the public) almost entirely after the big decisions have been made.

It was wrong for the New York Public Library, a public/private entity funded mostly by the taxpayers, to blithely sidestep public and staff input with respect to Donnell and now library trustees are doing it again as libraries throughout the system are being put on the chopping block. Look at the Central Library Plan in Manhattan. Look at what is going on in Brooklyn where a BPL *"strategic plan"* puts every piece of the system's real estate into play.

When Donnell was sold the City Council's Libraries Subcommittee chair didn't know about the Donnell sale ahead of time even though he said it was *"troubling"* in terms of *"the whole mission of the library."*

Now Donnell and that lack of transparency and that lack of accountability is being used as a model everywhere in the city. Taxpayers fund the libraries and these plans need to be audited and brought into the daylight.

Sincerely,

Citizens Defending Libraries

Testimony of Donald Christensen Evaluating Real Estate Interest Issues Affecting Central Library Plan Partly In the Light of Previously Respected Trustee and Public Policy

March 11 2014

James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

Thursday, June 27, 2013, Assembly Member Micah Kellner, Chair of the Committee on Libraries and Education Technology, held a public hearing at 250 Broadway in Manhattan on the sale of New York City library buildings to private developers. Donald Christensen, a professional researcher delivered startling testimony at that hearing. It is highly relevant to this hearing, but Mr. Christensen contacted us to let us know he could not be here today.

Accordingly, we are submitting that testimony on his behalf in the form it appeared, republished in full, in the attached Noticing New York article: Tuesday, July 2, 2013, [Startling Testimony at State Assembly Hearing on NYC Library Sales](#). His testimony is also viewable at the New York State Assembly site and on YouTube the link to it being available in that Noticing New York article.

Sincerely,

Citizens Defending Libraries

Lack of Public Benefit From Proposed Brooklyn Heights Sale Because of Previous Transfer of Development Rights To Forest City Ratner

March 11 2014
James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

A Request for Proposals has been issued by Bloomberg administration officials working with Brooklyn Public Library officials to sell The Brooklyn Heights Library.

Ostensibly, that library, a significant and important capital asset for the public, is being sold and shrunk to raise dollars for the BPL's capital budget. There is of course the problem that any sale proceeds would *not* go to the BPL, but to the city, because it is the city that owns the library. Setting that aside, there is a bigger problem that was *not* mentioned to the public or to the elected officials theoretically being informed about and overseeing the transaction: *There is very little left to net any proceeds for the public because in 1986 most of the 10 FAR development rights were transferred out to Forest City Ratner.* Even worse, analysis indicates that, if the library were sold, most of the benefit, perhaps even most of the sale proceeds, would be going to Forest City Ratner, not the public.

And yet, in promoting this transaction library and city administration officials felt they could keep this information under wraps and out of the equation.

The attached Noticing New York article covers this topic in more detail than three minutes of testimony can: Friday, September 20, 2013, [Forest City Ratner As The Development Gatekeeper \(And Profit taker\) Getting The Benefit As Brooklyn Heights Public Library Is Sold](#).

Sincerely,

Citizens Defending Libraries

Another Privatization Of Publicly Owned Property and Public Realm Associated With Digitizing Public

Collections

March 11 2014
James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

While many of us are well aware that these proposed library sell-offs represent real estate deals that privatize publicly-owned assets there is another associated concern about privatization that should not be overlooked. Library officials talking about getting rid of books are at the same time discussing digitizing and relying on digital content sometime in the future even if their plans are not yet ready for prime time).

But we must be wary that there are many who see the digitized future in terms of an increasingly privatized future where corporations pushing for various plans expect to make a lot of money by controlling digitized information, in many cases, by charging the public for what's already owned by the public in public collections that are being put out of reach.

Many consider that this was the principal motivation behind the sickening 1995 hollowing-out of the San Francisco Public Library collections, which was underwritten with big-ticket contributions from telecoms and Silicon Valley.

Digital activist Aaron Swartz warned about this disturbing trend:

The world's entire scientific ... heritage ... is increasingly being digitized and locked up by a handful of private corporations.... The Open Access Movement has fought valiantly to ensure that scientists do not sign their copyrights away but instead ensure their work is published on the Internet, under terms that allow anyone to access it.

In the future we may expect that after the libraries have contracted out to privatize content we will be charged exorbitantly high fees for what was once publicly owned. The further irony in all of this is that much of the transcription and other work to create digitally available content may have been crowd sourced so that the public will be charged for what it once freely owned and for the result of its own freely contributed work product and intensive labor creating privatized content.

Sincerely,

Citizens Defending Libraries

With Errant Visions of Digital Utopia Do We Now Get A Digital Dystopia?

March 11 2014
James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10017

Re: *New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings*

Dear Committee:

Those who would tell you that we are now arriving at a digitally-supplied version of a utopic future where having libraries or physical books is no longer important are naive or dishonest.

Here is what Citizens Defending Libraries explained in answer to a question in an interview article published by Melville House ([Citizens Defending Libraries calls the Central Library Plan “a real estate grab” and “contrary to the public interest”](#), by Claire Kelly, February 19, 2014 - Copy of full article attached)

Are you concerned that libraries are moving towards privatization and that there is a move to replace physical books with digital resources?

We are very concerned about notions proposed that libraries should have to pay their own way or start bowing to corporate or other private interests. Libraries are an essential public commons, and should continue as such.

The issue of ownership is a good segue into the second part of your question. There is much evolving right now with respect to digital rights that hasn't been resolved: Copyrights are being extended and made stricter; so-called “orphan works” are in serious jeopardy; content providers are consolidating into monopolies that raise prices while much of what is available digitally is made available through time-limited subscriptions that have a potential ephemerality that never applied to books on the shelves. Technology busily shifts too: The New York Times had a sentence in a tech section article recently, *“If you own a Nook, the fate of your books may now be up in the air.”*

We favor, and we are not against, adding digital resources, but right now we think that the benefits of digitization, partly fad, and partly, to an extent, legitimate future, are being seized upon and exaggerated to excuse a rush to get rid of physical books because books take up real estate and the focus of too many people running the libraries is selling real estate. The public, all of its generations, like physical books. For the most part the public hasn't switched away from physical books. Scientific American just did an interesting review of the science literature indicating that the human brain may be hard-wired to learn and retain information better with physical books. Many books aren't available digitally. Making them available would be a massive undertaking at which it is easy to fail. Nicholson Baker's “Doublefold” and his tales of the unutterable destruction that occurred at San Francisco's library provide serious cautionary tales. It doesn't serve to banish books in a precipitous experiment undertaken by people with questionable motives who lack library credentials. Working for a hedge fund doesn't qualify you to curate mankind's store of knowledge.

NYPL President Tony Marx reads a physical copy of the New York Times, so do I, and that's the way I read many books. Physical media shouldn't be the exclusive preserve of a lucky privileged few.

When the Brooklyn Heights Association asked internet guru Clay Shirky to speak at its annual meeting on February 27th, Mr. Shirky said that we need libraries, acknowledging that there are great gaps in the knowledge and information that can be found on the internet and much that isn't digitalized. Further, information available electronically can be unstable and ephemeral. More on this is available in the following Noticing New York article which is also attached: Wednesday, March 5, 2014, [Internet Guru Clay Shirky Speaking At Brooklyn Heights Association Annual Meeting Says We Need Libraries Because Of Holes In The Internet](#).

Jane Jacobs, the great urbanist thinker, suggested that society's future answers, strengths and real development will almost certainly be developed organically, diversely, bottom up, not top-down. Importantly, such solutions to the future include what we need to know about and consider doing, with respect to many important issues facing us, including climate change. Unfortunately, in our rush to dismantle libraries, throwing away books, we are also destroying and putting beyond reach mankind's store of knowledge on these matters. Jane Jacobs' books cannot be found in Brooklyn's libraries! Climate change information has vanished. More on this is available in the following Noticing New York article which is also attached: Tuesday, February 11, 2014, [Libraries And Climate Change: The Dangerous Destruction of Information We May Need To Know To Survive](#).

Unless we are careful stewards of our resources the envisioning of a digital utopia may usher in the opposite, a dystopic future, a new dark age, where much of humankind's knowledge is lost, much like the burning of the Great Library of Alexandria.

Sincerely,

Citizens Defending Libraries

MICHAEL D. D. WHITE

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Subject: Articles submitted as testimony for library hearing.

Date: Mon, Aug 31, 2015 12:17 am

This is the first of a number of articles I am submitting as testimony in connection with the library hearing that are relevant and informative with respect to the proposal in obvious ways:

<http://noticingnewyork.blogspot.com/2015/06/where-are-they-now-sharon-greenberger.html>

Saturday, June 6, 2015

Where Are They Now?: Sharon Greenberger, Evercore and the Revson Foundation- Selling And Shrinking NYC Libraries



Sharon L. Greenberger in government and now . . . still selling libraries?

Sometimes coincidence seem just too frequent and sometimes it will surprise you where certain people will turn up.

Sharon L. Greenberger

Back last August I wrote a long article, the saga of the Brooklyn Public Library's creation and pursuit of a "*Strategic Real Estate Plan*" to sell and shrink ("*right-size*") its libraries, an article put together through the vantage of reading over ten years of the Brooklyn Public Library's own minutes. See: Sunday, August 31, 2014, [Mostly In Plain Sight \(A Few Conscious Removals Notwithstanding\) Minutes Of Brooklyn Public Library Tell Shocking Details Of Strategies To Sell Brooklyn's Public Libraries](#).

One of the BPL trustees who emerged as a fascinating spearhead pushing the plans to put library real estate in the hands of developers was *Sharon L. Greenberger* (the "*L*" stands for "*Lee*") who was appointed to the BPL board by Mayor Bloomberg. She was chief of staff for Bloomberg's top development dog, Daniel Doctoroff, Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and Rebuilding.

It was Ms. Greenberger who became the key designated leader of a BPL board task force created in the fall of 2008 to promote the "*Strategic Real Estate Plan*." She regularly appears in the minutes pushing it forward. She is the one who introduced to the board Karen Backus, the former Forest City Ratner vice president, who was hired to create the real estate plan in 2007 and who in her task force role was responsible for coordinating with Backus and being a conduit for all board comments to her. Greenberger's committee in February 2009 also reviews whether to hold off on capital work that needs to be done at the Sunset Park Library, given that a secret "*Revson Study*" called for that library to become a "*Mixed Use Real Estate*" opportunity.

That "*Revson Study*" must be a pretty eye-opening one given that the BPL even now, years afterward, [refuses](#) to furnish it [pursuant to the Freedom of Information Law](#) as it is required to.

Revson

We'll be back to Revson.

Back to Greenberger

February 2009 was also when Ms. Greenberger's real estate committee is reportedly in communication with New York City's Landmarks Commission to ensure that landmark designations don't interfere with the real estate-related ambitions the BPL has for its multiple historic libraries.

Greenberger over time winds up in a fair number of other development and government related positions, all of which are interesting.



Greenberger with NYU president John Sexton

For a while Greenberger was involved with NYU's controversial expansion plan as Vice President of Campus Planning and Real Estate for New York University. She was described as having "*bolted*" from it. When she left to become President and CEO of the New York City School Construction Authority, Greenwich Village Historic District Director Andrew Berman criticized her for her involvement in selling air rights to developers while at NYU and quipped that the same thing might now happen to NYC schools, something that ultimately proved to be [a very valid concern](#). (See: [Planning czar bolts N.Y.U. for Bloomberg schools job](#), By Lincoln Anderson, April 19 - 25 2006.

From the School Construction Authority Ms. Greenberger moved on to the Department of Education. She left there in 2011 following the exceptionally brief troubled tenure and departure of Schools Chancellor Cathie Black, the Bloomberg appointee from the public relations world who had no education experience.

Greenberger wasn't the only Doctoroff staff person to show up on the BPL's board. There was also [Laurel Blatchford](#), a Senior Policy Advisor to Daniel Doctoroff before she moved on to become Deputy Commissioner for Strategy Planning, Policy, and Communications at New York City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). She later was involved on the private sector side in events working towards the dismantling of the South Street Historic District.

If you read the [previous longer NNY article](#) it describes much more about how other Bloomberg operatives like Bloomberg Counsel Anthony Crowell another Bloomberg trustee and First Deputy Mayor Patti Harris, also charged with overseeing real estate matters for Bloomberg, were presiding over BPL governance matters in various ways.

Greenberger and Blatchford both overlap in their BPL board tenures, interestingly with another BPL trustee, *Janet Offensend*.

Greenberger showed up on the BPL board in December of 2004, appointed by Mayor Bloomberg for a five year term. This is roughly the same time that Janet Offensend makes her first appearance in the BPL's minutes (September 21, 2004). Ms. Offensend is interesting as another key BPL trustee associated with the BPL's library sales although she didn't get appointed to the board until the end of 2005. Ms. Offensend shows up in the minutes about half a year after her husband David's assumption of the position of Chief Operating Officer at the NYPL where he would oversee the sudden, secretive sale of the Donnell Library in 2007 and the Central Library Plan, another massive boondoggle involving library shrinkage and the proposed sale of the Mid-Manhattan Library and SIBL, the 34th Street Science, Industry and Business Library, together with the destruction of stacks at the 42nd Street Central Reference Library and removal of its

books.

Evercore

David G. Offensend started as Chief Operating Officer at the NYPL in the first half of 2004, coming from Evercore, a private equity and investment firm that spun off from the [Blackstone Group](#), an investment company which has, as just one of its many lines of business, the world's largest real estate investment company, and which is headed by Stephen A. Schwarzman. Mr. Schwarzman transferred \$100 million to the NYPL when it was his understanding that the Central Library Plan would then proceed with its plans to shed valuable Manhattan real estate. Oddly, months before the relatively contemporaneous Donnell sale was publicly known, there was [weird speculation](#) in the press that Schwarzman and his Blackstone Group would be involved in an acquisition of Orient Express, the company that it was revealed had contracted to purchase Donnell when information about the apparently bidless sale came out.

Where Are They Now?

Where is Sharon L. Greenberger now? Yes, she has been at New York Presbyterian, [SVP for Facilities Development and Engineering](#). . . But she can also be found on the board of the "[Charles H. Revson Foundation](#)."

Remember that "[Revson Study](#)" the BPL *won't release*? That study about libraries converted into "Mixed Use Real Estate Opportunities"?

Recently the Revson Foundation was one of a principal movers and funders behind "[Re-imagining New York City's Branch Libraries](#)" that set up an orchestration of "*six interdisciplinary teams to present innovative design solutions for the challenges facing branch libraries.*"



More than one set of these presentations was made. I missed the first one that borrowed Brian Lehrer from WNYC to moderate. I was at the one at the New School's Furman Center [on January 12th](#) early this year. That evening's audience was informed that materials were going to be put up the web, but they decided *not* to put up a video of the evening. It could have been embarrassing in some respects.

At the end of the presentation, the moderating New School host, summing up, said the following:

And again, as the final presentation has shown, and we will see again hopefully, at the end a library is real estate. It's an integral ingredient in urban development. I've studied libraries for years, and many design projects around the country have found it's often a nice placating gesture in a real estate development. You want to do commercial development?: Put a library in it and you win a new public that you might not have had on your team initially. So in short a library has many fronts and functions.

The last presentation referred to above had, among other things, shown, with accompanying diagrams, how provision of libraries could be exchanged for community approval of real estate development: A better, bigger library traded for an upzoning where it is built, or the upzoning of an entire area surrounding such a library based on the exchanged assurance

that *surcharges* on the new development would be paid into the library system's general coffers. Anything paid in by what was referred to as such a "*surcharge*," would, theoretically, have to not be subtracted out of the city's budget on the other end. . . . but that virtually insurmountable problem wasn't hinted at.



Let developers upzone and get a bigger library?

Libraries as 'nice placating gestures' to 'win' public approvals for development? . .

. . . Such enticement plans could hardly work if the public felt that libraries were a basic public service they were entitled to no matter what- And wasn't such public entitlement the deal Carnegie struck with the city when he donated most of the city's libraries? It's a deal the city is now breaking.

The only way such enticement plans work is if the public is kept starved for libraries and starved for library funding. That, perversely, puts people hoping to use libraries as pawns for lubricating development in the camp of wanting libraries perpetually underfunded or even on the brink of extermination. . . .

Such enticement plans do not work if libraries, like police, fire and sanitation departments, are looked upon as inherent public goods that pay for themselves because the cost of doing without them would be greater.

The presenters at these "*re-envisioning*" forums were all propounding themselves as being pro-library and pro-library funding..

The entire evening of presentations, more than three hours even in incomplete form, and even before it was opened up for audience questions, served up some good ideas. It also served up some silly ones and some other ideas that were ominous and frightening.

The talk about having fewer books at the libraries was far too cheerful. There was talk about libraries that would be appreciably smaller, their "*flexible*" spaces less committed to traditional library use with the idea of cramming in multiple competing prospective uses. One possibility focused on: "*ephemeral*" small temporary storefront libraries.

As I made the point when audience questions were permitted, when evaluating all of this, what gets thrown out as a smorgasbord mix of good, silly and bad ideas is less relevant than which of these ideas gets cherry picked for *actual execution* by library administration officials. The panelist presenters were loath to comment when I asked them what they thought of actual plans materializing against the background of the cloud of ideas thrown up. The plans we have witnessed actually materializing involve sale and shrinkage of libraries and elimination of books, all of this structured to benefit the real estate industry: Selling and shrinking central destination libraries like the Donnell and Brooklyn Heights libraries,* and similarly the Central Library Plan shrinking library space and eliminating books while selling Mid-Manhattan and the Science, Industry and Business libraries.

(* The *first ever* hearing about selling off a NYC library, this one, will be held [Wednesday, June 17th.](#))

The fact is that the Revson Foundation, as with the too-toxic-to-release "*Revson Study*" about converting libraries to

multi-use development opportunities has been suspiciously in the background and suspiciously aligned with supporting these development ambitions.

The Revson Foundation has prominently backed [Spaceworks](#), a private firm, technically a not-for-profit, comprised of real estate and political insiders that has as one of its principal purposes the privatizing takeover of space to shrink libraries. Spaceworks targeted as one of its first guinea pig experiments the shrinking of the 7,500 square foot Red Hook Library down to just 5,500 square feet. This was although the Center For an Urban Future in a report funded by the Revson Foundation (and promoting their redevelopment) said, somewhat at cross purposes, that New York City branch libraries should be at least 10,000 square feet or more and notwithstanding that BPL President Linda Johnson, given a high profile platform to speak unchallenged at the Municipal Art Society, said that 7,500 square feet for a library was “*woefully inadequate*.”

The Revson Foundation has also [partnered with Urban Librarians Unite](#), a group that has [testified in favor](#) of selling and shrinking libraries and that also [supports](#) Spaceworks. It donated at [a total of \\$32,000](#) to that group over the years of 2012, 2013 and 2014.

To find in addition that the Revson Foundation has on its board Sharon L. Greenberger, who as a Daniel Doctoroff city development official was key in structuring the BPL's plans to turn all its libraries into real estate opportunities, is shocking.

Looking at the Revson Foundation board, there is something else to exacerbate concern: Evercore, the firm spun off from Blackstone that David Offensend co-founded and left to work at NYPL selling and shrinking libraries. Revson Foundation board member Stacy Dick was at *Evercore* overlapping with for a number of years with Offensend.

Greenberger now? She's just arriving at another institution that caretakes appreciable other assets about which the public cares. About a month ago the YMCA announced Ms. Greenberger is becoming its new president. She starts in July. See: [YMCA of Greater New York Announces Sharon Greenberger as New President & CEO](#), April 7, 2015.

YMCA of Greater New York Announces Sharon Greenberger as New President & CEO

Greenberger Brings Extensive Experience in Community and Economic Development and Education
Will Lead Largest YMCA in the United States Beginning July 2015



YMCA of Greater New York
April 7, 2015 9:00 AM



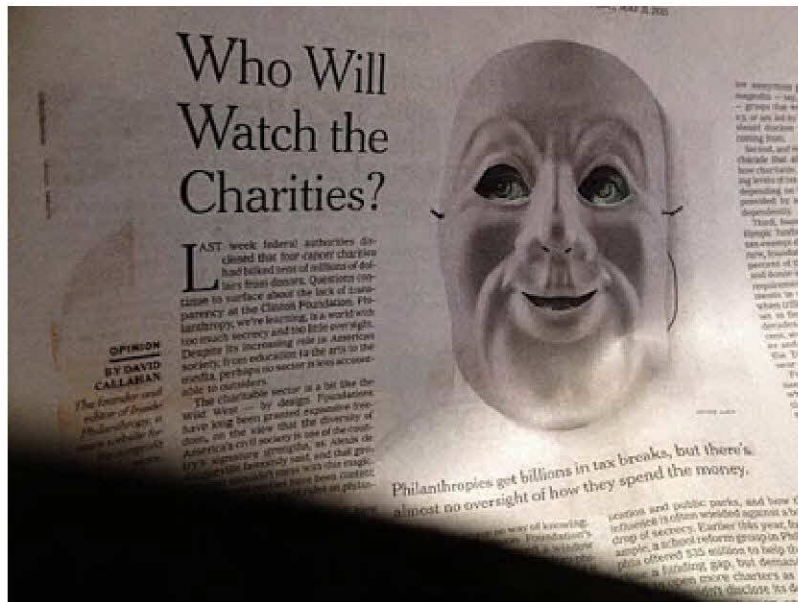
NEW YORK--(BUSINESS WIRE)--

The YMCA of Greater New York announced today that Sharon Greenberger will serve as the new President and Chief Executive Officer, effective July 2015. She will succeed Jack Lund, who has served as president and CEO for ten years and will retire at the end of June, as previously announced.

Ms. Greenberger currently serves as Senior Vice President, Facilities and Real Estate at New York-Presbyterian Hospital, a position she has held since 2011, and has more than 20 years of



Takeover of Charitable Boards By Wall Street Financiers With Not So Charitable Values



There is new study on the increasing dominance of Wall Street financiers on charitable boards: "[The Wall Street Takeover of Nonprofit Boards](#)," by Garry W. Jenkins at Ohio State University's Moritz College of Law. See: [Wall Street's latest takeover: Charity boards](#), by Robert Frank, May 28, 2015.

As CNBC's Robert Frank summarizes:

the percentage of nonprofit board members in the study who come from finance has doubled since 1989. They hold an even larger percentage of leadership positions on nonprofit boards.

From the report:

As financiers come to dominate the boards of leading nonprofits, it is not surprising that their approaches and priorities have made their way, very explicitly and fundamentally, into the governance of the nonprofit sector.

Among multiple other critiques of the pitfalls of such boards the report notes that "numerous critics have written thoughtfully about the ways in which market-based thinking and approaches applied to the nonprofit sector provide false promise, with the potential to dilute charitable values" and "undermine long-term mission focus."

Mr. Frank wraps up:

.. as the study makes clear, simply "following the money" may not be the best long-term strategy for today's most important charities.

This report and the Robert Frank summarizing of it apparently assume the good intentions of such dominating board members, their principal concern then being that the approach of such board members will be culturally misguided and insensitive to value that cannot be expressed monetarily

A May 30, 2015 New York Times Sunday Review Op-Ed, "[Who Will Watch the Charities?](#)," by David Callahan, founder and editor of Inside Philanthropy, is far more caustic and cynical. "(W)e should end the charade that all philanthropy is somehow charitable," says Mr. Callahan. He cites how earlier this year "a school reform group in Philadelphia offered \$35 million to help that city close a funding gap, but demanded the right to open more charters as a condition and wouldn't disclose its donors." He warns a big problem with modern philanthropy: "how inextricably entwined it has become with politics and ideology." He says:

it's alarming how in an era of high inequality, private funders have a growing say over central areas of civic life like education and public parks, and how this influence is often wielded against a backdrop of secrecy.

Mr. Callahan says that the secrecy can't go on, predicting that it won't, saying that as powerful institutions in American life charities need vigilant oversight.

I am not saying that the Revson Foundation has not done many things of value. What's more I am sad to be questioning it at all as my aunt, [Kay Daly](#), was Vice President of Revlon in charge of advertising and a close colleague of Revlon's founder, Charles Revson Sr. who set up the Revson Foundation. His son, Charles Revson Jr., his son, is also on the Revson Foundation's board.

Revson Board

I'll leave it to the reader to study and try to discern how and by whom influence gets exercised on the Revson Foundation's board. I have not yet had time to do as much deep research as I'd like.

Does it matter that Sharon L. Greenberger is really more a development operative hailing from the Bloomberg administration's Daniel Doctoroff days, than a financier and technically from Wall Street?

Does it matter that Cheryl Effron, a real estate developer on the board, has strong ties to the Bloomberg administration (see this [from 2011](#)):

In 2009 she founded Greater NY, a public-private partnership based in the Mayor's Office to engage fifty corporate executives in two-year one-on-one strategic partnerships with non-profit executives to develop new models for social service delivery in New York City.

* * *

She is a trustee of the Mayor's Fund for the Advancement of New York City.

Does it matter that Jeffrey Goldberg on the foundation board is one of the columnists at *Bloomberg View* set up in May of 2011 as the editorial division of Bloomberg News, [that is](#) "an opinion product . . . to some extent, a reflection of its creator," Michael Bloomberg, mayor at that time.

I invite my readers to investigate more. These *'where are they now'* questions are indeed interesting, but *where will WE be without libraries?* Wherever we are, we'll probably be there without many of our other public assets as well. . . . *Because, if you can't stop them at libraries, where can you stop them?*

PS: If it makes you feel any better- or worse- the Revson Foundation has given [a great deal of money](#) to WNYC radio which now [has on its board](#) MaryAnne Gilmartin, the head of Forest City Ratner (a [gatekeeper](#) for one of the library sales, [Brooklyn Heights](#)) and has recently [run promotional spots that are essentially advertising](#) for Forest City Ratner.

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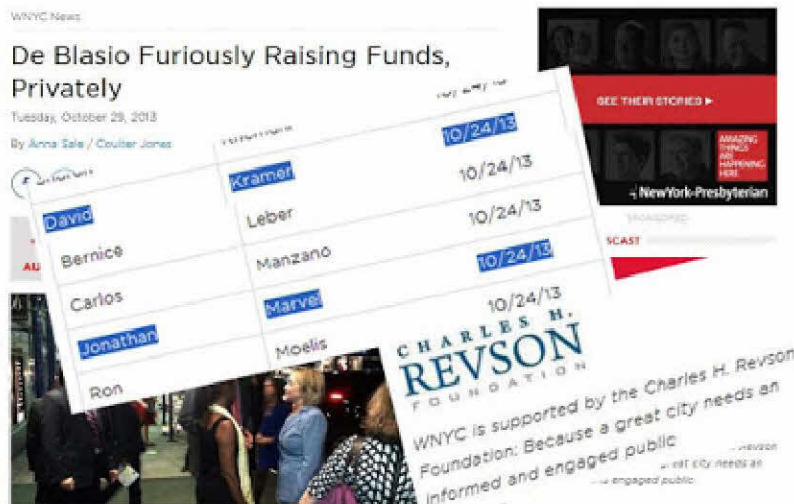
Subject: Re: Articles submitted as testimony for library hearing.

Date: Mon, Aug 31, 2015 12:21 am

This is the second of a number of articles I am submitting as testimony in connection with the library hearing that are relevant and informative with respect to the proposal in obvious ways:

<http://noticingnewyork.blogspot.com/2015/06/wnyc-reports-mayor-de-blasios-furiously.html>

WNYC Reports Mayor de Blasio's "Furiously Raising Funds" - Including From Developers "Lurking Behind The Curtain" of Library Real Estate Sales- And WNYC's Money?



Bill de Blasio funders: Library-purchasing developers David Kramer and Jonathan Marvel. WNYC funder: The Revson Foundation

Here's a link to a WNYC report: [De Blasio Furiously Raising Funds, Privately](#), by Anna Sale.

The article, informative and newsworthy mostly as long list of "who is helping" de Blasio, channeling big bucks to his door. It doesn't say who is bringing *how much* and you have to guess who is bringing the most. You can make some good guesses though.

As you'd suspect the city's heavy-hitting real estate developers are well represented: William Zeckendorf, the Sitt Family, Larry Silverstein, Fred Heller, Robert Levine and Ronny Levine, Mike Muse and Jason Muss, Ron Moelis, Gary Barnett, David Von Spreckelsen, Donald Capoccia.



A May 27th [demonstration](#) against Gary Barnett's Extell gentrifying 227 Cherry Street development that wiped out the local supermarket on the Lower East Side.

You also have people representing them like real estate lawyers Douglas Eisenberg or John Zuccotti, immortalized by having the [private park](#) from which Occupy Wall Street [was evicted](#) named after him.

There are, of course, lobbyists: Peter Vallone Sr., Sid Davidoff, Ken Fisher.

And then there are many others who may or may not have brought in that much money and who are likely on the list for reasons unconnected with real estate, in some cases perhaps because they even have altruistic hopes in common with the rest of us for Bill de Blasio's future as mayor: Abby (Abigail) Disney, Emily Madoff, Yetta Kurland, Debbie Almontaser.

Attorney Jim Walden is on the list perhaps because in 2013 he was representing a huge public constituency hoping that de Blasio in his ascension to office as mayor would be key in defeating the sell-off of Long Island College Hospital as part of a plan to turn that facility into waterfront condominium towers. No such luck: Mr. de Blasio wimped.

No doubt the reason that WNYC did an information dump of all these names for the public to analyze is the supposition that all these people sending money de Blasio's way wanted him in office and to influence his decisions in office.

People that are particularly interesting on the list in one respect are the people *connected to the selling off of New York City libraries*, shrinking them to squeeze the best out of the real estate deals that materialize as a result.

David Kramer of Hudson Companies Development is on the list as is Jonathan Marvel of Marvel Architects. Their fund-raising at this time was concurrent with Kramer and Marvel having a pending application in with the city to buy and shrink the Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's central destination library in Downtown Brooklyn on Cadman Plaza at the corner of Tillary and Clinton.



This was October 2013. *Three months* earlier in the campaign de Blasio [stood on the steps](#) of 42nd Street's Central Reference Library with Citizens Defending Libraries (of which I am a co-founder) and other activists opposing city library sales to speak of the proposed sale and shrinkage of the city's libraries, including the Brooklyn Heights Tillary Clinton Library, in harshly discrediting terms:

It's public land and public facilities and public value under threat. . . and once again we see, lurking right behind the curtain, real estate developers who are very anxious to get their hands on these valuable properties

Eleven months after Kramer and Marvel flowed money to de Blasio's campaign and *nine month's* into de Blasio's term as mayor, the de Blasio administration decided that the Kramer and Marvel application would be the one selected if the sale and shrinkage is approved to go forward. The sale will entail a substantial loss to the city with library being shrunk down to one-third size. As a technical matter the process to obtain

that approval will commence with [a hearing](#) before Brooklyn Community Board 2's Land Use Committee on [Wednesday, June 17th](#).^{*} The process will take at least 18 months, perhaps as much as two years, and will require de Blasio's sign-off before it is complete. A week ago de Blasio told one of the activists opposing library sales that *he has not made his decision on the sale yet*, but there are plenty who cynically believe he has already committed himself privately to the developer.

(* This will be the *first ever* hearing about the selling and shrinking of a major New York City library. No such hearings were required when the Donnell Library was suddenly and secretly sold off because, in that case, the library, not the city, owned the land. Similarly, such a hearing isn't required for the sale of another major destination library, SIBL, Science, Industry and Business Library at 34th Street.)



Developer David Kramer looks on approvingly as library administration officials do a sales pitch for his purchase and shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights Tillary Cointon Library

The developer David Kramer and I live in the same neighborhood, Brooklyn Heights, which the other day resulted in our meeting and a discussion about the proposed library sale giving a young man who was present an impromptu civics lesson. David described Citizens Defending Libraries and its opposition to the city's transformation of libraries into real estate deals as being part of the "*checks and balances*" of the system.

I continued this discussion with him May 27th at a community board meeting where the library administration officials had flogged the plan to sell and shrink the library. I asked him what check and balance there was to the influence of his money and the money of the real estate industry when it came to library sales. He said he hadn't given any money and that money wasn't a factor in the process. . .

. . . However, here is [record of \\$4,725.00](#) going directly from Mr. Kramer to de Blasio's coffers.

Not on the list published by WNYC is any [fund-raising](#) by Forest City Ratner for de Blasio which was prolific, the Daily News [reporting on](#) Bruce Ratner and associates sending \$73,000 de Blasio's way.

Forest City Ratner is important because Forest City Ratner is positioned as a [gatekeeper](#) able to also benefit from the Brooklyn Heights Library sale. It was former Forest City Ratner vice president Karen Backus [who created](#) the BPL's still [secretly held](#) "*Strategic Real Estate Plan*" to "*right-size*" Brooklyn's libraries by "*leveraging*" all of the system's real estate while prioritizing for sale the two libraries next to Forest City Ratner property, the Brooklyn Heights Tillary Clinton library being one and the Pacific Branch the other.

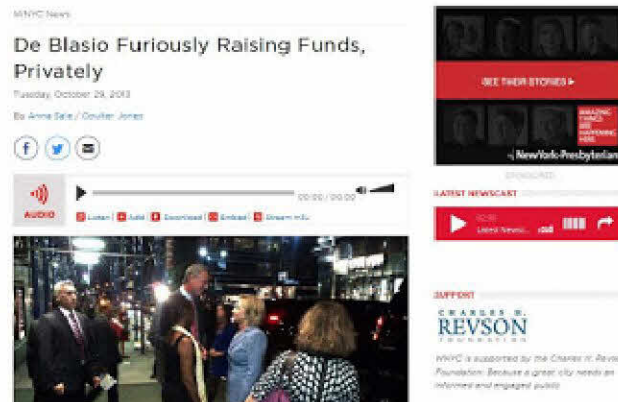
The rationale was to sell the most valuable libraries first, but those are also the libraries most valuable to the public. What's considered next most valuable will be seen as the BPL moves down the list.

WNYC's October 2013 list did have others involved in the library sales. Among them is Nicholas A. Gravante, Jr. a lawyer that his firm [spotlights](#) for trial victories, including "*winning an acquittal for three leading New York City real estate companies indicted under the Martin Act*" (that means the firms were indicted for making misrepresentations to the public). Gravante is a board member and is now currently chair of the Brooklyn Public Library board pushing for

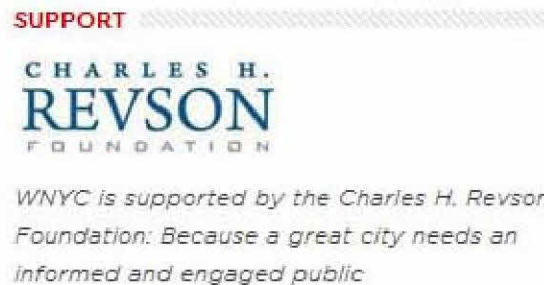
these library sales. Other members of his Boies Schiller & Flexner law firm were also on the WNYC list: David Boies and Christopher Boies.

Carlos Scissura (Carlo A. Scissura, Esq.) is on the list. He is currently [president](#) of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce that is supporting the library sales. Previously [he was](#) General Counsel and Chief of Staff for Borough President Marty Markowitz, who supported the library sale and shrinkage. Working for Markowitz Scissura served as an ex-officio member of the BPL board and was there for the concocting of the still secret "*Strategic Real Estate Plan*."

Lastly, Joe Sitt (the Sitt Family was on the list) is a developer who is likely to have benefitted in ways that have yet to be publicly analyzed and discussed if the part of NYPL's Central Library Plan involving the proposed sale of Mid-Manhattan Library were ever to move forward.



I wrote above that no doubt the reason that WNYC furnished the list of the names of all these people funneling money to de Blasio is the *supposition* that the money was intended to have influence. . . .



In one final irony as we pay attention to the proposed transformation of city libraries into real estate deals, it is distressing to note that the WNYC article about who is sending money to de Blasio appears with the following note about who is providing money to WNYC:

WNYC is supported by the Charles H. Revson Foundation: Because a great city needs an informed and engaged public

The irony? The Charles H. Revson Foundation has been suspiciously in the background and supportive of turning New York City libraries into real estate deals. (See: Thursday, June 6, 2015, [Where Are They Now?: Sharon Greenberger, Evercore and the Revson Foundation- Selling And Shrinking NYC Libraries](#).) . . . It may be one of the reasons that WNYC reporting on the sale of libraries, something that should be a very important story, has fallen quite short of the mark.

The Revson Foundation gives WNYC big money: In the years 2010 to 2015 the Revson Foundation has given to WNYC (or in one case one of its projects) a total of *\$1.78 million*.

The axiom (courtesy [here](#) of Bill Moyers) is that "*news is what people want to keep hidden, everything else is publicity*."

WNYC [says](#) that its news reporting is *not* affected by the sponsors that 'donate' money. WNYC, which now has Forest City Ratner head MaryAnne Gilmartin on its board, also takes sponsorship money from Forest City Ratner, in return for which it [has run](#) what are essentially advertisements for the firm. WNYC has regularly been a publicist telling the public volumes of what the Revson Foundation wants known about how it is spending its money. It has *not*, however, reported about what is going on behind the scenes to turn libraries into real estate deals.

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Cc: cernac62 <cernac62@aol.com>

Subject: Re: Articles submitted as testimony for library hearing.

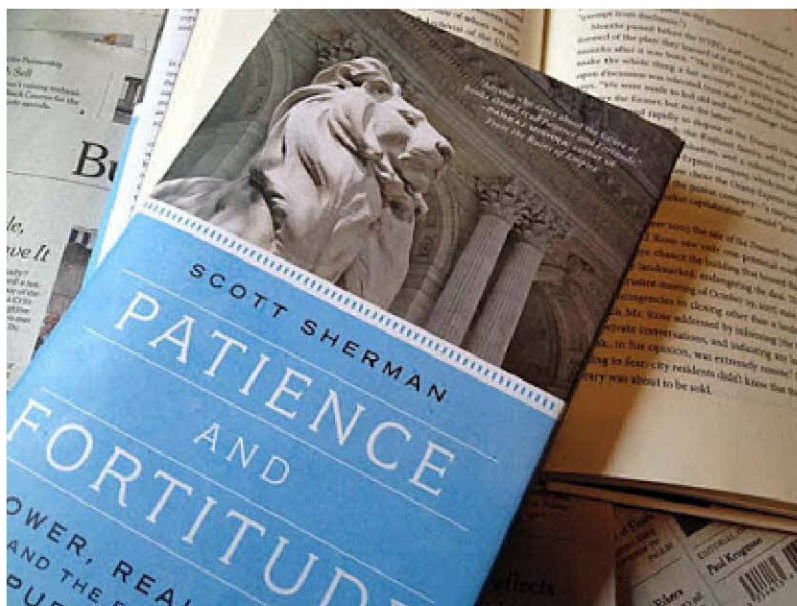
Date: Mon, Aug 31, 2015 12:23 am

This is the third of a number of articles I am submitting as testimony in connection with the library hearing that are relevant and informative with respect to the proposal in obvious ways:

<http://noticingnewyork.blogspot.com/2015/06/real-estate-deal-revelations-in-scott.html>

Saturday, June 6, 2015

[Real Estate Deal Revelations In Scott Sherman's New "Patience and Fortitude" About NYPL Central Library Plan Fight: Observer-Ownng Kushner Family In At Outset of Donnell Sale](#)

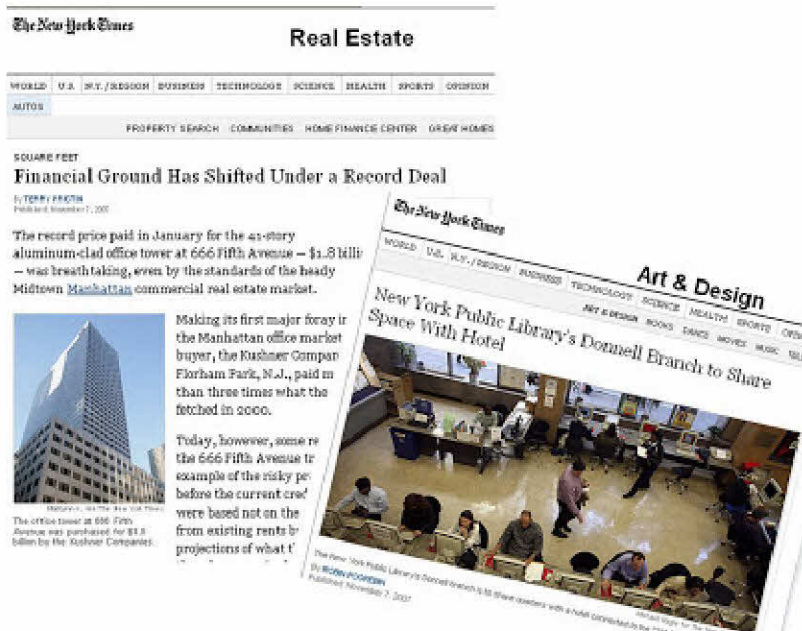


I am reading and now am almost at the conclusion of Scott Sherman's new *"Patience and Fortitude- Power, Real Estate, and the Fight to Save a Public Library."* It's about the fight to save the famed 42nd Street Central Reference Library from the NYPL "Central Library Plan" that would have also sold off the Mid-Manhattan and 34th Street Science, Industry and Business libraries.

The book's official release date is a few days from now, but [ordering directly from the publisher](#) makes it available earlier, which is the way I got copies.

I am fascinated to see how Mr. Sherman ties it all up, although I already suspect that there will be a few threads left tantalizingly hanging. The book deserves a thorough Noticing New York review, which I hope I will get around to soon.

In the meantime, the book produces some revelations in what I already have read. One of them involves confirmation of something that was easy to suspect but was never before reported: *The Kushner family that owns the New York Observer was in on the sale of the beloved Donnell Library from the outset.*



Two November 7, 2007 NY Times stories about real estate deals that turned out to be connected. Why was that easy to suspect? As [reported previously](#) by Noticing New York, on November 7, 2007 the New York Times published two stories that reported separately (even in two different sections of the newspaper) about two real estate deals that ultimately turned out to be connected: The New York Public Library's announced sale of the Donnell Library and Jared Kushner's purchase, for a record-setting amount (taken home by Tishman Speyer) of 666 Fifth Avenue. Jared Kushner is the owner of the New York Observer.

In my [previous](#) NNY reporting on these tandem sales I asked: "Did somebody know when 666 was bought that there was other potential value in the building?" Why? Because ultimately \$30.825 million was paid to the owners of 666 Fifth Avenue for 'air rights' freeing the Donnell site developer from restrictions that would have limited what could be built there.

The purchase of 666 Fifth Avenue announced December 2006 occurred in January 2007, ten months before the announced sale of Donnell. The Times reporting that November said it was the "first major foray into the Manhattan office market, the buyer, the Kushner Companies."

Scott Sherman's book reveals that in 2007:

[Marshall] Rose moved rapidly to dispose of the Donnell Library. Two bidders emerged: The Kushner family, which owns many properties in Manhattan, and a subsidiary of the Bermuda-based Orient-Express company, which owned the abutting "21" Club.

When Citizens Defending Libraries (I as a co-founder of CDL was part of the interview team) interviewed NYPL Chief Operating Officer David Offensend about the NYPL's library sales he was evasive about the bid process that wasn't public so it isn't a surprise that only these two bidders "emerged." It is interesting that behind the scenes, the Kushners, looking to make a second *major foray* into the market, apparently understood the connection and what it meant in terms of the transaction that would ultimately be structured.

Certainly others understood too, but that connection was not furnished publicly at the time Robin Pogrebin was reporting about the announced Donnell sale. She was misled by the NYPL's description of a very different transaction involving only an 11-story hotel, *not* a 50-story luxury tower in which the inclusion of a luxury hotel would be only a small part.

As the Kushner deal to acquire of 666 Fifth was solidified by the end of 2006 at a then suspiciously high price, it looks all the more likely that the Kushners knew of the likeliness of a Donnell sale somewhat earlier that year. . .

. . . That, checked against the reporting in Scott Sherman's book, seems to mean that the Kushners knew the outlines of the deal that was shaping up *before* the NYPL board knew about or approved it. Notwithstanding, the Kushners were apparently taking significant action presuming they knew how things would unfold.

2006 seems to have been an interesting year for the Kushners. Jared Kushner [acquired](#) the Observer in July 2006.

Also, as the Times [reports](#), his father was released from prison:

Mr. Kushner's father, Charles B. Kushner, is a company founder and a newsmaker in his own right. A major Democratic fund-raiser, Charles Kushner was convicted last year of 18 counts of tax evasion, witness tampering and illegal campaign donations. He was released from prison earlier this year.

Interesting thing about the owner of the Observer being involved in this deal?: It's one more New York City news organ less likely to do investigative reporting about New York City library sell-offs. . .



At 53rd Street accross from MoMA, the 97,000 square foot Donnell on land from John D. Rockefeller out of stone that matched Rockefeller Center's

Mr. Sherman's book has other revelations. There are, for instance, revelations concerning the loss the NYPL suffered selling Donnell. Noticing New York and Citizens Defending Libraries have previously made the point that Donnell was sold to net the NYPL *less than \$38 million*. It turns out the NYPL netted far less than that. The NYPL collected a gross price of \$59 million for the 97,000 square foot library, much of which had been recently renovated. It is so far costing the NYPL at least \$21 million to build the much smaller 28,000 square foot, largely bookless, largely underground library that will 'replace' Donnell in 2015 or maybe 2016.

Additional losses must be subtracted. The NYPL paid millions to professionals to tell them that its essentially stupid real estate transactions were the *opposite* of that. That's the way that you cover your ass when are doing something that you shouldn't.

But, if the NYPL had tried to build a library that replaced Donnell full scale it would have lost money on the transaction even taking just these figures into account.

There is more information that will come out associated with the cost of removing the books from Donnell.



Books ready to be shipped off, disappearing from Donnell. Many millions of books that were in Manhattan Libraries are not there anymore. And there is substantial cost associated with not having them there.

Mr. Sherman's book identifies some other costs that turned out to be huge in comparison to how little Donnell was sold for:

the outfitting of a temporary replacement library for the Donnell in a cramped space on 46th Street, which turned out to be a very costly proposition— [NYPL President] LeClerc and Rose had inked a rental lease whose terms called for payment of \$850,000 for the first year (with possible increases thereafter), but the Library also spent nearly \$5 million to outfit that new temporary facility.

Ergo, even before recognizing that the NYPL would have suffered a net loss if it had to build a full-scale Donnell, the \$5 million to outfit the temporary replacement means that the NYPL netted *less than \$33 million* for selling the library and from that there needs to be *further subtractions* of the \$850,000 annual rents for all the years since Donnell closed in spring of 2008.

Meanwhile, the penthouse apartment in the 50-story luxury tower replacing Donnell is on the market for [\\$60 million](#). Several weeks ago another single lower-level condo unit in the building, 43A, sold for [\\$20,110,437.50](#). There is also a 114 guest room luxury hotel in the tower and earlier this year Chinese investors made that hotel, according to the Wall Street Journal, "*the most highly valued hotel in the U.S.*" after agreeing to buy it for "*more than \$230 million. . . . more than \$2 million a room.*"

Having checked via the index, I know that there is *one thing* that Mr. Sherman *didn't* report.

He reported how NYPL COO David Offensend (now replaced- not reported by Sherman- by Iris Weinshall, Senator Schumer's wife) was a key driver of the Donnell sale and NYPL real estate plans. Some flatteringly refer to Offensend as a *`mastermind'* of the plans.

But Sherman did *not* report that while David Offensend was engaged in such plans at the NYPL his wife, Janet Offensend was named to the board of the Brooklyn Public Library where she was instrumental in the introduction of parallel plans for the sell-off and shrinkage of Brooklyn libraries, including a sale very closely modeled on, almost exactly duplicating, the sale of Donnell: The sale of the Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's central destination library in Downtown Brooklyn on Cadman Plaza at the corner of Tillary and Clinton.*

(* The sale of Donnell was sudden and secretive, but the *first ever* public hearing about the sale of a major New York City library will be held [Wednesday, June 17th](#), about the proposed sale and shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights library.)



On the left the Grand Army Plaza Library. On the right the Brooklyn Heights Library. Both central destination Brooklyn libraries were designed by Francis Keally, former president of the Municipal Art Society when it was a vital organization

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Noticing New York

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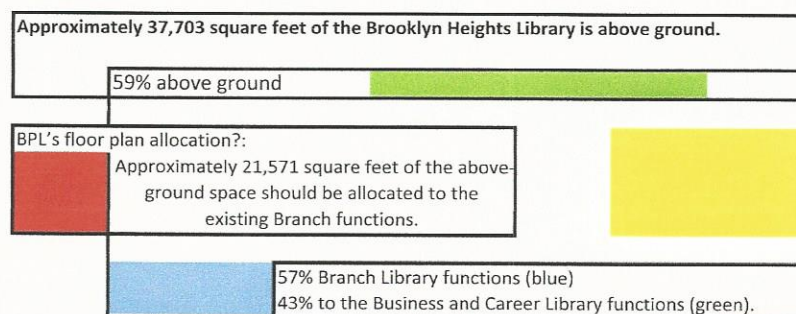
To: MDDWhite <MDDWhite@aol.com>

Subject: Floor Plans of the Brooklyn Heights Library Considered In Light of the Library's Proposed Sale and Shrinkage

Date: Mon, Nov 23, 2015 10:02 am

Tuesday, March 10, 2015

Floor Plans of the Brooklyn Heights Library Considered In Light of the Library's Proposed Sale and Shrinkage



This is NOT a graph- Just a visual to catch you attention with the information that we have some interesting calculations for you below!

59%, approximately 37,703 square feet, of the Brooklyn Heights Library is above ground, and, . . . according to the BPL's own calculations, 21,571 square feet (at least) of the above-ground space should be allocated to the existing "branch" functions. . . . PLUS added to that there should also a lot of additional underground space!- . .

. . . But shouldn't ALL, or MOST of, the tax-payer-owned-and-paid-for space including the space the BPL deems "Business and Career Library" function space, be kept for public use, not sold off and shrunk way down to benefit the private developer of a luxury condominium tower and Saint Ann's a private school which now may be getting 18,000 to 20,000 square feet for a new school theater, pretty much the same amount of space as proposed for a shrunken replacement library (proposed to have only 15,000 square feet above ground)?
FOR MORE CALCULATIONS KEEP READING. . .

How big is the current Brooklyn Heights Library?

The current library is 63,000 square feet. We are going with this particular stated size, because this is the stated size that has been used the longest and was used by the architects that the Brooklyn Heights Library hired to calculate an inflated estimate of repairing the library's air conditioning. The BPL's previous statements of the libraries size have usually stated the size of the library to be very close to this number and over 62,000 square feet. On [Monday, March 9, 2015](#), the library announced for the first time that it was hiring Marvel, the real estate developer's architect, and simultaneously released for the first time floor plans in response to [one Citizens Defending Libraries long-standing requests](#). At that time the developer's architect presented for the first time a somewhat reduced statement of the library's current size stating it to be 59,146 square feet. In order to avoid any aggregation of rounding errors and what is know in the trade as "net to gross" calculation shifts and in order to facilitate a continuity of dialogue we will continue to use the 63,000 square feet that has been used for the last couple of years. That is 1.06516x the smaller revised statement of size recently adopted by the developer's architect.

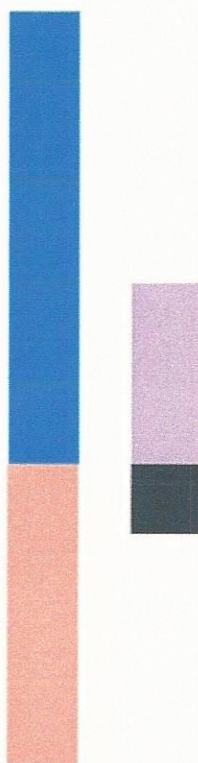
How big is it proposed that a smaller library to replace the existing library would be?

The developer was appointed as developer, awarded the RFP (Request For Proposals), based on its representation that it would build:

- a 21,000 square foot library,
- of which just 15,000 square feet would be above ground.

On [Monday, March 9, 2015](#), the developer's architect for the first time referred to the developer's still incomplete plans (no current design existing) as providing a library with a few additional square feet, "21,500 square feet." We think that statement of a slightly increased size is a reaction to the fact that the new Sunset Park Library is currently proposed to be 20,600 square feet, almost the same size as the it is proposed to shrink the Brooklyn Heights Library down to. Also, on that [March 9, 2015](#) evening the developer disclosed that Saint Ann's, a neighboring private school is likely to get an 18,000 to 20,000 square foot auditorium because of the redevelopment. There is friction in the neighborhood because it is understood that the benefits that Saint Ann's school is getting is helping drive the deal to sell and shrink the taxpayer-paid-for library. We are not now restating the size of the proposed replacement library to include an extra 500 square feet because *there is no known obligation on the part of the developer to provide it* and we do not see evidence that the BPL is trying to negotiate any improvement of this very bad deal for the public.

How much of the Existing Brooklyn Heights Library is above ground?



Above, showing in bar graph form the amount of space in the existing Brooklyn Heights Library (left) both above and underground and (right) in the proposed replacement library that would go at the bottom of tower built for luxury condominiums

*Based on the figures and floor plans (below- click to enlarge) the BPL just released the current library has **approximately 37,703 square feet of above ground space**.* The library consists of four floors and 59% of its space is in the two most important floors that are above ground. There is more space in another two stories below ground, where currently 17,527 square feet or (28% of the total 63,000 square feet) is used for books and materials (similar to the research stacks of the NYPL's 42nd Street Central Reference Library that make books readily accessible upon request).

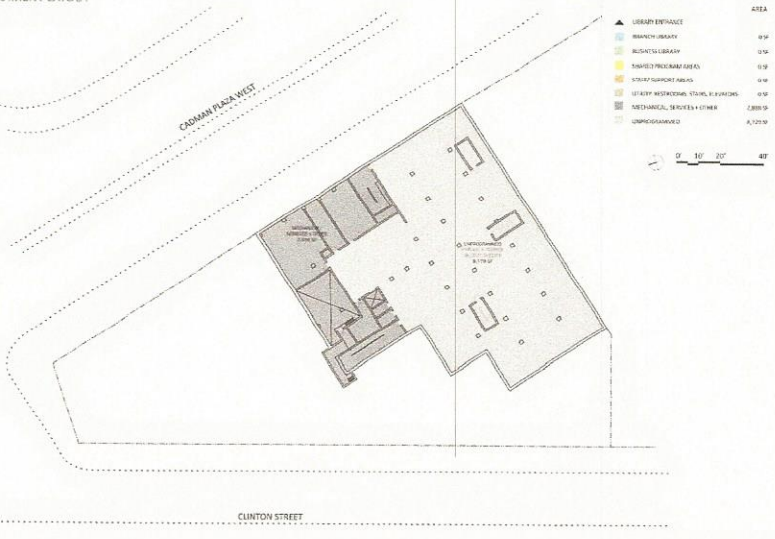
GROUND LEVEL
CURRENT LAYOUT

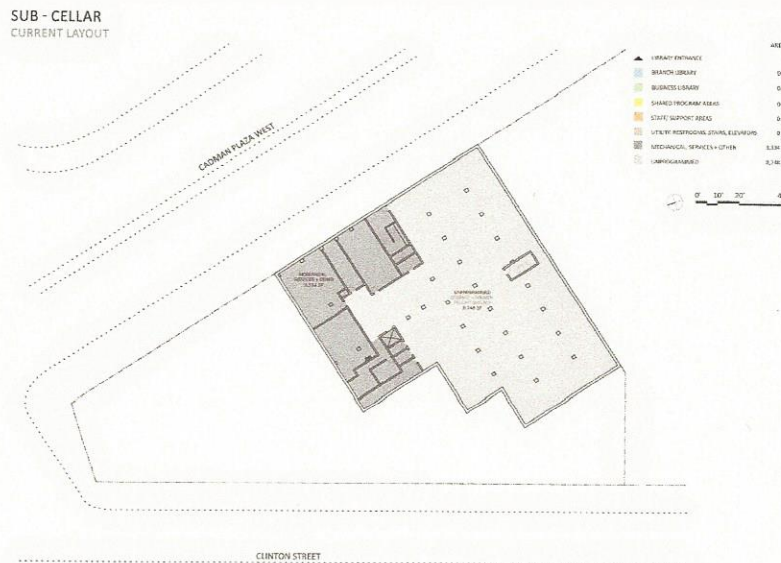


SECOND FLOOR
CURRENT LAYOUT



CELLAR
CURRENT LAYOUT





Is anything else being given up in addition to the space *inside* the library?

Yes, [a great deal](#). There is all the space outside the library, including a park and landscaped areas. There is all the light and air that the neighborhood will sacrifice. There is an extra burden of infrastructure like public schools. . . even as this move diminishes that supporting infrastructure. There is an enormous amount of cost and disruption that needs to be taken into account and hasn't been yet. There is the fact that for years yet to be determined, the neighborhood will only have a very small temporary library, a mere 7,000 square feet. That's not only a poor, make-shift substitute while children are growing up, one also needs to remember that as BPL president Linda Johnson told her trustees at the last BPL trustees meeting, *when you take library resources away there is an extended period after you bring those resources back before patrons return to their habits of using them again returning to previous levels of patronage.*

The Existing Brooklyn Heights Library integrates both "branch" and the "Business and Career Library" functions serving Downtown Brooklyn: What amount of space is proportionally devoted to each?

Between the Branch Library and the Business and Career Library functions, the library assigned 57% of the space to the Branch Library functions (blue) and 43% to the Business and Career Library functions (green).

Allocating the entire library's space proportionately that would mean that *approximately 21,571 square feet of the above-ground space should be allocated to the Branch Library*. Allocating the below ground space the same way would assign another 14,419 to the Branch Library for a *total of 35,990 square feet*. In that case, 27,010 square feet of the Brooklyn Heights Library's functions would wind up being moved to the Grand Army Plaza Library deemed by the BPL to be Business and Career Library functions that don't need to stay in Downtown Brooklyn. There will be *no additional space* for those functions in the Grand Army Plaza Library, but Linda Johnson and the BPL administration officials have acknowledged that *there will be costs they are not disclosing* to reconfigure the Grand Army Plaza Library and shrink other function there to cram in the functions transferred of of Brooklyn Heights Library and away from the Downtown area.

The BPL is arguing that the amount of space devoted to Brooklyn Heights Library functions that should be shifted, reconfigured and crammed into Grand Army Plaza for reconfiguration and replacement/shrinkage of other function there should be *greater than* the 27,010 square feet allocation above.

How much space should be retained for an adequately-sized replacement Brooklyn Heights Library if the Business and Career Library functions are moved to Grand Army Plaza?

The answer to this question must flow from the functions the public would like to see retained at the Brooklyn Heights Library. . . . and also what the public would *not* want to see *crowded out* of the Grand Army Plaza Library. The answer should also defer to, and take appropriately into account, the fact that the Brooklyn Heights Branch and the Business and Career Library functions in the library have always operating on an integrated, synergistic basis with economies of scale flowing out of their joint operations.

Accordingly, even if the Business And Career functions are shifted out of the library, one must think twice or more about whether the Branch Library would want to give up the following:

- The full scale auditorium that is used for events, films, functions and gatherings, and as a place to do things like vote. Such space that can be made readily available to the public in the Downtown area is very rare and becoming increasingly in more demand as density rapidly increases.
- The public conference room, for the same reason as above. (There is also a possibility for more of these conference rooms to be created if you read on.)
- The electrically equipped computer room that is now technically designated by the BPL as a Business and Career Library space, but which is definitely used by many, many of the Branch Library patrons.
- The restrooms. There is currently a men's restroom, a women's restroom (so frequently in many facilities complained about as not being large enough), a separate children's bathroom and a ground floor bathroom next to the front entry. The ground floor bathroom is designed to serve the handicapped, and because of the way that Downtown Brooklyn figures as a major transit hub, it regularly serves the bus drivers of a number of Boroughs' key bus lines.

If you want the library to keep *all* of these spaces, which is probably a good idea, then the calculation of the percentage of what should be retained for the branch of the above-ground space becomes a *74% for the branch vs. 26% for the Business and Career library functions proposition. In that case, one would want the library that remains to have about 27,900 square feet of space above ground* (vs. the current 37,703 square feet) *plus a certain amount of additional support space below ground*. If the percentage for the underground space were the same percentage (which the library would probably argue against) *the additional underground space would be 18,719 square feet*.

The BPL's mantra is that all space in libraries should be the same space flexibly used for everything, an excuse to shrink libraries that creates logistic and noise problems while communicating to the public that it isn't valued enough to deserve gracious public spaces devoted to its needs.

Should the Brooklyn Heights Library retain all the Business and Career Library functions?

Yes. We think the simple answer is obviously yes. The decision to "*move*" it dates back to plans initiated in 2007 to sell and shrink libraries around the city and the plan to "*move*" it is, in our opinion, just a pretext to shrink library space in something of a shell game maneuver.

We think the Business and Career library should be kept in Downtown Brooklyn where they are most centrally and conveniently located to the residents of the borough and to other New Yorkers.

What about enlarging some of Brooklyn Heights Library's Library functions irrespective of whether Business and Career Library functions are formally being viewed as retained at the library?

This could be a very good idea. At other libraries like the NYPL's 34th Street Science, Industry and Business Library and The Grand Army Plaza Library the concept has been introduced to have libraries provide more spaces for people to meet and convene and work on projects, sometimes providing patrons with such things as digital editing and production equipment. With the reuse of the former Jehovah's Witness Buildings the neighborhood is becoming even more a tech center that the library could work hard to support. What could be done to serve the public with facilities centrally located in the borough's downtown gets into the realm of imagination. . but you don't need to challenge your imagination much to realize the building's potential extra uses.

Thoughts include:

- A second and/or a larger auditorium
- Use of any unused or perhaps less well used staff space, as conference and meeting rooms.
- Configuration of library uses to better align with and support educational service support school students, especially those in the overburdened public school system. This could include rooms for use by visiting classes on study trips.

Do the floor plans released on Monday March 9, 2015 disclose anything else of interest?

Yes. They indicate that restoring the air conditioning system in the building to working order could easily be be a much simpler and less expensive proposition than the BPL has acknowledged.

When one considers the possibilities, it is probably foolish not to think in terms of more wisely using this asset to benefit the public as always intended, not figuring schemes to benefit a private developer or the private Saint Ann's School instead.

There is also the question of the importance of books (yes physical books) and having them readily accessible, more than one copy in the system, particularly in central libraries when it comes to the harder to find volumes. . .you know, the reason we created libraries to store and share our books to begin with.

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ADDENDUM
Description of Brooklyn Community Board 2 Votes

(This is a portion of materials upon Citizens Defending Libraries web page reporting on the CB2 library votes: Wednesday, July 15, 2015, Brooklyn Community Board 2 Votes To Sell and Shrink Brooklyn Heights Library, Largely In the Dark, With Much Manipulation And Strong-Arming In Background- Developer's Says He's "Super-duper Excited" And Thankful.)

Ms. Gallo's Motion

Here is the motion Doreen Gallo made. It is relatively self-explanatory about some of the strong-arming that contributed to the vote that night.

**MOTION/RESOLUTION TO HONOR AND LET STAND
AS THE FINAL APPROPRIATE OUTCOME OF THE BROOKLYN COMMUNITY
BOARD LAND USE COMMITTEE VOTES
OF JUNE 17th 2015 MEETING AND HEARING DATE**

WHEREAS, Land Use Committee of Brooklyn Community Board 2 (Committee) met on June 17, 2015 to hold a hearing with respect to and consider a proposal to sell and shrink the publicly owned Brooklyn Heights Library in Downtown Brooklyn; and

WHEREAS, after presentations by the developer and the Brooklyn Public Library to sell and shrink the library and conducting the hearing where the Committee listened to the public, the Committee discussed the proposal and voted twice *NOT* to approve the proposal: The first vote on (all three pieces of the proposal) failed by 6:6 (6 yes - 4 no votes and 2 abstentions); the second non-approval vote (only two pieces, leaving out modification of the agreement with Ratner) was a more profound defeat for the proposal 5:7 (5 yes, 5 no and 2 abstentions); and

WHEREAS, also as part of its decisions at its June 17th meeting the Committee voted *twice NOT* to meet again to consider the this matter: The first 4:7 (four to meet and 7 not meet), the second vote 5:7 (five to take more time to make a decision and 7 not to take more time to make a decision); and

WHEREAS, these votes not to approve the proposal and not to meet again about approving the sale and shrinkage of the library were valid as final outcomes of the Committee's process; and

WHEREAS, the June 17th votes could and should have been let stand as the Committee's final action; and

WHEREAS, the Committee subsequently convened a hastily scheduled, previously uncalendared meeting on July 6, 2015, the day after the Fourth of July Weekend, where for voting and discussion purposes the Committee members were different and did not represent the same group of committee members who had participated in and benefitted from the presentations and being present to listening to the public at the hearing; and

WHEREAS, there wasn't sufficient means by which the reconstituted version of the Committee could be as adequately and comparably informed as the Committee originally constituted when it conducted all the predicate actions to its June 17th vote, including presence

at the hearing; and

WHEREAS, the CB2 Chair stated to the CB2 Executive Committee that the meeting had been convened so that the Committee would now do *"what they were supposed to. . . What should have taken place, what should have taken place at"* the Wednesday hearing, specifically without having to listen to the public before coming to a decision; and

WHEREAS, the Committee had, according to Robert's Rules, already properly conducted and concluded its business without having to reconvene making this instruction incorrect and therefore improper, seeming to put pressure on the reconstituted Committee for a particular vote and means to achieve it; and

WHEREAS, the outcome of the July 6, 2015 Committee meeting of reconstituted members was somewhat confused in a number of respects including with respect to provisos and caveats about the project which would be unenforceable:

WHEREAS, the Committee on June 17, 2015, as constituted the day of the presentations and hearing, thereupon adjourned its meeting, the business of the meeting and the hearing held that day completed, **now therefore be it resolved:**

Section 1. The votes of non-approval of the proposal passed by the Committee, as originally constituted on June 17, 2015, the day of the presentations, hearing, and ensuing discussion should be let stand as the final proper outcome and disposition of the Committee's process.

Section 2. The subsequent vote of the Committee on July 6, 2015 should be set aside, as failing to supersede the original proper and final disposition of the June 17, 2015 non-approval votes of the Committee conducting its proceedings in connection with the approval request before it that day.

Ms. Gallo's motion was not voted on. Instead Chair MacRea called upon CB2 member Jon Quint (not present at the previous Land Use Committee meetings) to address Ms. Gallo.

Mr. Quint said that *"in response to"* Ms. Gallo's *"position"*:

"The committee decides how it operates, and if the committee decided it wanted to reconvene and take an action that's a vote, that's a decision that the committee itself can make.

* * *

The fact is that now that the board has convened, it can take any action it wants.

The fact that the committee was a different. . . Ah- constituted differently than at the time it remet is irrelevant, because the board. . . er. the committee is its own judge of what it can do.

The public hearing was all the opportunity for the public to be heard

Once the public hearing was concluded, the committee members whether they heard the public or not, and I and every other board member received, before the July 7th meeting, [sic: actually July 6th meeting] a very extensive, and very well done summary of what had occurred at the public hearing so that fact is that the committee action that was taken on July 7th [sic: actually July 6th] was proper. The motion that they made was proper. Its now before this committee [sic board].

He then stressed that the board could take any action it wanted ignoring what the committee did.

However, the description of the way that the process for generating the new substitute votes taken by the committee given by Chair Shirley McRea's at the June 22, 2015 CB2 Executive Committee meeting does not exactly quite jibe with the interpretation Mr. Quint as parliamentarian was giving for why the substitute vote was proper. There Ms. McRea announced , *"I will take this opportunity to say that this item is being sent back to committee"* and in connection with this she referred cryptically to the CB2 members knowing that they had *"received an email from the board office"* explaining that the item was sent back to committee to set the stage for the July 15th vote.

She further explained at that meeting:

Now the follow-up meeting to last Wednesday's meeting, and everyone needs to be very clear on this, the public hearings are closed, There are no more hearings on the BPL. It's over. It's done with. It was done on Wednesday. When this committee meets next it will be to do what they were supposed to. . What should have taken place, what should have taken place at last Wednesday's meeting without having sat there for three, four, five hours and then trying to come to some decision. I just want everyone to be clear on that: It is not a repeat of the public hearing. This is for the committee now to come together and do the business of the committee.

As for the record of the hearing that CB2 members received as referred to the Mr. Quint?: Perhaps it was sufficient as minutes, but some who testified felt the briefer summaries censored the points they made and corrections requested were not made: For instance, including testimony that Mayor de Blasio was taking money from the development team while the team's application to acquire the library for development was pending. . . Those testifying who thought that by submitting testimony in writing the might circumvent any problems with undue truncation of their thoughts found that their written testimony was also not passed on to the other CB2 members. . .

. . . At the second, hastily convened, July 6th Land Use Committee the public was not permitted to speak until after the committee's vote. But then, a long line of community members lined up to speak unanimously against the sale. Again, these statement from the public, the only ones made after, and with a chance to reaction the formulation of new "conditions," was not relayed to the rest of the CB2 members.

Meanwhile, CB2 was distributing pro-sale-and-shrinkage material to the CB2 members to the deciding CB2 members, like a new article seemingly planted in the New York Times article written by a Saint Ann's parent (not disclosing herself to be such) suggesting that the deciding CB2 members *"might be interested"* in her pro-library sale and shrinkage *"observations"* and presumably her message too. At the same time the CB2 office was not passing along other negative viewpoints expressed and sent to the CB2 members,** because it was outside the time limit for things to be considered by the CB2 members.

(* "Ginia Bellafante, who writes the "Big City" column in the Metropolitan section of the New York Times, apparently walked over from her Brooklyn Heights home to attend the community board's public hearing on the ULURP applications associated with the Brooklyn Public Library's plans for its Brooklyn Heights and Business and Career branches. The applications are on the agenda for this Wednesday's general meeting, to be held at 6:00 pm at St. Francis College. I thought the members of Community Board 2 and its Land Use Committee might be interested in Ms. Bellafante's observations."- District Manager Robert Perris.)

(** Versus: "Sean, thank you for your submission. The public hearing is closed and the community board is not accepting additional testimony. Rob" [District Manager Robert Perris]- That was in response to "Landmark West! submits the attached testimony for your consideration in regards to your vote on the sale of the Brooklyn Heights Branch. We are very concerned about this potential and hope you consider our testimony. . . . Sean Khorsandi, Advocacy Director, Landmark West")

Although CB2 *could* have allowed the public comment to speak at the beginning of its meeting, *before* the vote, its intention to allow the public to speak only afterward didn't depart from the way it usually conducts business. . . . But deciding on the sale of a major \$120 million publicly owned asset, one of the most significant libraries in the city, is highly unusual, essentially unprecedented. That considered, every decision CB2 made from manipulating to supersede the vote made the day of, and responding to, the hearing testimony on, served to insulate and put the CB2 members at a far remove from the public and the CB2 members possible effective education about the significant action they were taking.

Influence of Brooklyn Heights Association on CB2 Votes

The Brooklyn Heights Association, with (private school) Saint Ann's connected decision-makers steering it, factored in profoundly to the voting outcomes. . . .

Among other things at the June 17th hearing the BHA testified urging the sale and shrinkage of the library.

. . . This might be TMI, but, taking it up a notch, all of the four votes of the 17th (and any on the 6th) would have been one more in our favor if Judy Stanton, Executive Director and an employee of the BHA, had been precluded from voting based on her conflict of interest. What makes this conflict of interest significant is that the key deciders (with a compounding improper preponderance under the way it was set up) on the BHA library committee were connected with Saint Ann's).

Albeit, this raises the question of Irene Janner, also a BHA employee. On the 17th she voted against the sale and shrinkage of the library. Subtracting her out for conflict of interest would have had the same effect of putting her in the negative column since the requirement was for a required number of *affirmative* votes.

On the 17th Ms. Janner spoke cogently about how there is absolutely no assurance that any money is going to the libraries from this sale (1000% true) and I think she also spoke of the burden on the schools and the committee's previous position on that. Wednesday night she sat silently, stonily expressing nothing, and switched her vote in favor of what she's previously opposed knowledgeably and eloquently. On the 6th, she was "*on vacation*" but on that date Judy Stanton stated that the developer calling the BHA office (presumably speaking to Ms. Stanton too) while calling for Ms. Janner. Stanton provided this information when it was asked whether anyone on the Land Use committee had been contacted by the developer to lobby them.

Citizens Defending Libraries

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Co-Founders

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October 5, 2015

City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: Submission of supplemental testimony against the proposed sale and drastic shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's central destination library in Downtown Brooklyn. (ULURP C15039 PPK - Oral testimony taken by Commissioners on September 22, 2015)

Dear City Planning Commission:

This is submitted as additional supplemental testimony with respect to this ULURP proceeding asking for public input about whether public approval should be given for the proposed sale and drastic shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's central destination library in Downtown Brooklyn on Cadman Plaza West at Tillary and Clinton.

In an October 3, 2013, Brooklyn Eagle article by reporter Mary Frost about the receipt of proposals from developers in response to the Request For Proposals that was issued for the library site BPL it was reported that BPL spokesperson Emma Woods:

... denied that the site's developer would have to buy air rights from a third party to build a profitable project, as alleged by the advocacy group Citizens Defending Libraries. "This level of development does not require transfer of any additional development rights, and we do not expect additional development rights to be acquired for this site."

(See: A 'sizable number' of developers eyeing Brooklyn Heights Library site.)

Was Wood's inaccurate denial intended to head off community concerns about the size of the building being built, to disguise the involvement of and private profit accruing to Saint Ann's school, or to cast doubt about the reliability of information furnished by Citizens Defending Libraries?

During the oral testimony on September 22nd Commissioner Effron asked EDC's representative Ron Holbrook about the awareness of the transfer of the Saint Ann's rights and whether that awareness was "*at the same time*" the RFP was being done, whether they were "*simultaneous*"?

Commissioner Effron was told that they were, indeed, “*simultaneous*,.” and that one of the factors that allows the building “as-of-right” as asked for in the RFPs is the transfer of Saint Ann’s rights, and that the building is “*actually impossible*” without the zoning lot merger that incorporates the Saint Ann’s rights.

We offer the above mainly to point out that while the BPL’s representations intended for public consumption in October 2013 may have been convenient or expedient to the BPL’s purposes that particular fall, they proved, with the release of additional information over time, to be flatly inaccurate and misleading.

Sincerely,

Michael D. D. White
Citizens Defending Libraries

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October 9, 2015

City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street
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Attn: Yvette V. Gruel
- (212) 720-3370 -

Re: Submission of supplemental testimony against the proposed sale and drastic shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's central destination library in Downtown Brooklyn. (ULURP C15039 PPK - Oral testimony taken by Commissioners on September 22, 2015)

Dear City Planning Commission:

The attached is submitted as supplemental testimony with respect to this ULURP proceeding asking for public input about whether public approval should be given for the proposed sale and drastic shrinkage the Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's central destination library in Downtown Brooklyn on Cadman Plaza West at Tillary and Clinton.

At their meeting on Monday, October 5, 2015, the commissions, during discussion of the proposed sale and shrinkage of the library, several times stated or otherwise indicated that there were various matters respecting the proposed sale about which they still needed to better inform themselves. (For instance commissioners Cantor and Ortiz both indicated they needed to be informed about the way that the sale and shrinkage of the 53rd Street Donnell Library across from MoMA compares and relates to the proposed sale and shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights Library. The relationship of the Heights proposal to the decried Donnell debacle is actually exceedingly stark.)

Accordingly, organized under a listing of those things the commissioners indicated on October 5th that they were in any way still wondering about or stating they needed more information about we have supplied the information we think the commissioners need to know and consider.

Sincerely,

Michael D. D. White
Citizens Defending Libraries

**Information In Response To Statements By City Planning Commissioners
Respecting What they Said They Need To Know More About
During Their
October 5, 2015 Discussion About Proposed Sale and Shrinkage of the
Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's Central Destination Library in Downtown Brooklyn**

1. **Commissioner Cantor asked if the proposed sale and shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights Library could be compared and related to the sale of the 53rd Street Donnell Library across from MoMA and Commissioner Ortiz said that she needed more information about the sale of Donnell in order to be able to make any comparison.** There is already material supplied to the commissioners in earlier testimony on this subject, but the answer is stark: The two transactions are very definitely related and follow almost exactly the same model with the proposed sale and shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights Library closely mimicking the nearly universally decried 2007 sale of the Donnell Library:
 - a. The two transactions were both conceived at essentially the same time, 2007.
 - b. The 2007 Donnell Library sale was handled by NYPL Chief Operating Officer David Offensend. (Offensend came from Evercore a spin-off of the Blackstone Group.) The conception in 2007 of the Heights library sale involved Mr. Offensend's wife, Janet Offensend, acting in a key role as Brooklyn Public Library trustee as plans to convert libraries into real estate deals were originated.
 - c. The Donnell sale was pursued secretly until suddenly announced as was the case with the Brooklyn Heights plan that was not publicly announced until 2013.
 - d. Both plans substantially shrink recently renovated and publicly financed libraries (Donnell from 97,000 square feet down to 28,000 square feet and Brooklyn Heights from 63,000 square feet to an RFP specified 21,000 square feet.)
 - e. Both plans wind up shifting a substantial portion of the publicly used space underground.
 - f. Both plans get rid of many, many books even as the public persists in desiring the presence of those physical books at the libraries.
 - g. Both plans were associated with ideas of accomplishing consolidating shrinkage of the libraries, proposing to cram huge amounts of theoretically "shifted" space into a central location library.
 - h. Both plans, with libraries in each case under a luxury residential tower, mean the newly shrunken library cannot ever be enlarged in the future if that shrinkage was a mistake or for any other reason.
 - i. Both plans involve huge benefits to developers and others in real estate while the public gets an insulting and laughably small amount of net cash from the sale. At the very height of the real estate bubble the NYPL netted substantially less than \$33 million from its sale of the 97,000 square foot Donnell which was documented to be on what was, at the time, the most valuable commercial block in Manhattan (via a somewhat interrelating Tishman Speyer sale) while the penthouse in the 50 story building replacing Donnell went on the market for \$60 million.
 - j. Both plans are decried by the public as obvious boondoggles. (Since the Heights

deal was decried by de Blasio in 2013 the facts revealed with respect to it have gotten progressively worse.)

- k. Both plans involve an undue exertion of interest from the real estate industry at the board level of the libraries supplanting the core missions of libraries.

The Brooklyn Public Library has tried to assert that there is one key difference between the Donnell Library sale (which both BPL and NYPL officials have been forced to acknowledge as a mistake). They have asserted that difference is that the Brooklyn Heights deal will give the BPL rights to terminate if the deal if it is not progressing satisfactorily. But it is a distinction without a difference because NYPL's Offensend had the ability to terminate (plus also restructure) the Donnell deal when it was recognized to be a bad deal and was not progressing and he did not exercise that available option.

- 2. **Commissioner Ortiz expressed concern that the RFP to sell the library that spoke only in terms of getting maximum tear-down value of the library was biased rather than neutral about getting best possible real public value going forward into the future.** Commissioner Ortiz's concern is confirmed by the developer information conferences held by the Brooklyn Public Library and Economic Development Corporation in July of 2013 where the developers were told that doing more for the public other than improving price (for instance providing more library space or more above-ground library space) was not going to improve their prospects of winning the RFP. At the same time developers were also told that the contract wouldn't necessarily go to the highest bidder: Other things such as feasibility and a convincing "*zoning calculation*" were to go into the mix. The only possible addendum to the above? : As previously pointed out, during the oral testimony EDC's representative told Commissioner Ortiz that a significant factor in the decision was evaluating '*heavily*' that the developer (Hudson) had presented the proposal of providing an approximately 7,000 square foot temporary space to house the interim replacement for the currently 63,000 square foot library. (In other words, this very short-term consideration was the tail wagging the dog respecting the disposal of a major significant long-term capital asset?)

The best answer to the question of what will best benefit the public is hardly going to come from developers bidding the tear-down value of a library: It is going to come from the creative ideas the public and public-spirited institutions can readily come up with if given the chance. We are talking about a library and public space in Downtown's Brooklyn that is also where the new Brooklyn Tech Triangle is being developed.

- 3. **Commissioner Cantor (responding to concern Commissioner Ortiz expressed about selling a valuable public asset) asked whether it was premature to be selling the library. (Presumably asking whether this is an asset whose value has not yet substantially waned.)** Yes, it is obviously premature to think about selling this valuable public asset. If the commissioners look at the information that has already been supplied in previous testimony, the commissioners should note that this building, now proposed to

be shrunk down to one-third size (in the face of library use that has escalated 40% programmatically and 59% in terms of circulation), was just substantially enlarged and fully upgraded and renovated at the end of 1993. That makes it effectively a building that is five years younger than the adjacent Ratner building where Hillary Clinton has located her national campaign headquarters. While the Center for an Urban Future has said that one of the main problems the Brooklyn Public Libraries face is that Brooklyn public libraries are, on average, 65 years old, and need to be modernized in terms of electrical outlets and support for computers . . . But this building is one of the newest and best in the system, excellently equipped in these respects since that was all addressed effectively by the 1993 upgrade, expansion and renovation.

4. **Commissioner Ortiz wondered whether the “ship” might have “sailed” with respect to making a decision about whether our public asset should be protected and she wondered, if it was to be assumed the “ship” had “sailed,” could the issue at hand be properly addressed by making sure that something so stupid is not done again.**

There is absolutely no way that the ship can have sailed on this issue of whether it is stupid and incredibly unwise and short-sighted to sell this valuable public asset. This, right now, as required by the City Charter, is the public process to determine whether it is wise or unwise to dispose of this city-owned asset. Heretofore, there has been absolutely no public process in this respect. The only public processes that have occurred to date have involved minor details with respect to the preordained sale of the library and its shrinkage down to a preordained smaller size. As a matter of record, the Brooklyn Public Library and city officials specifically excluded from the public processes to date, any discussion of whether the library should be *sold*, any discussion of whether the library should be *shrunk* as preordained, and specifically excluded from participation in, for instance, the “Community Advisory Committee” those who opposed the sale and shrinkage of the library. Their reason for such *exclusion* was their assertions that this ULURP process would necessarily be where the question of whether the library should actually be sold or shrunk would get addressed and decided. Therefore, this cannot be a ship that has in any respect sailed.

Further, the notion that we can do the inexcusable and the terrible if we promise not to do it again ignores the fact that after the Donnell sale everyone said “*never again*.” (The fact that the Donnell sale did not go through ULURP is irrelevant.) The public is no longer willing to accept as sincere excuses for the inexcusable, repeated reuse of promises of “*never again*” that afterward simply recede perpetually, with repeated breakage, to a future that is always on the horizon, never arriving.

5. **Commissioner Levin, noting that the proposed return of capital funds for libraries from the sale for the Brooklyn Heights Library, the “main argument” for the proposed sale, was only vaguely and insufficiently addressed by the document (the Memorandum of Understanding “MOU”) supposedly addressing this point and wondered if it would be sufficient to “tune up” that document. Similarly,**

Commissioner Effron said she agreed with Levin that it was essential to assure net funds obtained from a library tear-down sale would be truly supplemental to and not substitute for tax levy dollars, nor should such funds get the city or taxpayers “off the hook” for “years and years” of neglect of funding.

Commissioner Levin’s observation that the MOU does not assure that the libraries would get any promised capital funds as a result is consistent with the observations of the representatives of elected officials referred to in previously provided testimony. Commissioner Levin referred to how the testimony from the “*public library folks*” was that what was wanted or expected was a “*real commitment*” that these funds would go to libraries. If Ms. Levin was referring to the actual public or to the library advocates when she referred to “*public library folks*,” we want to make clear that neither the library advocates nor most of the public is seeking such a “*real commitment*,” because we know it is not possible and because we think that instituting a program of self-cannibalizing sales that shrink the library system is self-defeating, not viable and not desirable. Also, if Commissioner Levin speaking of “*public library folks*” meant to refer to Brooklyn Public Library administration officials, we think of these people as the “*real estate folks*,” and Commissioner Levin also sounds as if she has not yet had a chance to read our previously submitted testimony with specific quotes where the BPL’s spokesperson dealt with the BPL’s failure to provide an enforceable MOU by essentially making light of the subject.

The way in which the BPL’s spokesperson was pretty much almost joking about this unenforceability is probably because (as previous testimony we submitted dealt with) it is truly impossible to in any way actually assure these funds will be used as Commissioners Levin and Effron were saying they should be used and, which use, was noted to be the “*main argument*” for this proposed loss-to-the-public sale of the library. In fact, for starters, there was never any thought that, even as promoted by the BPL, the actual proposal wasn’t intended to get the city and BPL off the hook for funding that was previously neglected and deferred. In other words, it was intended to allow for exactly what Commissioner Effron says shouldn’t happen. We note again that the BPL minutes show that the relatively recent past deferral of funding (not a significant problem before that) was put into place in conjunction with the institution of plans to sell and shrink libraries.

6. **Commissioner Levin asked about the resulting imbalance if this public asset, an ancillary support for school and educational needs, is sold for more development that will further burden the school system and Commissioner Effron wondered if ensuring that supporting public infrastructure is maintained as development proceeds apace is within the jurisdiction of the City Planning Commission.** The concern Commissioner Levin expressed about the balance and burdens between development and supporting public infrastructure is quite critical and we addressed it in previous testimony that we provided to address Chair Weisbrod’s question about the relationship of the library to the schools. Repeated below is what we provided in that

prior submission to the commissioners:

As for the second question, the relationship of the library to schools is two-fold, one relationship an augmenting one, the other the inverse. As high school student Nicholas Cancar testified the library is, itself, an educational facility, providing educational services ancillary to those services the schools provide directly. For some, the ancillary services and refuge alternatives a library provides may work well to fill in gaps when the services of a school may, for one or another reason, be failing particular students. Inversely, there is the overall issue of our public infrastructure, including particularly our education infrastructure, needing to keep pace with the rapid pace of development in this city. That is why many are calling for a moratorium on unnecessary discretionary development such as the proposed redevelopment of the library site until we have caught up and dealt with local school PS8 being at 140% of capacity.

Shrinking the library to build a luxury tower at one and the same time removes an ancillary supporting educational resource while burdening the educational system additionally.

Are these concerns that should be within the jurisdiction of the City Planning Commission? We certainly think so: What is the function of city planning if it doesn't address precisely these kinds of issues?

7. **Commissioner Levin (while citing as the “*main argument*” for proceeding with any sale that funds could possibly be netted and returned for library funding from the “tear-down” value of the Brooklyn Heights Library) noted the perplexing concern of the myriad competing theoretical public benefits to be weighed in the proposed transaction. Commissioner Ortiz added, “*in the spirit of*” Commissioner Levin’s comments, that these were being weighed against this is *the sale of a public asset*. Chair Weisbrod suggested that the transaction should be regarded as “multifaceted and complex.”**

Commissioner Levin expressed her frustration about dealing with these equations after discussion of the proposed so-called “affordable” housing units to be built way off site, the building of which is one supposed “benefit” for which the existing library is proposed to be sacrificed. The units are being built way off site supposedly to get more of them. Unlike space at the library (nonsegregated), those units of housing will be privately owned by an owner who will charge occupants rent to use the space although that “rent” through regulation will be subject to a ceiling. (The developer is building what are known as “*inclusionary*” units with regulated rents in order to be allowed to build a bigger luxury tower at the downtown library site with the building rights obtained from sale of the library and from Saint Ann’s, a private school.) Commissioner Levin’s comments followed discussion about how some of those privately owned so-called

“affordable’ housing units and space devoted to them would be given up to create commercial street level space because that commercial space is to be considered an even more superior public benefit to the housing units. The commercial space will, again, unlike the library, be privately owned by an owner who will charge rent for it, this time unregulated rent. “*Multifaceted and complex*” or not, the public is getting tired of intricacies designed to serve as pretexts and to distract from the big picture of what is being taken from the public. Such tinkering around the edges should not distract anyone from the overwhelming and inexcusable losses being proposed here.

8. **Chair Weisbrod noted that the Brooklyn Borough President (in rejecting the BPL’s proposal to site a new ‘replacement’ library in an acquired condominium unit in the 400-foot luxury tower that would displace the library) perhaps ought to have specified where else, in terms of a site, the city investment in having the library should be.** We think the answer is clear. It is clear from what the Borough President said: Instead of putting the library in a newly created condominium unit in a luxury tower, the library can and should, in the future, be on that site where it currently is, perhaps including, but not limited to, some variation on the possibilities present themselves by having the library sited there in there future.

Citizens Defending Libraries

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September 22, 2015

City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: Submission of testimony against the proposed sale and drastic shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's central destination library in Downtown Brooklyn.

Dear City Planning Commission:

I address this submission of testimony to the commission generally and not to its chair because I believe that Chairman Weisbrod, like some of the other commissioners, likely has reason to recuse himself on the proposed sale of library real estate, the transactions and plans for them having proved to be highly and dynamically interlinked despite occurring in different parts of the city. I am aware that Chairman Weisbrod previously had a position (ending 2011) where he was responsible for the real estate of the Episcopal Diocese of New York owned by Trinity Church while the church's pension fund engaged in, as part of the New York Public Library's Central Library Plan (real estate plans that commenced 2007 or before), a series of intricate real estate transactions involving, among other things, the pension fund's acquisition of a very substantial portion of the NYPL's 34th Street Science, Industry and Business Library (SIBL). Even now, it appears clear that those transactions have not all definitely concluded as more about the future of SIBL must be discussed and negotiated.

I submit as my testimony, and testimony of Citizens Defending Libraries, testimony that was submitted by us to the Brooklyn Borough President in connection with his earlier held hearing in connection with this ULURP proceeding asking for public input about whether public approval should be given for the proposed sale and drastic shrinkage the Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's central destination library in Downtown Brooklyn on Cadman Plaza West at Tillary and Clinton.

These submissions include:

1. An aggregation of previous testimonies submitted pertaining to the proper funding of our libraries and why libraries should not be sold, transformed into real estate deals turning away from the core missions needing to be pursued.

2. A series of articles detailing significant background with respect to this proposed library sale.
3. A Citizens Defending Libraries web page of links to articles (including key excerpts) that discuss the relative merits and disadvantages of digital versus physical books.
4. Testimonies concerning this proposed sale from members of the public collected in a brief space of time after the Borough President finished the portion of his hearing for the taking of oral testimony. We submitted well over 2,000 to the Borough President and most were collected between August 25, 2015 and September 8, 2015. Already we have many more (not here supplied). Look at the form that was filled out (a blank one is supplied herewith): Most Brooklynites and New Yorkers feel that all or almost all of these many reasons should bar the sale and shrinkage of this library, often with just a few of these reasons being sufficient reason enough. Among other things, aside from the fact that the public values its library, there is profound lack of faith in the conduct of library administration and other involved officials.
5. A print-out of our Citizens Defending Libraries petition to Mayor Bloomberg and a print-out of our Citizens Defending Libraries petition to Mayor de Blasio. Currently there are just under 16,000 electronic signatures to the petition to Mayor Bloomberg (and other officials) and well over 6,000 electronic signatures to Mayor de Blasio (and other officials). In addition, we have thousands of additional signatures that are not *electronically* executed because many people still do not have emails or choose not to sign the petition that way. However much heralded, the digital age has not entirely arrived. Although representative, these print-outs for submission to the Brooklyn Borough President at an earlier date are not up to date with all new signatures. Nor are we able to keep up with data entry with so many people adding their names.

We trust you will appreciate the time and expense we invested in producing all of the above for you. We could have supplied all of the above to you *electronically* by email or on a DVD readable by machines (versions of which most of you are probably currently using), but we were informed that the planning commissioners will only accept *physical* copies. We understand the value and superiority of physical copies. We have complied and supplied *actual*, not *virtual*, copies.

Much of the conversation being had right now (probably far too much given the silliness of the proposition) is whether the public should be handed a *virtual library* in place of an *actual* one, and whether that would also justify the proposed outrage of taking considerable assets and property away from the people of Brooklyn and New York to give them to a connected developer, getting in return far less than their public value. The answer is a resounding no.

This library was recently substantially enlarged and upgraded at public expense and is one of the system's most modern and up-to-date in terms of computer and technological support. It is

worth more than \$120 million to the public. Technology does not mean that libraries stop growing. The libraries of other communities such as Austin, Texas, a technology city, are growing. Should we be shrinking ours?

Virtual library?: The public knows a *real* boondoggle when it sees one. The digital age actually means we need *more* space as our libraries do *more*, not less, *more* space for our physical books *plus* space for the new and digital functions we are adding.

Sincerely,

Michael D. D. White
Citizens Defending Libraries

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September 29, 2015

City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: Submission of supplemental testimony against the proposed sale and drastic shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's central destination library in Downtown Brooklyn. (ULURP C15039 PPK - Oral testimony taken by Commissioners on September 22, 2015)

Dear City Planning Commission:

The attached is submitted as supplemental testimony with respect to this ULURP proceeding asking for public input about whether public approval should be given for the proposed sale and drastic shrinkage the Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's central destination library in Downtown Brooklyn on Cadman Plaza West at Tillary and Clinton.

During the portion of the hearing where oral testimony was taken the commissioners asked and sought answers to many important questions. Many of the answers they received were highly notable, some in extremely surprising ways. We also noted many of the questions commissioners asked remained unanswered or incompletely addressed, in particular often by the proponents of the sale and shrinkage of the library. In some cases answers given did not appear to be entirely accurate. There were also some questions asked of opponents of the library sale and shrinkage that we think could benefit from a more amplified response.

Accordingly, we have collected what we think are the most important questions the commissioners asked supplying the correct answers.

Sincerely,

Michael D. D. White
Citizens Defending Libraries

**Answers To Various Questions Asked By
City Planning Commissioners
at**

**September 22, 2015 Hearing About Proposed Sale and Shrinkage of the
Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's Central Destination Library in Downtown Brooklyn**

1. **Is the public getting a good deal with this sale to the developer? And is the public getting the best possible deal from this developer?** Quite a few times while oral testimony was being given the commissioners asked variations on these two questions. Although there is some interrelation between the questions, an affirmative answer to the second question, is the public getting the best possible deal from the developer, provides virtually no assurance that an affirmative answer can be given to the first, whether it can be assured that the public is getting a good deal with this sale. That's because the value to the developer, the highest price any developer will pay, is only the *tear-down value* of the library. Having to sell one's property for no more than its *tear-down value* is the nightmare of any property owner that has made a substantial investment in their property. As Michael D. D. White of Citizens Defending Libraries noted, the *tear-down value* of the library is a good indication of what would be only a fraction of the cost involved, just a starter, if the public were ever to try to reestablish the full equivalent of this library in the future.

To know whether this is a good deal for the public requires answering many questions that remain unanswered by the BPL and EDC: What is the value of the current library to the public that will be lost with the proposed sale, what is the public getting as a result of the sale (impossible to say when there are no designs for what will 'replace' it at either the Cadman Plaza site or at Grand Army Plaza), and what are the other costs associated with the sale (the BPL has confirmed that it has no figures for the cost of the Grand Army Plaza changes- where there will be no increase of space to accommodate the supposed transfer and assumption of additional functions there- because it has no design for that space yet and while the BPL has a theoretical price for the still undesigned 'replacement' library at Cadman Plaza that theoretical price is, we think, low-balled way below what would need to be spent if you look at what is proportionately being spent for the equivalent Donnell Library 'replacement'.)

What is the loss to the public? Citizens Defending Libraries has documented (using the BPL's own figures) that the current library is probably worth more than \$120 million to the public, about \$60 million to replace the building and well over another \$60 million for the land and associated rights of its public use. Our calculations indicate that rather than being sold for a net amount of about \$40 million, the figure the BPL publicizes, when all the necessary costs of the transaction are netted out the public will receive, net, so much less than this figure that we could verge into negative territory. We have asked whether the BPL has documenting figures to contradict our figures about these loses (they apparently don't) and for the BPL to calculate and make such calculations public (they haven't).

When Commissioner Levin asked one trustee “*what kind of independent analysis*” the BPL had done, including presumably any appraisals of exactly the above value being lost to the public, the trustee sniffed that the value that was set in a request-for-proposals sale process, was “*not to be sneezed at.*” In other words, she was unaware of any such valuation of the worth of the library to the public. No one representing the BPL (or EDC for that matter) at any point represented that they had in any way assessed the actual value of the library to the public. Instead, it was indicated that valuation questions, if any, were entirely the province of EDC whose job doing real estate deals is entirely different from, it not actually antithetical to, the library’s core mission.

Is the public at least getting the best possible deal from this developer for the *tear-down value* of the library?: Two other representatives of the BPL, including another trustee, indicated that the deal might not look so good now or over time even though they thought it was, once upon a time, a good deal. Respecting the best possible tear-down deal, Commissioner Ortiz asked EDC’s representative whether EDC was obligated to take the highest bidder and was told this was not the case, that other factors were considered, and then had explained to her that, in this particular case, a significant factor in the decision was evaluating *heavily* that the developer had presented the proposal of providing an approximately 7,000 square foot temporary space to house the interim replacement for the currently 63,000 square foot library. (In other words, this very short-term consideration was the tail wagging the dog respecting the disposal of a major significant long-term capital asset?)

A related concern is that, while this developer’s proposal was pending for possible selection, the development team, in Bill de Blasio’s words “*lurking right behind the curtain*”, was sending money to de Blasio.

2. **What about the alternative of a *lease* rather than a *sale*?** (This was particularly asked about by Commissioner Ortiz several times). This question has some subtlety to it. In one sense it addresses what Ramond Acevedo was expressing when he, using his farmer’s experience, metaphorically likened the proposed sale and drastic shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights central destination Downtown Library to *a farmer selling his milk cow to have one good meal rather than keeping it to milk over time*. Clearly there are models where leases (like with the Chrysler Building and Cooper Union where leases provide ongoing and stabile assurance that buttresses the financial condition of a not-for-profit institution, but the libraries are for the most part tax-payer funded with library real property owned by the city itself. To be intellectually honest, government does not generally invest in income streams that private enterprise might generate in order to finance public functions. (Doing so here would also not assure that city tax contributions allocated by the city each year wouldn’t be correspondingly lowered anyway.)

The real questions about selling, versus retaining, public assets are more subtle. One part of the issue is the overall shrinkage of the public sector assets and resources in

comparison to those of the private sector. There are many important arguments for balance.

A probably more important aspect of retaining public assets, rather than paring down to barest possible minimums, is to retain options and flexibility for the future and appropriate growth. So, for instance, placing a library at the bottom of a privately owned residential building means that the library (that desperately needed to be enlarged in 1993) could not be enlarged in the future. Conversely, if the library were placed in the bottom of a city-owned and occupied commercial building, a situation creating many parallels to the possible lease situation asked about by Commissioner Ortiz, the library could be enlarged fairly readily in the future. We are not saying, per se, that this is the option that should be substituted, but its superiority amongst options bears discussion that has not taken place.

A lease, unless it is short-term, does not create flexibility for reclamation of property to return it to public use and service, although it does assist the public in keeping pace with rising property values as property values inflate over the long-term. (Commissioner Ortiz was asking about what she referred to as a “*very long term lease*.”) As for whether a lease is possible here: The commissioners were told that it was not possible to do so if the developer being accommodated wants to build luxury condominium apartments as he does. However, in at least one case, the city entered into a such a lease deal by having legislation passed in Albany to make it possible.

3. **Are there any known reasons or explanations for why the Brooklyn Heights Library has not been designated a landmark?** The commissioners expressed interest in why the Brooklyn Heights Library, now eligible, might not have been designated a landmark. It, like Brooklyn’s other central destination library at Grand Army Plaza, was designed by Francis Keally, former president of the Municipal Art Society and an important preservationist. Uldis Skrodelis, the librarian and general manager of the library also took pains in his testimony to attach significance to the fact that the library has not been designated a landmark. Christabel Gough of the Society for the Architecture of the City noted that back when the Chrysler Building was also not designated, its newer art deco style was not well appreciated as it also wasn’t when the Brooklyn Heights historic district was created. (At that time, the building was also not old enough to be designated a landmark.)

Here is what is almost certainly more important to note in this regard: BPL minutes show that in 2009 the Landmarks Commission had identified eight BPL libraries as “*potentially eligible for designations as landmarks*,” but that the BPL asked the commission to “*wait on any decisions on landmarking individual sites*” because of the work that BPL was doing on its “*real estate portfolio*.” While Citizens Defending Libraries has asked for, and should be entitled to, more information about these communications halting the landmark process neither the BPL nor the Landmarks

Commission has complied in response to that FOIL request. Since this could provide the exact reason the landmarking has not taken place (especially given the BPL choice *not* to comply with this FOIL request), the BPL is not entitled to cite the lack of designation as any meaningful evidence that the building is not potentially eligible for designation.

Similarly, making another stab at attempting to interpret a supposed void, Mr. Skrodelis tried to attach significance to the fact that architectural critic Francis Marrone has not written anything about the library. When checked about this Mr. Marrone said: *"I guess I need to be more careful about what I don't say!"*

4. **Questions about BPL transparency.** The BPL's refusal to provide information about landmarking is just one example of the BPL's lack of transparency. Another example of such lack of transparency and the BPL's refusal to respond to FOIL is its refusal to furnish its "strategic real estate plan" which would disclose what other libraries are similarly being targeted for sale. Although the commissioner's asked some questions that teased out the obfuscatory nature of much of the BPL's testimony the commissioners did not directly inquire about the many ways in which the BPL hasn't been transparent. That includes the BPL not furnishing existing information that is contrary to what they have represented about air conditioning repair needs.
5. **Are there assurances to make certain that a sale of the Brooklyn Heights Library would result in funds going to other libraries? If so, what are they and how does the flow of funds work? Does the money go to OMB? Where else might the money (the theoretical "large bucket up front") go instead?**

The commissioners asked a series of questions about whether there are any assurances that proceeds from the proposed sale and shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights Library would go to other libraries, a foundational premise offered by the BPL for doing this deal. The answer is no, there are no such assurances. Another intrinsically related question is what, if any, the net amount of such a sale might amount to, to what extent are there might be net proceeds at all.

Treating the net amount question as the threshold question, the fact is that *gross* proceeds from the sale are only \$52 million. From this should be netted the cost of outfitting a 'replacement,' as yet undesignated library on Cadman Plaza West (the BPL says that cost is \$10-12 million- we say, based on Donnell, it's closer to \$17 million) the cost of undesignated changes at Grand army Plaza (millions), the cost of moving and keeping books off-site, all the costs of disruptions and going without a proper and full library, etc. We have warned how we may verge into negative territory here when we calculate the net. What was referred to the theoretical "*large bucket up front*" (instead of benefit over time) is hardly such a "*large bucket*" at all.

The next question is whether funds from a library sale could be predicted or assured to

come back to be spent on libraries. The answer is that there is absolutely no credible assurance that funds would go to the libraries. (We have pointed out that acquiescing and selling off libraries to the real estate industry in response to underfunding actually creates a *perverse incentive to underfund libraries in the future*- other public assets too- a point that at least one commissioner, Commissioner Marin, acknowledges that he thoroughly understands.)

In this regard, the commissioners asked whether money from the sale of the city-owned library goes into the city's general fund, whether it goes to OMB. *It does.* Commissioners asked what the "*flow of funds*" was after that. The money must be gotten back from the city.

Even if (and this is not and won't be the case) a netted, or non-netted, amount of money was set aside in a separate identified account, the money could never be assured as going back to the BPL since the city could always effectively reclaim it through the budget process by reducing all the other capital allocations going to the BPL libraries. Succinctly put, it is virtually impossible to assure that funds will go to BPL libraries as a result of this sale.

EDC's representative was asked whether EDC had represented the BPL in legally assuring that funds from the sale would go back to the libraries. He said he could not represent it to be the case, but represented that he knew it was important to the BPL that they assure that funds go to BPL libraries. That is not, in fact, the case. It's documented that the BPL *didn't* care.

When the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) on the subject was released representatives of local elected officials observed and complained that it was absolutely unenforceable. In response, BPL spokesman Josh Nachowitz (who came from EDC) dismissed the importance of the ineffectiveness of the MOU, saying that some MOUs get honored and some don't (they just "*get thrown out*") and that with an upcoming change of many elected officials throughout the city (he cited: new Mayor, new City Council, new Speaker of the City Council, new Borough President, new Planning Commissioner, new Deputy Mayor for Economic Development, new Economic Development Corporation President, new head of Council Finance, new head of committee for Fine Arts, even new library officials such as himself) it was a "*fluid environment*" and there was "*no assurance*" the MOU would be honored, saying "*we are not going to do something that is completely and totally irrevocable that can't be changed by a new administration.*" (Not that the BPL actually could- see the reasons noted above.) See: Noticing New York, Friday, September 20, 2013, Forest City Ratner As The Development Gatekeeper (And Profit taker) Getting The Benefit As Brooklyn Heights Public Library Is Sold.

<http://noticingnewyork.blogspot.com/2013/09/forest-city-ratner-as-development.html>

The fact is that current legislators and political office holders cannot bind future ones with respect to future budget matters.

The most that can be assured (and it hasn't been to date- "*no specific allocations*" "*no public commitments*") is this: If the Brooklyn Heights Library is sold, political assurances are offered that certain libraries (with associated legislators cynically targeted?) will be moved up to the head of the list to receive NYC capital funds. That means that other libraries, perhaps more needy, will be pushed further down the priority list to get funds.

So, for example, it has been represented that if the Brooklyn Heights Library is sold and shrunk the city will move the Sunset Park Library to the head of the city list to get \$10 million (the proposed Fifth Avenue Committee project actually probably requires more than that amount). Eight million dollars of that ten will be said to be coming from OMB and the general fund by reason of the Brooklyn Heights sale and two million coming from OMB and the general fund just because it is. Actually, because there is no way to track it, there is no real differentiation between these amounts or how they get to Sunset Park.

Mr. Weisbrod asked a good specific question: *Where else might the money from the library sale go instead of to libraries?* How might the city divert money paid into the general fund to other expenditures instead? New York Times columnist Jim Dwyer had a good answer for this when he wrote decrying the underfunding of the libraries. Dwyer pointed out that in the last 8 years at least \$620 million has been spent on just three sports arenas, (the Ratner/Prokhorov "Barclays" included) and that this amount was 1.37 times the amount spent on libraries serving seven times as many users. Dwyer wrote, "*The city's libraries - the fusty old buildings, and a few spiffier modern ones, . . . have more users than major professional sports, performing arts, museums, gardens and zoos - combined.*"

Therefore it's very clear how funds from any library sale once dumped into the general fund might be diverted to other uses: The same way they have always been diverted and that includes things like for-profit sports arenas because the owners of such private venture have highly paid lobbyists working to divert that money just the way developer lobbyists are working to get libraries like Brooklyn Heights sold.

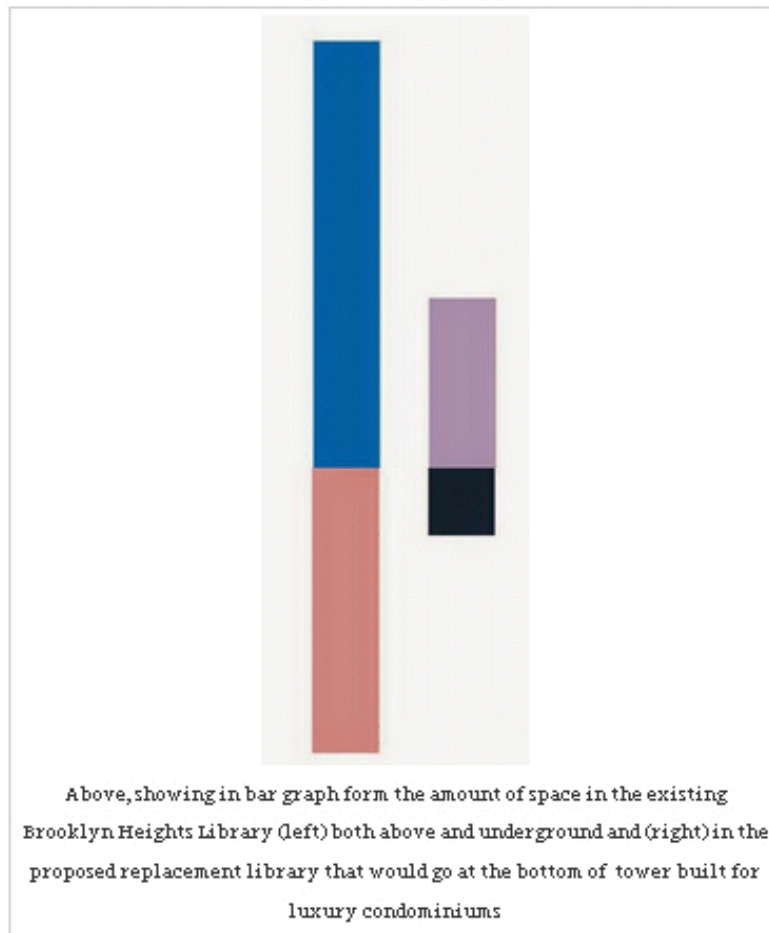
Could you argue that the city or mayor is at least more obligated, if not enforceably obligated, to fund the libraries to a greater extent when all is said and done? No, because that moral obligation to better fund the libraries already exists and is being disregarded.

6. **What do the public and library patrons think of these plans?** This is an important question and one that was asked by one of the commissioner of at least one librarian who testified personally extolling the as yet non-existent design for the new library. If the commissioners want they can believe the public whose 2,000+ testimonies we gathered, a

huge proportion, perhaps the preponderance from library patrons outside the Brooklyn Heights Library. . . all these testimonies say the plans are terrible and should not proceed. Or you can choose to believe the paid BPL representative so busy adhering to repetitious talking points about how “*excited*” people are about a “*21st Century Library*” that they tell the commissioners that library patrons are actually “*excited*” (“*excited*”!) about the temporary approximately 7,000 square foot interim library that will substitute for the current 63,000 square foot library if plans proceed. Mind you, no one has even seen plans for the temporary library to get “*excited*” about. Similarly, do we really want to accept the representation, in answer to Commissioner Ortiz’s inquiry, that Grand Army Plaza is a better library location to serve the needs of Brooklyn’s Downtown Central Business District office workers?

7. **Were designs done for the ‘replacement’ Cadman Plaza library before it was dictated that it would be shrunk down to a preordained size (approximately the same size as the now proposed 21,000 square foot Sunset Park Library, a library on the “R” line that is *not* a research library, *not* a destination library and whose circulating portion has lower circulation)?** With questions that Commissioner Levin and others asked it was confirmed more than once that the BPL does *not* have a design for the ‘replacement’ library at Cadman Plaza, that a design is to be supplied in the future only after its already preordained decision of exactly how much to shrink the library down to. So, for instance, the BPL librarian commenting on design plans could not say in response to Commissioner Levin’s question whether the children would be kicked into basement, only assuring the commissioner that if the children are put in the basement, there would be special lighting to assure that they could still feel “*inspired*” by their environment.
8. **Have designs been done to cram transferred business and career functions from the Brooklyn Heights Library to the Grand Army Plaza Library (where no additional square footage will be added to accommodate the assumption of these additional functions)?** With Commissioner Marin asking more than one question it was confirmed by the proponents of the proposed sale and shrinkage that there are no designs for how the functions theoretically shifted to Grand Army Plaza would be crammed in to the existing space. Commissioner Marin asked how much space is going to Grand Army Plaza. He received no direct answer from the BPL. Based on the floor plans that we pressured the BPL to finally release, about 27,010 square feet of the Brooklyn Heights Library's functions would wind up being moved to the Grand Army Plaza Library. No space would be created: Things would just be compressed which would involve something a BPL representative referred to as “*leveraging*” probably with regard to overlapping functions.
9. **How can it possibly be that a library that is currently 63,000 square feet can be compressed to 21,000 or so feet (see chart below) just by making the space “more efficient”?** The BPL’s spokesperson David Woloch explained this saying that one “*factor is we do have an opportunity that we normally don’t have to design a library*

from scratch.” Really? The new library will hardly be designed “*from scratch.*” That “*from scratch*” opportunity is not only constrained by the preordained shrinkage that also specifies that only 15,000 square feet of the new library is to be above ground, it is also clear that the new library, being designed after the developer has come up with his own plans, must be designed around what the developer has first designed for his needs, including meeting his building’s service core needs, leaving the library with a strange and oddly shaped space to fit into.



The BPL will design “*from scratch*” the kind of library *wanted by whom?* In May Marvel architects acknowledged and publicly reported to a CB2 Youth and Education Committee meeting that at its three charrette/charades public Charrettes (many say “charades”) about how best to shrink the library down to one-third size the public clearly expressed that what it wanted in the new library was “*Books, Books. Books.*” Nevertheless, it turns out that Marvel’s architects completely ignored the entire question of book capacity, a question key to the libraries core mission, when it came to conducting its three public Charrettes. Marvel presented proposed tentative designs for the replacement library without knowing (or being able to inform participants) how many

books the current library holds or how many it might be good for the new library to hold. At that CB2 meeting in May the architects and BPL said that this was information they could one day obtain and provide. They have never since done so. Citizens Defending Libraries has independently developed its own figures showing how drastic the loss would be. More information is on one of our web pages. See: Sunday, June 14, 2015, It's Marvelous To Have Books!- Indeed, But Architect Jonathan Marvel Designs a Library Seemingly Oblivious To The Tradition of Finding Books In The Library.

10. **Can clarification be provided with respect to what the space in the current library is versus the proposed shrunken library?** Many questions were asked about the amount of space in the existing library and how it is used versus the proposed shrunken library. The math supplied by the confusing representations by BPL representatives did not seem to add up. Questions the commissioners may have about all of the above are comprehensively addressed in the attached addendum available on our web page with enlargeable floor plans (finally obtained from the BPL) that can be printed out. Further, we also have a page on the web of approximately 300 photographs of all the space in the library. That includes what the public normally sees and what the public normally can't see. Is a huge amount of existing library space shown to be devoted to 'mechanicals' as the BPL suggests? No. Is there space in the building that is being used as a bomb shelter as the BPL tries to hint is the case? No, we are talking about two half floors of underground space currently used for the storage and delivery of books. See: Wednesday, June 3, 2015, In A Closed Library, A Tour of Much The Public Doesn't Get To See- Don't Let Them Close This Library, The Brooklyn Heights Library On Cadman Plaza West, Corner of Tillary & Clinton.
11. **Were the plans to shift the business and career functions out of the Brooklyn Heights Library and Brooklyn's central downtown and business district conceived simultaneously with or before the plans to sell and shrink the Brooklyn Heights Library? Was there any polling of the patrons in order to make the decision?** The plans to sell and shrink the Brooklyn Heights Library and to shift functions of the library to Grand Army Plaza were both conceived at the same time (2007/2008). The library's assertion that the two, necessarily interlinked, decisions were *independent*, or that the intended transfer of the functions *preceded* the plan to sell and shrink the Brooklyn Heights Library strain credulity. It should also be noted how closely the proposed sale and shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights Library mimics the nearly universally criticized 2007 sale of the Donnell Library as well as how that Donnell sale and shrinkage was tied in with the proposed, now thoroughly discredited, NYPL Central Library Plan generated at the same time. That Central Library Plan was a similar proposed consolidated shrinkage of library space focused on generating library sale hand-offs. The NYPL sales were under NYPL CEO David Offensend. The BPL transactions were done with his wife, Janet Offensend, acting as a key trustee at the BPL.

Commissioner Effron asked whether the BPL polled its patrons about whether to shrink

the library and transfer functions *before* deciding to do so, noting what a fundamental part of such decision making this ought to be. Indeed, the BPL did not do any such poll except as an afterthought (requested by others) until the fall of 2013. This was after the BPL has already issued and received responses to its requests for proposals that preordained the specified terms pursuant to which the library would be sold and shrunk. Therefore, any assertion that the BPL considered what its patrons wanted in this regard must be dismissed as bogus.

12. **Have librarians working at the Brooklyn Heights library communicated their opposition to the proposed sale and shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights Library?**

When retired Queens Librarian Daniel Winocour testified that he has spoken to BPL librarians and librarians from other systems and knows them to be opposed to this plan, but that they were unable to testify to that effect for fear of jeopardizing their employment Chairman Weisbrod asked, without asking for identifying names that would put employees in jeopardy, whether that included such communication with librarians working at the Heights library.

Mr. Winocour said that he had not personally had such communications with librarians working there. Nevertheless, members of our Citizens Defending Libraries team have had such communications, including being taken aside on the street, pulled over where a conversation can be had out of public view, and being told by librarians that they want us to know that they are watching us, that they think we are being effective, and they are on our side and want us to be successful in opposing the plan. We have similarly been quietly assured by other staff that the Heights library staff supports our efforts.

We have had other experiences. A librarian was once dutifully repeating the BPL's talking point about how the goal was to create a new, better library and then was asked whether she really believed that. She stopped and said, "*No, it's the real estate*" as tears streamed down her face. Another member of our team found their way to join our efforts by asking librarians at the Heights library what was happening, what the proposal was. Talking points were, once again, dutifully repeated by the librarian. They told the librarian that what they were hearing didn't seem to make sense. The librarian first assured them that it did, but when they insisted that something seemed fishy and the librarian grew more confident about communicating with them, the librarian looking both ways first pulled out some hidden Citizens Defending Libraries literature to give them.

Early on we had the experience of communicating with librarians at other libraries targeted for sale who told us they were not allowed to talk about any of the sale plans, then later on they started communicating and helping us in secret. We also had an interesting experience at one table at the third "*Charrette*" when Marvel architect 'test fit' experiment designs were released. The architect and BPL wanted to counter-balance the members of the community at the Charrette who were virtually all in opposition to the plans. This included the architects bringing not only much of their staff (many freshly

hired), but also a very young daughter as well as an architect's brother. The BPL brought staff too, including librarians who seemed to be under instruction or strong encouragement to be upbeat about possibilities. Two of those librarians were making upbeat comments at one Charrette table until one of Citizens Defending Libraries team noticed that nowhere on the test fit was there any space for staff and pointed this out to the librarians who quickly became quite indignant with the proposal.

On our web page about the libraries in general we have a link to the DC37 Public Employee Press article (Communities and DC 37 mobilize to stop library sell-offs, by Gregory Heires, November, 2013) guiding union members to our petition. We have joined many rallies for more library funding heavily populated by librarians called out by their union where the signing of our circulating petition by the attending librarians has been nearly universal even as we have watched library administration officials, particularly BPL administrative staff, threaten warning that the petition should not be signed, something difficult for them to do withholding any explanation when the only explanation that could be given is that we are against selling and shrinking libraries while the BPL is for it.

13. **Did all those providing the 2000+ testimonies objecting to the sale and shrinkage of the library know that it is proposed that there be a 'replacement' library?** It is an interesting question to ask (asked by Commissioner Efron) especially given how explicit and detailed the testimony is. Was anyone who provided such testimony perhaps accidentally unaware of the BPL's proposed 'replacement' of the existing library with a new smaller one? We spent a huge amount of time talking with and exchanging information with those providing the testimony. It seems to us highly unlikely that there were people taking the time to provide their testimony that didn't understand such basics of the proposal.
14. **Are we aware of there being a program in effect for "decades" of selling off New York City schools to finance the school system that can actually be considered a long-standing model for the selling off of libraries as proposed here?** The short answer is that we are not aware of there being a long-standing and historical school sell-off and redevelopment program that would serve as a model for shrinking this library because we do not believe that there is one.

When librarian Daniel Winocour suggested in his testimony that it would be dispiriting to *"imagine selling off our New York City schools as a solution to air conditioning problems"* Chairman Weisbrod asked Mr. Winocour he was aware that such a programmatic *"model"* already existed, in effect for *"decades."* Mr. Winocour didn't know this to be the case and we think are right in saying that it actually isn't the case.

In 2013 we were the unacknowledged source of much of the information and scoping for a New York Times front page article about *"a novel financing model that is increasingly*

being used around New York City as a way to pay for government services,” an article that talked about the doing this both for schools (three proposals at the time) and libraries as well as mentioning the plans for similar NYCHA sell-offs. (Originally the article was going to be just about the Brooklyn Heights Library sale and shrinkage. See: Friday, March 29, 2013, Saving Schools and Libraries by Giving Up the Land They Sit On? - Letter To The New York Times Editor (From Citizens Defending Libraries)).

But the Bloomberg plans to sell those schools died with community resistance before the year was out and before Michael Bloomberg left office.

Disrupting the ecosystem of an existing properly functioning school to redevelop it has enormous downsides. These “*novel*” school sale and redevelopment proposals pushed by the Bloomberg administration were widely and vociferously opposed by Gale Brewer and others for some of the same reasons they don’t make sense for similar library plans. That includes that we would be sacrificing recent investment in the existing assets. When the Educational Construction Fund was launched during the Lindsay administration it was to put new schools in mixed-use towers, not to disruptively redevelop existing already built assets (new schools like Norman Thomas, Murry Bergtraum HS downtown, the Verizon tower). The program, not ongoing, was moribund from 1980 through 2005. The shut down was partly because of frictional misfit with the developers/potential investor partners wanting the public’s needs to slot in more predicably onto their own goals.

We are aware how, recently, in the case of the Brooklyn Dock Street project now being built, placement of a school in a tower was used as an inducement to have the public consent to an upscaling variance the community had otherwise already rejected, resulting in awkward school-sizing problems. FOILED email between the School Construction Authority and Bloomberg administration officials showed that the SCA didn’t want to consider what very likely could have been more appropriate and better fit school-building alternatives. Thus, this forced partnership turned into a form of community blackmail. On the other side of the Brooklyn Bridge, a school was placed in the Ratner Gehry Spruce Street tower and blackmail of the community board for benefits to the developer extra to what had been agreed upon again became a hotly contested issue. School-fit issues presented themselves with that project as well: the lead time in developing the school accentuating the moving-target problems of what needs most needed to be served as the school was constructed. What was built in the end was not what had been planned in the beginning.

As far as we are aware, redevelopment that sacrificed an existing up and running school it has only been done once: That was the recent PS 59, Beekman Hill International School, and that plan did not necessarily unfold entirely smoothly with there being questions about how things would stay on track along the way. That project was so very particular

and unprogrammable, that special legislation was passed in Albany to allow part of the new mixed-use building to be a residential condominium. Further, that project was not a self-cannibalizing shrinkage proposal as with the Brooklyn Heights Library: That project was supposed to generate *more*, not fewer, school seats although one criticism was that the additional seats would not cover the needed number of new students generated by the development. To be fair to Mr. Winocour he was specifically decrying the notion of self-cannibalizing sales of major existing capital assets to finance what should be pay-as-you-go capital maintenance items like “*air conditioning*” and we have never had a model of selling off existing schools to do that.

If Chair Weisbrod wishes to suggest that proceeding with the Brooklyn Heights Library sale and shrinkage should be viewed as a sanctioning of the use of this “*model*” in the future to pay for school air-conditioning repairs then we should probably sound the alarm for all to hear now. Similarly, if Chair Weisbrod believes that approving the Brooklyn Heights Library deal will pave the way for (set the “*model*” for) resurrecting or viewing as ongoing the defeated Bloomberg proposals to redevelop schools (including P.S. 191 on West 61st Street and P.S. 1990), then those communities that were protected by Council Member Gale Brewer’s efforts and others need to be warned immediately of that pending resurrection.

These possibilities are why Citizens Defending Libraries has repeatedly cautioned that this proposed sale and shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights Library should be regarded with some trepidation as momentous and likely precedent-setting.

(One last thing to note: Putting a school in the bottom of a privately-owned residential building, like doing the same with a library, particularly a central destination and research library with growth needs, means there is a lack of flexible options to meet future needs. That further accentuates the sizing problems.)

15. **The Center for an Urban Future was asked to provide the commission with a figure for the amount of repairs that need to be made at BPL libraries, and at the Brooklyn Heights Library.** The Center for an Urban Future, which does not have expertise or deploy expertise in the area, has publicly confirmed that, in doing its most recent report, it did not do any assessment of its own as to the calculation of the dollar amount of capital repairs that are required at the libraries. Instead it says it used figures supplied by library administration officials. So the figure cited for the amount of necessary capital repairs by CUF is the BPL’s figure, not CUF’s own.

As to evaluating how much reliable guidance this figure in context supplies, several things must be taken into account. First, prior to launching plans to sell libraries the BPL minutes show that there was no appreciable problem with any build-up of capital expenditure. As plans were launched, the BPL discussed and agreed with the Bloomberg administration to defer and build up needed capital repairs. Second, BPL minutes show

that at the same time the BPL was looking, as it developed its “*strategic real estate plan*” with the help of former Forest City Ratner V.P Karen Backus, to make its plan more convincing, thus raising the question of inflated assessments. Third, the stated capital needs for the Brooklyn Heights Library are clearly inflated. The stated capital needs of the Pacific Branch, another library (also next to Forest City Ratner property) that the BPL was looking to sell seems to be inflated too, and a study of capital needs of the BPL libraries shows a correlation with higher estimated repair costs for BPL libraries that are in neighborhoods with escalating real estate values.

Several of the commissioners indicated that they were appreciative of consumers and admirers of past Center for an Urban Future product. We have found some of that product valuable too, but we do not always agree.

One example where we agree we is the assessment that 10,000 square feet is small for a library, but Linda Johnson was fighting to shrink the Red Hook Library from 7,500 square feet to 5,500 square feet.

An example where we disagree?: CUF has praised the decision to sell the Donnell Library putting itself at odds with virtually all other New Yorkers informed on the subject, and probably, it is fair to say, the NYPL’s own board and management’s retrospective assessment. That praise for the Donnell sale calls into question CUF’s judgment with respect to turning libraries into real estate deals. CUF has said that NYC libraries need to be redeveloped because they are old with the average Brooklyn Library being about 65 years old, but the Brooklyn Heights Library was expanded and fully upgraded in 1993. It was essentially only a 20-year old library when the BPL made public its desire to sell and shrink it. CUF has cited with great emphasis the absence of electrical outlets in libraries as a reason to redevelop libraries. As a general rule we do not think that too few electrical outlets is a reason to tear down buildings, but, even it were, the Brooklyn Heights Library is one of the system’s libraries best supplied and best equipped in this respect.

16. **What does the Center for an Urban Future think of the physical condition of the Brooklyn Heights Library?** In answer to this question from Chairman Weisbrod David Bowles said he considered the library “*drab and dingy*.” Let’s not be silly!: Mr. Bowles doesn’t like the light bulbs, the decorating or the last paint job? Is it the fenestration?; Let’s recall that there was also testimony that flooding libraries with light from huge glass windows is not necessarily the most desirable thing when it comes to books or computer use.
17. **Is it good to finance libraries with a “one-shot” sell off of a major capital asset? If so, why?** Commissioner Levin asked David Bowles, the Center for an Urban Future representative recommending the selling of the library, why it was good to seek funds for the libraries with a “*one-shot deal*.” She was told that it was a good idea because more

support for the libraries has been asked for and not received. This underfunding (not yet restored by the de Blasio administration) reflects funding cuts by the Bloomberg administration implemented as it launched plans to sell off libraries. (By contrast, mayors Dinkins and Giuliani were enlarging libraries.) The Center for an Urban Future has pointed out in its reports that these cuts put library funding in New York City far below the par of other comparable cities with far shorter hours, despite greater use, than comparable cities (such as Chicago, Boston, Toronto, Columbus, even Detroit). We think that it is insupportable to suggest that the current plight inflicted by the Bloomberg cuts should be acquiesced to, formally blessed as a new and acceptable status quo by selling off libraries at a fraction of their value to the public.

18. **What exactly happened in terms of Brooklyn Community Board 2 votes on this proposal, particularly with respect to the votes of the CB2 Land Use Committee *not* approving the sale and voting *not* to consider approval of the sale again?**

Commissioners sought clarification about what exactly happened at Brooklyn Community Board 2, particularly with respect to the multiple votes (not mentioned in the letter to the Commission from Community Board 2 Chair Shirley McRea) of the CB2 Land Use Committee on June 17, 2015 not approving the sale and not to consider approval of the sale again. A fuller description of what happened is in the attached addendum of information that Citizens Defending Libraries has up on the web. (On the web see: Wednesday, July 15, 2015, Brooklyn Community Board 2 Votes To Sell and Shrink Brooklyn Heights Library, Largely In the Dark, With Much Manipulation And Strong-Arming In Background- Developer's Says He's "Super-duper Excited" And Thankful.)

In basic summary, on June 17th the CB2 Land Use Committee voted *twice* for the nonapproval of the proposed library sale and shrinkage and *twice* not to reconsider the matter in the future. Those votes were and should have remained dispositive. It is our impression that this matter was not brought to the Land Use Committee until the proponents of the plan felt fairly secure that they were going to get the affirmative vote of approval they then failed to get. We think that their failure was because the testimony against the proposed sale and shrinkage was so strong and convincing that Land Use Committee members present listening to it refused to approve the project.

Thereupon, in a hasty and forced meeting of a reconstituted Land Use Committee held July 6th (just after the holiday weekend) the reconstituted Land use Committee voted under instruction from the CB2 Chair McRea that when the committee met again “*to do what they were supposed to. . . What should have taken place, what should have taken place at last Wednesday's meeting.*”

The reconstituted Land Use Committee voted without hearing public testimony and without an accurate and complete record of the testimony that had been given at the meeting of the 17th.

The vote of CB2 is also remarkable for the amount of information it is documented that the CB2 board members did not have and did not consider including a comprehensive letter to the board from Citizens Defending Libraries that Chair McRea refused to distribute to its members. See: VIDEO: CB2 Denied Crucial Facts Before Approving Library Sale.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqeWC_RcTXw&feature=youtu.be

The votes of the Land Use Committee and then the general CB2 were also influenced in their outcome by what needs to be examined as a conflict of interest situation involving the private Saint Ann's School and the amplified representation of the school's private interests through the Brooklyn Heights Association. That conflict of interest situation is now being examined by the city's Conflicts of Interest Board. See: Monday, August 3, 2015, Conflicts of Interest Inquiry- Inquiry Submitted To The New York City Conflicts of Interest Board Respecting Brooklyn Community Board 2 and The Proposed Sale and Shrinkage of Brooklyn Heights Library.

In our last very recent communication with Patrick Killackey, president of the Brooklyn Heights Association, he told us that he did not see any problem with there being special representation of the Saint Ann's School interests in the BHA's decision-making process because Saint Ann's is part of the community and its interests need to be represented. We think this is simply a failure on the part of Mr. Killackey and the BHA to understand what constitutes conflict of interest.

19. **What are the trends in e-books?** Commissioner Ortiz asked about what the trends were with respect to e-books. We want to note for the commissioners that our Citizens Defending Libraries testimony included furnishing a Citizens Defending Libraries web page with a very complete set of links and extracts addressing how trends regarding e-books and physical books relate to the paths we may be taking into the future. E-books have their uses and virtues and limitations including, for libraries, the extra associated expense and impermanence. Since the date of our testimony the New York Times ran an additional front page story on the subject: The Plot Twist: E-Book Sales Slip, and Print Is Far From Dead, by Alexandra Alter, September 22, 2015. One pertinent point a bookseller makes in that article: *"It's a very simple thing; only books that are on the shelves can be sold."* (Emphasis supplied.) We would add that *only books on the shelves of a library can be borrowed by visiting patrons*. That is obviously becoming more of a challenge.
20. **Two questions were asked by Chair Weisbrod in close conjunction: Should a school be built on the site of the library and what is the relationship of the library to our schools?** Should a school be built on the site of the library? Most people don't believe the library should be sacrificed to provide a site for a school, but this is a reasonable question that was never publicly asked in a way that it could have become part of the

public debate. It would have been a superior public process if there had been a way to talk about that possibility. One reason that's true is that we need to augment our school facilities and need to be talking about the possibilities of where to put them.

If the library site were to be converted and used to provide a school facility it should probably be done after a new, bigger, better, expandable library is built at another site first, something that is possible.

As for the second question, the relationship of the library to schools is two-fold, one relationship an augmenting one, the other the inverse. As high school student Nicholas Cancar testified that the library is, itself, an educational facility, providing educational services ancillary to those services the schools provide directly. For some, the ancillary services and refuge alternatives a library provides may work well to fill in gaps when the services of a school may, for one or another reason be failing particular students. Inversely, there is the overall issue of our public infrastructure, including particularly our education infrastructure, needing to keep pace with the rapid pace of development in this city. That is why many are calling for a moratorium on unnecessary discretionary development such as the proposed redevelopment of the library site until we have caught up and dealt with local school PS8 being at 140% of capacity.

Shrinking the library to build a luxury tower at one and the same time removes an ancillary supporting educational resource while burdening the educational system additionally.

21. **Was EDC aware and did it take into account during its negotiations with developers that the private school Saint Ann's was selling its development rights to the project, enabled to do so by the sale and shrinkage of the library?** This question was asked by Commissioner Effron. It's a good question because anyone looking at the 400 foot luxury tower proposed to replace the library might incorrectly suppose that all of its new height was representative just of unused development rights being sold by the city, rather than also reflecting how significantly Saint Ann's is cashing in on the proposed deal. (Half the library site development right were already transferred to Forest City Ratner in 1986.) Without taking this benefit to Saint Ann's into account one might not think to ask whether there had been negotiations to have Saint Ann's compensate the city for making the school's deal possible. The EDC representative said that EDC was aware of the Saint Ann's sale as a necessary component to the deal, but did not say that EDC had negotiated any compensation to the city from Saint Ann's for the benefit it was receiving.
22. **Should public assets like libraries be sold to build, in discriminatory poor-door style, a few units of so-called affordable housing? And, if so, have we reached with 23 units at 60% AMI, only 5 of them large enough for families, a number of units sufficient in amount to make this housing segregation and sell-off of a major library rationally and morally defensible?** Some of the commissioners were asking questions

that pointed to an impression that there could possibly be a fine-tuned, tinkering answer to this question even with such a major sacrifice of a public asset as here proposed. Tinkering and fine-tuning cannot fix the big picture. We do not believe selling off assets cheaply in round robin shell game fashion holds any positive answers for society. It only portends instead a downward spiral of abuse.

Certainly, the segregation ought not to be excused. The library was built as part of urban renewal with its own discriminatory segregation effect as density was reduced in this area and previous residents removed. It is brazenly ironic to suggest that the previous segregation of a not yet so bygone era should be taken a further step by evicting all the people of different ethnicities, colors and classes who use this library to build a luxury library-squashing tower that will be for just an exclusive group of the very most wealthy.

Selling off public assets cheaply simply induces more of the same and this proposal is being put before us even as we now see a parallel incentive to underfund NYCHA housing. In that situation NYCHA assets and truly affordable housing, 14,000 NYCHA housing units proposed to be shed, are being handed off to a real estate industry that will surely, its appetite whetted and unsated, lobby for more. The loss of 14,000 truly affordable units?: You can't make up for this with crumbs!

23. **Questions were asked about what should be done in Sunset Park with the proposed redevelopment of the library there.** In the end we think this a question for the Sunset Park community. We note that Sunset Park Community objections begin with the fact that these questions were not put to the community. Instead, plans for redevelopment of that library were first surfaced and brought to the attention of the community by Citizens Defending Libraries. With a lack of transparency the BPL is proceeding on a no-bid basis without prior community input. Once again, a public asset is proposed to be privatized as a result. There is history in the community as other public assets, similarly privatized through 501(c)(3) organizations, have been lost.

In Sunset Park real estate sites are not as scarce as elsewhere and there are questions about appropriate siting of the library and any proposed housing as well as what should be proposed. One of the problems is that Sunset Park is growing, 19% in terms of recent growth. A recent rezoning has not been built out and proposed upzonings of two more avenues are pending. If a new library is put at the bottom of a privately owned residential building the library cannot be enlarged in the future.

There are also questions about whether the BPL, when making promises, can be trusted to accurately estimate and predict its ability to financially follow through. (These issues could be alleviated along with the problem of the community having to suffice with an inadequate interim library, if a new library were built on another site first, something that could be done with a revolving fund.) Another question of trust: The Fifth Avenue Committee which says it can be trusted to stand up for community interests has also

shown a lack of faith in that respect by promoting the sale and shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights Library rather than joining in the opposition to the sale of the library and other public assets.

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- (212) 720-3370 -

Re: Submission of supplemental testimony against the proposed sale and drastic shrinkage of the Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's central destination library in Downtown Brooklyn. (ULURP C15039 PPK - Oral testimony taken by Commissioners on September 22, 2015)

Dear Commissioner Cheryl Efron:

This is an open letter to New York City Planning Commissioner Cheryl Efron. We are also providing the other city planning commissioners with their own copies of this letter because we were told that planning commission staff considers it improper to have a communication that does not go simultaneously to all the commissioners* and, in addition, because the matters we describe here and ask Commissioner Efron to give serious thought to may have parallels with respect to other of the commissioners that we have not identified here and might not even yet know about, but which we would nonetheless ask them to give similar consideration to.

(* Some of us did, however, observe the developer, David Kramer, communicating with one of the commissioners about business and mutual opportunities and we hope, much the way we are addressing Commissioner Efron, that this other commissioner will also, ultimately, do the right thing.)

This letter is not a formal request for Commissioner Efron to recuse herself on the matter of proposed library sales or deals transforming libraries into real estate deals. Since we note that Commissioner Efron has apparently already decided that she not need to recuse herself we will, for the purpose of this letter, put such a request aside and assume *aguardo* and for the moment, that she does not need to recuse herself. Thus we will ask instead that Commissioner Efron recognize and detach herself from the personal and professional relationships and her prior pursuits with respect to the implementation of city library policy such that she avoids being influenced by them, consequently making wrong decisions.

When Jonathan Bowles, Executive Director of the Center for an Urban Future, provided oral testimony in favor of selling and shrinking the Brooklyn Heights Library at the September 22nd portion of the public hearing certain commissioner (Levin and Weisbrod) stated that they were appreciative consumers and admirers of past Center for an Urban Future product. We followed up with supplemental testimony to the effect that, while Center for an Urban Future product can sometimes be valuable, the testimony the Center for an Urban Future was providing was flawed in several respects and noted, as well, that the judgment of the Center for an Urban Future must be considered seriously amiss when it praises the decision to sell the Donnell Library, putting itself at odds with virtually all other New Yorkers informed on the subject, and probably, it is fair to say, the NYPL's own board and management's retrospective assessment.

The Center for an Urban Future also testified in favor of selling the Brooklyn Heights downtown central destination library at the Brooklyn Borough President's hearing.

When Mr. Bowles spoke Commissioner Effron did not acknowledge any connections with him or the Center for an Urban Future. She did not weigh in with the other commissioners to acknowledge being a consumer or admirer of its product. Nor did Ms. Effron note for the record that she was in any way connected with the production of its work, especially, in particular, when it concerns libraries and, more particularly, when it concerns whether libraries such as the Brooklyn Heights Library should be sold.

When during his testimony Commissioner Levin asked Mr. Bowles about why it is *"a good idea in this case to sell a valuable public asset, a one-shot deal"* Mr. Bowles responded *"our report called 'Re-Envisioning New York's Branch Libraries,' about a year ago, actually called for this kind of thing for at least ten branches in the city."*

Chair Weisbrod thereupon followed up with questions about what the report said.

Although Commissioner Effron was then the third commissioner to ask a question of Mr. Bowles, asking her question after the Levin and Weisbrod exchanges, Commissioner Effron did not note that the report being discussed was a major initiative (in fact the second such report) paid for by the Revson Foundation. Ms. Effron is on the board of the Revson Foundation. At the Reason Foundation web page presenting the report Mr. Bowls referred to it is stated: *"This report was made possible by generous support from the Charles H. Revson Foundation."*

Commissioner Effron also did not note her position on the *"Benefit Committee"* for the Center for an Urban Future's 2015 Gala coming up on November 4, 2015 as well as last year's 2014 gala. We don't yet have information about whether Commissioner Effron or others had a similar role with respect to any prior year functions.

It may be wondered why the Center for an Urban Future would have such bad judgment as to endorse the sale of the Donnell Library, or any other important libraries like the Brooklyn Heights Library. One explanation could be discerned from the fact that serving with Commissioner Effron on the *"Benefit Committee"* for the Center for an Urban Future's 2015 and 2014 galas is *David Offensend*. It was David Offensend who as Chief Operating Officer of the NYPL, coming to the New York Public Library from the investment firm Evercore (a spin-off of Blackstone), was responsible for effecting the Donnell Library sale. Further, it was David

Offensend's wife Janet, who taking a key trustee role at the Brooklyn Public Library was involved in the contemporaneously planning for the very similarly designed sale of the Brooklyn Heights Library.

The Center for an Urban Future web pages for the 2015 and 2014 galas are also interesting in that not only do you find Commissioner Effron's and Mr. Offensend's names appearing with Jonathan Bowles' name on the Board of Directors; you also see Jonathan Butler's name appear as a director as well. It's one of Mr. Butler's businesses that will be given the ground floor retail space in the developer's luxury tower if the Brooklyn Heights Library is sold and shrunk.

Concerns about Ms. Effron's role on the board of the Revson Foundation should not have gone unnoticed. Citizens Defending Libraries included in its original testimony submitted September 22nd an article that raised questions about the activities of the Revson Foundation with respect to the sale of libraries. We were unwitting at the time that the same article identified Ms. Effron as being on the board of the Revson Foundation, asking whether her presence there, and her point of view on library sales might be a problem. The article is: "Where Are They Now?: Sharon Greenberger, Evercore and the Revson Foundation- Selling And Shrinking NYC Libraries" (Saturday, June 6, 2015).

If Ms. Effron and the commissioners are reading the testimony submitted then they should all have become aware of this. Ms. Effron and the commissioners also should all know this if, at least, city planning staff is reading the testimony to identify such important matters as mention of the commissioners themselves and their roles.

Of great concern respecting the Revson Foundation's board is that it has on it Sharon Greenberger, a former Bloomberg appointee to the board of the Brooklyn Public Library (she was chief of staff for Daniel Doctoroff, Bloomberg's Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and Rebuilding). In her role as BPL trustee Ms. Greenberger served as designated point person working with Janet Offensend putting together the real estate strategy for the library sales, including the Brooklyn Heights Library that is now before the commissioners. Ms. Greenberger went on to be involved in other work that related to the privatization of public assets and her position on the Revson board may be looked at as one of those endeavors as the plans for library sales she worked on at the BPL are pursued further. Also on the board at Revson is Stacy Dick who was at Evercore overlapping for a number of years with David Offensend.

During the oral testimony, Commissioner Effron asked a question of Mr. Bowles setting him up to offer an opinion whether (as "*spoken about*" or raised by "*fellow commissioners*") the "*fiduciary responsibilities*" of library trustees "*have been taken seriously.*" (i.e. The "*fiduciary responsibilities*" of trustees selling libraries and constructing real estate deals such as BPL trustees Sharon Greenberger and Janet Offensend.) Center for an Urban Future representatives were previously on record as saying they do not believe the library trustees motivations should be subject to question and Mr. Bowles responded that he though the library trustees were "*doing a great job.*" Citizens Defending Libraries was one of the plaintiffs in lawsuits recently brought against the NYPL. In all, two of the lawsuits, each with multiple plaintiff parties, had as one of their causes of action breach of fiduciary duty by the trustees when they pursued the real estate plans being implemented by NYPL COO David Offensend. (The cases did not proceed to legal discovery on the issue, but that does not preclude the commissioners from delving to evaluate the

issue.)

The Revson Foundation's role with respect to the proposed sale and shrinkage of libraries has not been good and must be viewed with profound suspicion:

1. The Revson Foundation was undoubtedly involved with the "*Revson Study*" which concerned the proposed sale and redevelopment of the Sunset Park library into a mixed use facility. This proposed Sunset Park redevelopment is part of the reason that Commissioner de la Uz is recusing herself from hearing the Brooklyn Heights Library matter that the BPL has tied in with Sunset Park. What more the "*Revson Study*" says or what other libraries it mentions is not known to us at this point because the BPL has for more than a year been refusing to release the study as required by the Freedom of Information Law. Presumably, it is being withheld because what it says would not be viewed favorably by the public.
2. The Revson Foundation is a heavy funder of Urban Librarians Unite, created around the same time that library sales plans were launched and an organization that has backed every form of proposed library sale and shrinkage since that time, including the Brooklyn Heights Library sale, the Central Library Plan (involving the sale of Mid-Manhattan Library and the 34th Street Science, industry and Business Library plus the destruction of the research stacks of the 42nd Street Library) and the plans for library shrinkages via Spaceworks. We have asked that Urban Librarians Unite decry the Donnell sale and they refuse.
3. The Revson Foundation is a key funder of Spaceworks, a private company, albeit technically a 501(c)(3), with a heavy emphasis on real estate that cited the privatization of library space (as "underutilized") as one of its principal business purposes when it was created.
4. Supplementing, yet distinct from The Center for an Urban Future reports, the Revson Foundation funded a "*Re-envisioning New York's Branch Libraries design study*" followed up by a series of presentations of the study that, subtly or not, provided support for turning libraries into real estate transactions, promoted the urgency of redesigning and redeveloping libraries, suggested that books can be made less important with less space devoted to them, introduced ideas for how to have good PR for keeping books off-site, and promoted the idea that libraries should or can be smaller "*flexible*" spaces so that less space serves their needs. As submitted in our original testimony, one of these presentations ended with the audience being told:

And again, as the final presentation has shown, and we will see again hopefully, at the end a library is real estate. It's an integral ingredient in urban development. I've studied libraries for years, and many design projects around the country have found it's often a nice placating gesture in a real estate development. You want to do commercial

development?: Put a library in it and you win a new public that you might not have had on your team initially. So in short a library has many fronts and functions.

5. As noted, whatever good work The Center for an Urban Future has done, it has also been promoting the sale of libraries in ways that raise concern and indicate serious lapses of judgment and reckoning on the Center's part. In fact, of late, the Center has been so deeply enmeshed in the subject of libraries that when David Giles, author of the CUF library reports, appeared at yet another event following up on the Re-envisioning Libraries design study funded by Revson (October 21, 2015) at the New York School of Interior Design, he had to, before he got started, disclaim to the audience that *"although we have been publishing quite a lot recently on libraries we are not a library advocacy organization, but a public policy think tank"* researching a range of other issues as well.

Ms. Effron has had significant personal involvement with what the Revson Foundation does with respect to libraries and even the library heads themselves, which would include Linda Johnson, head of the BPL library, who appeared on behalf the BPL on September 22nd as it made its case as applicant for this library sale and shrinkage. The Revson Foundation's web pages highlight this with a link to a Wall Street Journal article profiling Commissioner Effron, where her help to spearhead *"Love a Library"* in the fall of 2011 was a featured portion.

The Wall Street Journal article, *"Giving New York City's Local Libraries a Boost,"* by Melanie Grayce West, September 3, 2012 reads (*emphasis supplied*):

She brokered a grant of \$50,000 from the Revson Foundation. . for New York Cares for the purpose of Love a Library. . .

*The idea for Love a Library blossomed in the fall of last year when a grant from the Revson Foundation sponsored a panel discussion **with the three leaders of the city's library systems**, where better collaboration was discussed. At the same time, Ms. Effron was aware that New York Cares [She's an honorary board member of New York Cares] was engaged in library activities and could do more to serve branches. So, Ms. Effron did what made sense: She made a three-way introduction between New York Cares, **the heads of the three library systems** and the Revson Foundation. Out of that came the day of service, which Ms. Effron coined, "Love a library, embrace a branch."*

Ms. Effron's picture is also on the Revson Foundation site ceremonially presenting Revson Foundation library awards: Yes this involves the Brooklyn Public Library and the (only theoretical?) eligibility of awards to any of its branches and actual awards to some. One must wonder about all the public relations management discussions that ensue with the subject of library sales almost certain to come up. . In 2015 \$40,000 went from the Revson Foundation to the BPL, in 2014 \$138,820 in 2013 \$173,820 (including an Offensend sponsored gala). The Revson Foundation's library sale related disbursements (and these are not all of them) rise is dramatic correspondence to the presentation to the public of plans to sell and shrink libraries.

In 2015 the Revson Foundation made a grant of \$62,000 to the Fifth Avenue Committee (per Revson's website):

To support FAC in facilitating a community planning process and assessing the potential of New Market Tax Credit (NMTC) in order to build and finance an expanded Sunset Park Library with affordable housing above.

This grant supports the proposed sale for redevelopment of the Sunset Park Library which the Brooklyn Public Library has tied in with (including citing as a reason for) the proposed sale and redevelopment of the Brooklyn Heights Library. It is the reason that Commissioner Michelle de la Uz, head of the Fifth Avenue Committee which is proposing to redevelopment the Sunset Park and other libraries into a mixed-use facilities has recused herself from consideration of the Brooklyn Heights proposal. It is the theoretical reason why the Fifth Avenue Committee has sent multiple representatives to multiple public hearings in this process to testify in favor of selling and drastically shrinking the Brooklyn Heights Library.

In 2014 the Revson Founddation gave \$80,000 to the Center for an Urban Future:

To support a project examining the challenges that New York City nonprofits face in undertaking construction projects financed with city capital dollars and managed by the New York City Department of Design and Construction (DDC).

As the commissioners must, no doubt be aware, some of the most important alternatives under evaluation at this moment in terms of what can and should be done with the Brooklyn Heights Library involve working with the New York City Department of Design and Construction to effect normal repairs (including just fixing the air conditioning- which the Department previously opined was in good shape). Those promoting library sales and taking real estate out of the hands of the public, supporting so-called "public-private" partnerships for new construction like in the instant case, have worked to make the New York City Department of Design and Construction into a bogeyman to be side-stepped at all costs (even though the department's figures for library construction were the merest fraction of what was proposed with the Offensend/NYPL Central Library Plan).

Ms. Effron was appointed to the City Planning Commission August 5, 2014 by Mayor de Blasio. This was after de Blasio, while developer applications for the purchase of the Brooklyn Heights were still pending, was receiving money from the development team to which his administration ultimately awarded this project.

As previously noted, Ms. Effron and the commissioners should all already know of Ms. Effron's, we think, problematic roles as trustee of the Revson Foundation. Presumably, Ms. Effron has raised with the other commissioners the question of her library activities and Revson Foundation board membership and Revson Foundation goal or vice versa. Nevertheless, the outcome is that Ms. Effron has not recused herself during the ongoing proceedings. Whatever the standards are that the commissioners are choosing to live according to, we must wonder whether Commissioner Effron, in feeling she does not have to recuse herself, also feels that it is similarly consistent with her role as commissioner to advance the current goals of the Revson Foundation within the context of the planning commissioners' deliberation and debate.

That said, here is the request we write this letter to make of Commissioner Effron:

We feel that with all the public's testimony, Citizens Defending Libraries testimony included, has made a strong, convincing, and irrefutable case that the Brooklyn Heights Library, Brooklyn's central destination library in Downtown Brooklyn, a very valuable, recently expanded and fully upgraded library should ***not*** be sold and drastically shrunk in a one-shot deal that will yield little, if anything at all, for city coffers or the public while sacrificing irreplaceable public assets we should pass on to future generations.

Commissioner Effron, if you do not recuse yourself, we ask that you at least disentangle yourself from your loyalties to those dedicated to selling libraries with whom you have worked long and closely and from the goals and policies with respect to selling libraries that the Revson Foundation has branched out to support in multiple ways. Please make it your intent to do this so as to consider with a clear, unbiased mind the public good. If you cannot manage this, at least abstain. This is far too significant a decision and precedent to deserve anything less.

We pray that it is not a faint hope that you will respect this request.

Similarly, we ask that any other commissioners who may also have entanglements and mixed loyalties that have not yet surfaced or been discussed, or have not been considered grounds for recusal (given how the commission chooses to conduct business) will themselves surmount such influences that are not consonant with the greater public benefit.

Sincerely,

Michael D. D. White
Citizens Defending Libraries