

Citizens Defending Libraries

Michael D. D. White
Co-Founder

62 Montague Street, Apt. 3E
Brooklyn, New York 11201
W: (718) 834-6184
E-mail MDDWhite@aol.com

March 12, 2019

Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer
Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Council Chambers
City Hall, New York

Re: March 11, 2019 Testimony respecting Preliminary Budget Hearing - Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations- New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on Fiscal Year 2020 Preliminary Budget, The Preliminary Capital- Plan for Fiscal Years 2020-2023, The Preliminary Ten-Year Capital Strategy for Fiscal Years 2020-2029 and The Fiscal 2019 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report.

Dear City Council Members and Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations:

This letter provides the written version of our Citizens Defending Libraries oral testimony delivered yesterday.

As the New York Times covered in its recent obituary for Karl Lagerfeld, (Karl Lagerfeld, Designer Who Defined Luxury Fashion, Is Dead), Mr. Lagerfeld had an estimated 300,000 volumes in his personal, private library. We presented pictures at the hearing that we have up at Citizens Defending Libraries. Those 300,000 volumes are only a few books shy in number from the number that is being talked about as the number that will be in the reduced Mid-Manhattan Library.

See: Through The Windows of Privilege (Like Karl Lagerfeld's) The Enduring Value Of Physical Books And Libraries With Big Collections Can Readily Be Discerned

<http://citizensdefendinglibraries.blogspot.com/2019/03/through-windows-of-privilege-like-karl.html>

That's not the way it should be. The mid-Manhattan Library was designed to hold 700,000 books. And now we are talking about it's being consolidated with SIBL (the 34th Street Science, Industry and Business Library), from which over one million books are missing. And then it is also supposed to be absorbing all of the hundreds of thousands of books that disappeared from the Donnell Library that was shrunk and sunk to be replaced by a luxury tower.

Mr. Lagerfeld was something of a polymath, but these 300,000 books represent his personal interests, those of just one single man. The Mid-Manhattan Library, the main circulating library for New York City, should provide books representing the interests of *all* New Yorkers.

We also presented pictures at the hearing that we have up at Citizens Defending Libraries of the empty shelves at the Flatbush Library. The pictures were taken the evening that the Brooklyn Public Library trustees held a trustees meeting above these empty shelves, quite oblivious to them and their emptiness, while they held a sort of goofy meeting about how to rearrange furniture in shrunken libraries so that library users wouldn't notice that the libraries didn't have enough space.

See: Atop Empty Bookshelves of The Flatbush Library, Brooklyn Public Library Trustees Meet Displaying Holiday Spirit As They Fuss Over Expensively Tiny Library Space

<http://citizensdefendinglibraries.blogspot.com/2019/01/atop-empty-bookshelves-of-flatbush.html>

Earlier at the hearing we heard Brooklyn Public Library president Linda Johnson testify about how the replacement for the Brooklyn Heights Library is going to be a bigger, better configured library. That's *not* true; it's going to be smaller, 40% of the previous library's size; it will not be an "Education Library," not a "Business Library," not a "Career Library," not a federal depository library (it was all these things before); it won't have lots of books like before; and, in terms of configuration, it will be configured as an afterthought (an awkward horseshoe shape) to what the developer wanted for his luxury project.

Similarly, NYPL COO Iris Weinshall said that the reason to sell the Inwood Library was because of its poor configuration, but when they assembled the developers to bid on the property the library administration officials and city development officials told those developers that configuration of the replacement library didn't matter.

See: The Voice of an Inwood Library Defender- Jeffrey Wollock Provides an Overview: Libraries as Real Estate -How NYC's Libraries are Being Stolen

<http://citizensdefendinglibraries.blogspot.com/2018/12/the-voice-of-inwood-library-defender.html>

So what you are told is *not* true, and we are eliminating books and living in a world where people like Karl Lagerfeld, who have the privilege to own what is valuable, own more books than we are furnishing the citizens of New York City in our public libraries.

Please not as well that Citizens Defending Libraries endorses and supports the testimony of Matthew Zadrozny of the Committee to Save The New York Public Library objecting to the NYPL's very contracted for the 42nd Street Central Referenced Library and how keeping those shortened hours in order to hold private gala events at the library represents a highly inappropriate privatization of that public asset intended to serve the public.

For more about the disappearance of books from our New York City public libraries see the section of information about it on our Citizens Defending Libraries main page:

How Many Books Are Disappearing From New York City Libraries?

<https://citizensdefendinglibraries.blogspot.com/2018/02/how-many-books-are-disappearing-from.html>

Sincerely,

Michael D. D. White
Citizens Defending Libraries

