

**Notes from Open Forum on NYPL Changes
CUNY Graduate Center, April 26, 2012**

Opening Remarks by Ann Thornton, the Andrew W. Mellon Director of the New York Public Libraries; and responses to questions by Ann Thornton with support from NYPL staff in attendance.

CUNY is one of the biggest constituent groups of the NYPL, and NYPL welcomes ideas about additional initiatives.

[The Central Library Plan:](#)

- Transform NYPL physically at 42nd & 5th into a library that “serves everyone.” Incorporate Mid-Manhattan, the Science, Industry, and Business Library (SIBL), and the World Class Business Center.
- The Schwarzman building will be transformed architecturally by the removal of the stacks under the main reading room.
- One of the bigger concerns is the financial transformation as well. NYPL will be able to sell real estate assets. The sale of those buildings will provide money towards research support and the “structural financial deficit” for many years.

Details of current operations:

- Currently 1.2 million volumes are stored under Bryant Park. 30,000 linear feet of manuscript material.
- 2% of that material in a given year is used.
- Some of the books already scanned to Google Books.
- Close to 3 million books in the original 1911 stacks; about half need to be onsite.
- There are close to 1 million manuscripts available electronically; the NYPL continues to acquire over 100,000 print volumes per year.
- NYPL spends 11% of its budget on electronic acquisitions; comparatively, NYU spends 70%.

The NYPL’s positions:

- The NYPL has a commitment to acquisition and retention.
- NYPL is trying to design the library for the next 100 years of use.
- It is also important that NYPL collaborate with other libraries.

How decisions will be made to move material off-site:

- NYPL is currently processing all materials because the true number of materials in the collections is unknown. An intensive inventory is underway.
- Next year will be bumpy during barcoding as every item gets physically touched/catalogued.
- It's an ongoing process to decide what stays – not only what's been used, but a balanced approach. Only 6% of NYPL's collection is used in any given year.
- There has been a 41% reduction in print material use in the last 15 years. Use in print material is down 70% at the Business Library.
- 90% of the materials used will be kept on-site.
- After the transformation is complete, there will be room to shift materials back from off-site; barcoding will provide flexibility with inventory.

In response to questions regarding off-site storage and retrieval:

- The NYPL is working to make off-site retrieval better: Saturday delivery and launching online request forms with electronic document delivery to make it easier to take advantage of off-site resources. The inventory process will give NYPL a better idea of current use. They are touching each item in the collection and barcoding everything.
- NYPL understands concerns about the length of time it takes to receive books, and they expect that electronic request forms will make it easier.
- They will also reconsider staffing at off-site storage to determine peak times and to respond more efficiently to requests. They might institute a later cut-off time for requests, with different delivery times.
- There has been off-site storage for 50 years. Better analysis is possible today – barcode and process everything so that it can be discoverable to readers. There is a commitment to improve off-site storage/delivery.
- The consortium recap facility at Princeton is staffed with employees from all institutions involved.
- NYPL has had electronic delivery service for the last 12 years; they are working to make it easier and to publicize it.
- Of the 3 million volumes currently off-site, 1% are requested per year.

In response to financial questions:

- The city gave money for the transformation of the central library according to the plan presented. Money is not currently in hand and could disappear if plan not put to use.
- Mid-Manhattan is mechanically failing, and would need \$100-150 million to fix it. It would have to be closed while it was renovated (for years).
- NYPL will only receive the city's money if the Mid-Manhattan is incorporated in the central library plan. The current endowment is too small for its operations.
- The NYPL needs to find \$10-15 million/year of operating savings (needs to be ongoing savings).
- The library has a \$800 million endowment, and a \$254 million/year operating budget.
- \$119 million of that \$254 million is used for research.

- The projected sale of the 2 combined libraries (Mid-Manhattan and SIBL) is \$200 million.
- \$350 million announced as the projected cost of the plan. \$150 million will come from the city; \$200 million from the sale of the buildings (though they won't be sold until after the transformation is complete).

In response to questions about transparency of the decisionmaking process/other options:

- The plan was announced in 2008, but the financial crisis put the plan on hold until now.
- The transition started last summer in executive leadership and NYPL started actively working on the plan again.
- There were earlier plans for a redesign of Mid-Manhattan that would have meant the library would be closed for years. In 2007, the plan was to secure more fiscal footing for NYPL. The current endowment is not large enough for operating costs. The stacks are not an ideal preservation environment for books. They certainly aren't equal to the preservation environment at off-site storage. The Bryant Park extension is a better environment than the 1911 stacks.
- RE: transparency of the Scholarly Advisory Council. NYPL responded that they will work to create something along the lines of other committees that other major research libraries have (like the Common Center for Readers and Writers (?)); NYPL has called upon past fellows to help advise the library.

In response to questions on space usage:

- The huge space where books are currently could hold both other libraries.
- The special collection reading rooms/Rose reading rooms stay as they are.
- Some rooms on the 2nd floor that are currently closed to the public will be opened.
- The anticipated plan will take 5 years. During that time the library will not be closed. Most of the heavy work will be done at night. The plan is to not close service.
- Approximately 1/3 of the Wertheim scholars are CUNY people. There is demand for research rooms, and they want to double the available space. Collaborative space? Possible in the circulating space, although not sure yet.

In response to questions about MaRLI:

- NYPL would like to continue the program after completion of the pilot, but is currently collecting information on it.
- NYPL is committed to extending the program until September.
- 72% of MaRLI users are from CUNY.
- MaRLI does not circulate unique materials; it only circulates materials in good condition.
- MaRLI is important for collaboration with other libraries, including for organizing purchases through consortium. "A great research library is one that shares and collaborates with others to serve its users better." (Ann Thornton)

[Notes taken by Margaret Galvan, GC student; notes typed/organized by Patricia Stapleton, GC student (4/27/12).]