



Preliminary Budget Hearing Fiscal Year 2015
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup
Relations
and
Sub Committee on Libraries
Joint Testimony of
Brooklyn Public Library Guild, Local 1482
New York Public Library Quasi-Public Employees, Local 374
New York Public Library Guild, Local 1930
Queens Public Library Guild, Local 1321
March 11, 2014

On behalf of the members of Locals 374, 1321, 1482 and 1930, I thank City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Cultural Affairs Committee Chair Jimmy Van Bramer, Subcommittee on Libraries Chair Costa Constantinides and the members of the Cultural Affairs Committee for holding this hearing.

The union members of Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library and Queens Borough Public Library want to thank Mayor Bill de Blasio for providing a responsible budget for the Libraries, a budget that does not force the Library systems to waste valuable resources fighting for our very survival. This proposed budget is a positive first step toward ensuring New York City's library staff can provide the services our patrons deserve.

We say that this is the first step, because our public libraries need more funds. We are severely short-staffed, causing considerable stress throughout the three systems.

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>Reduction in Headcount #</u>	<u>Reduction in Headcount %</u>
Brooklyn Public Library Guild Local 1482	1,079	873	206	24%
New York Public Library Quasi-Public Employees Local 374	243	224	19	8%
New York Public Library Guild Local 1930	1,934	1,461	473	32%
Queens Library Guild Local 1321	971	725	246	34%
<u>Total</u>	4,227	3,283	944	29%

Most of our branches do not have the staff to provide necessary services. We have staff members who spend part of their day traveling from branch to branch to ensure it has proper coverage. We have staff who are performing multiple jobs. We cannot provide six day service.

While New York Public Library has managed to continue doing some semblance of hiring, the staggering staffing reduction continues. NYPL reduced their frontline workforce by 32% and the situation is dire. The "Careers" section of nypl.org may look robust, however upon closer examination the job postings are not for full-time, frontline branch staff but for interns, tutors and other hourly rate employees. Morale is at an all time low. NYPL branches used to have a family oriented atmosphere but now that feeling is almost extinct. NYPL continues to push new initiatives and expand services, forcing staff to work multiple jobs. Staff are routinely canceling or getting denied their vacation. Often, staff are told to open sites with just two staff members creating serious safety issues for themselves and patrons. NYPL needs more staff so that we can provide the excellent services and safe branches our patrons deserve.

At the Queens Library, one example of the short-staffing problem can be found at the South Hollis Branch. Only three full-time employees and one part-time employee have staffed the branch for over three years. In addition to providing regular library services, every day they are inundated with unruly teenagers. This branch has had a number of security issues, including a recent shooting threat. The staff valiantly try to maintain order and provide library services. A branch of this size should have seven full time public service staff members, including a security guard.

To provide the services the public expects, we need the City Council and Mayor to increase our

budget. Though not as a blank check, without conditions. We are asking for more money that comes with more transparency, accountability and control. If the Libraries are receiving funding from the city, we need accurate and thorough reports on how the money is being spent and how major expenditures are approved. We need periodic and consistent documentation of how much money is spent on salaries and benefits by title, materials by material type, utilities, capital projects, basically everything the Libraries use city funds for. We need the City to provide more control over how the Libraries spend these funds.

Mayor de Blasio's budget is a welcome change from previous years' budgets. Our members are encouraged that we have funding stability this year. However, the library systems are severely understaffed. The unions representing the workers at the three libraries are asking the City Council and Mayor to provide us more funds that come with more accountability and control. We are also asking the City Council and Mayor to pass Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer's Intro 0114-2014 to baseline Library funding.

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