



MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FIVE

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David Siesko, *Chair*

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April 17, 2009

Dr. Paul LeClerc
President & CEO
The New York Public Library
Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street
New York, NY 10018

Dear Dr. LeClerc,

We value the relationship we've established over the years and hope we can count on you to listen and respond to our concerns about Donnell Library.

Our first concern is the ambiguity over Donnell's future. As you no doubt are aware, there is a great deal of pain, frustration and anger in our community over the closing of and future plans for Donnell. On March 31, Community Board Five's Housing, Human Services and Youth Committee convened a meeting to try to clarify Donnell's future. George Mihaltses and Theresa Myrhol represented the NYPL and many concerned community members also attended.

Mr. Mihaltses promised to apprise you of the opinions that were expressed, but I would like to express in writing our position and urge you and your board of trustees to address these points as soon as possible.

Although Community Board Five made no official comment on the original plan to sell the Donnell property and transform the 42nd Street Library into a circulating library, we are now greatly concerned that there is currently no concrete plan to replace Donnell Library with a comparable facility. It is our position that whatever the means, Donnell Library needs to be restored in its original location.

Our second concern is the lack of transparency with which the Donnell situation has been handled. We are surprised, concerned and disappointed that NYPL did not put more effort from the beginning into public relations surrounding this issue. Indeed, much of the outrage expressed at the meeting was due to NYPL's failure to communicate.

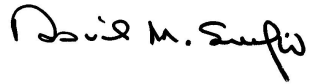
We were informed that because of the sensitive nature of the negotiations between NYPL and Orient Express, no questions concerning future plans for the Donnell site could be answered. We understand this. It was also pointed out that the NYPL is not a government agency and is not therefore obligated to consult with the public.

This may be technically accurate, but we believe that the fact that the library system plays such an important role in all our lives compels NYPL to a higher standard of outreach and listening. Moreover, the NYPL does receive substantial tax revenues from the City of New York and New York State, and Community Board Five has for many years given the public libraries the highest budget priority in our annual budget recommendations.

We therefore strongly urge NYPL to foster a healthier relationship with the community by being more forthcoming on the future of Donnell. Community Board Five is ready and willing to assist in any way we can. We would like to invite you to personally address these issues by either convening a public forum or by attending our full board meeting on May 14.

To many generations of New Yorkers, Donnell was not just *any* branch library. Residents and tourists from all over the world came to use its unique services. All of us in the community would find it reassuring to be heard by and to hear from you personally that the NYPL is planning to do everything in its power to marshal the necessary resources to restore this important community asset.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David M. Siesko". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

David Siesko
Chair