

President's Greetings

Not so long ago many predicted the demise of public libraries—due of course to the digital revolution and the idea that people could obtain, download and read whatever information they want, wherever they want, without going to a library. Actually, the situation is in reverse. Because of the digital age explosion of social and political activity, scientific knowledge, arts and culture, we need libraries more than ever and cities are responding accordingly.

In Chicago, Mayor Rahm Emanuel created a partnership with the Chicago Housing Authority, the Chicago Public Library System and two private developers to build three architecturally outstanding subsidized housing projects, each containing a public library branch. The libraries face outward as centers for their neighborhoods and attract children and adults, retirees, job-seekers, readers and digital materials buffs of every kind. These many and varied patrons help create community “in a city siloed by race and class.”

In New York City, the New York Public Library maintains a research collection of 11 million books and 40 million documents housed in four dedicated research libraries including the main Fifth Avenue building. The collection includes comic books and every phone book in our country. It also includes the first printed collection of Shakespeare’s plays, a letter from Columbus to King Ferdinand, and a copy of the Declaration of Independence written by Thomas Jefferson. All of this is available to the public.

Readers of this newsletter who wish to learn more about these remarkable library projects can read about them online in two New York Times articles. They are:

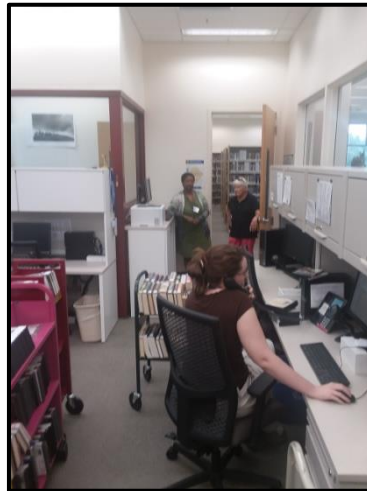
Chicago Finds a Way to Improve Public Housing: Libraries, by Michael Kimmelman
May 15, 2019

Why the New York Public Library Has 7 Floors of Stacks With No Books, by Winnie Hu
May 20, 2019

Florence Pritchard

Focus on Freedom

Renovation of the Freedom staff’s work area took place with amazing speed and efficiency in May. The people who did the work came into the area in the morning and by closing time had put all the new furniture in place. Director Ellie and her staff moved back in almost as promptly, and as you read this, are fully using the area. To show off the space, they will be hosting an open house all day on June 4 and Friends are invited to see what they have made possible. In the meantime, here are “after” photos to provide a sense of the wonderful changes.



Ellie shows off the new layout.



Mary Thompson hard at work.

On the Horizon

There’s a really big item looming on our horizon, and that is the programmable digital sign the Freedom Friends want to purchase for Freedom Public Library. Several recent meetings of board members and Julie Sieg, director of the library system, reveal that a number of variables impact the design, construction and installation of this sign.

Essentially the planned-for sign must replace the existing sign. This means the replacement sign says “Freedom Public Library” first and foremost. Secondary to this title and beneath it can be a two-sided programmable screen on which library staff can display information for the community about library programs, services and resources.

Additionally, a contractor who is properly registered with Marion County Procurement Services must submit and win a bid to design, construct and install the sign as a turnkey product. This means that the winning contractor must create all drawings, obtain all permissions, run electricity and create any necessary pads and mounts for the sign as well as creating the sign itself.

Board and Julie Sieg’s discussions of these necessities made clear that the amount of labor required of any winning contractor would bring the cost of the sign to an estimated \$30,000 if not more. In spite of this increase over earlier estimates, the Board voted to recommend to the membership that “we go full steam ahead” on this project. If the membership agrees, Julie is ready to prepare and post a request for bids for the sign not to exceed \$30,000. Julie has also assured the Board that procedures for including announcements on the digital part of the sign will ensure that the Friends can submit notices for the sign.

Freedom Friends are asked to read this column carefully and prepare any questions they have for a thorough discussion at our June 3 meeting. We will also discuss funding of the sign.