

Re: Chinatown Branch of SFPL

Yahoo/Sent

Thomas J Havey

From:thomasjhavey@yahoo.com

To:COB, SFPL (LIB)

Tue, Jul 18 at 2:38 PM

Dear Ms. Alcala-Veraflor,

Thank you in turn for your response to my message to what I thought was going to the Chief of Branches only to have to follow up afterwards by sending it to the City Librarian.

By way of clarification the purpose of my message was to report on the Chinatown Branch subsequent to resolution of my concerns pertaining to the North Beach branch. I was merely 'closing the loop' on the latter and segueing into the former.

While I can appreciate that community members have different needs, what I actually intended to address are what I would consider common needs, more specifically common courtesy on the part of all, toward all. This is where library staff play a crucial role, for better or worse.

I have considered that there can be a diversity of sensibilities as to proper conduct while no objective standards followed can lead to disputes if not also escalations. My general sense is that staff is overly permissive in what behavior is allowed and sometimes even engages in socializing amongst themselves.

Additionally it seems that staff easily takes initiative when it is time to close up, unlike so much else that is ignored before closing time. I find it unfortunate that staff cannot begin by setting a good example and then politely, but firmly, minimize conduct on the part of patrons that can be disturbing to a reasonable patron minding his or her own business.

I am not aware of any study rooms at Chinatown Branch, but in case my previous emails were not clear enough, my concerns have been related to when using a computer station or a printer/scanner. Thus, in my case, study rooms aren't really applicable, anyway.

As a separate matter I remain suspicious about the incident, at closing time, whereby another patron was treated in what perceived to be unduly harsh and under broader circumstances that appeared rather questionable. I'm not certain of what did (not) happen before I returned from the printer/scanner area, on my way out, but am mindful of the saying 'If you see something, say something'.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Havey (no 'r')

On Monday, July 17, 2023 at 02:29:09 PM PDT, COB, SFPL (LIB) <cob@sfpl.org> wrote:

Dear Mr. Harvey,

Thank you for taking time to contact the City Librarian about your recent experiences at the North Beach and Chinatown Branches. My name is Rebecca Alcala-Veraflor, and I am following up regarding your concerns about the noise level, closing announcements, and recent interaction with staff.

I am glad to hear your experience at North Beach has improved. SFPL strives to be a welcoming and inclusive environment. We are aware that members of the community have different needs in our branches. For that reason, we have included private study rooms for library users in our design for the newly renovated Chinatown branch. In the meantime, I will look into the current situation at the branch.

You are a valued member of our community, and your patronage is appreciated. We hope to see you again soon at the library.

Best,

Rebecca Alcala-Veraflor
Chief of Branches
(415) 557-4353

Thomas J Havey

From: thomasjhavey@yahoo.com

To: City Librarian City Librarian (LIB)

Sun, Jul 16 at 3:06 PM

NOTE: Forwarding to City Librarian email string sent to then-apparent Neighborhood Branch administrator (see below).

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Carlson, Terry (LIB) <terry.carlson@sfpl.org>

To: Thomas J Havey <thomasjhavey@yahoo.com>

Sent: Friday, July 14, 2023 at 12:02:58 PM PDT

Subject: Re: Chinatown Branch of SFPL

Hi Thomas,
Thanks for your email. I no longer work at that department.
Thanks,
Terry

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Thomas J Havey <thomasjhavey@yahoo.com>

Sent: Thursday, July 13, 2023 1:32:58 PM

To: Carlson, Terry (LIB) <Terry.Carlson@sfpl.org>

Subject: Chinatown Branch of SFPL

Hello again Mr./Ms. Carlson,

I am contacting you again subsequent to a previous email exchange, most recently your email of April 5 (RE: San Francisco Public Library-North Beach Branch).

Subsequently I have met the manager Richard and he encouraged me to contact him if any other concerns come up. So far, none have and I do not expect that any will as I have experienced a noticeable improvement during my ongoing visits.

In contrast, though, I have been experiencing numerous questionable situations at the Chinatown Branch where I sometimes go instead of North Beach's branch, especially if I will be going downtown right afterwards. While there are similarities with the pre-intervention North Beach matter, there is at least one difference, namely that the email responses I have received to my complaints (see below) do not identify anyone in particular. This, in and of itself, looks questionable to me as a patron. At least at North Beach one staff member did identify herself.

But as to the actual content of my complaints at Chinatown, that by now pertain to at least three separate situations, what I believe to be a pattern of behavior of library staff in general (not every individual) is to tolerate/cause too much noise, then taking initiative near closing time to make unnecessarily loud and/or frequent announcements of such. Yet the staff email response of May 3 (below) seems to imply that my complaint was not reasonable even though staff had not intervened:

"...We closely monitor noise levels and intervene when disruptions occur, in accordance with our established policies."

Separately, the most recent response I have received, of July 12, addressed only the last part of my visit (as I was walking out of the branch shortly before closing time). It did not address the other, preceding, issues I brought up, i.e. considerably noticeable conversations going on and apparently excessive announcements about closing time.

This leads me to conclude that, even if the incident with the other patron was handled well under the circumstances (I doubt it), still there are ongoing problems with the manner in which this branch is managed that result in sub-standard service to patrons in general. To have to submit a complaint only makes matters worse for any patron who expects a branch library to live up to the overall SFPL standards.

Thus I have given up on communicating with the Chinatown staff and now refer this matter to you.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Havey
SFPL #21223021865038

Re: SFPL Chinatown Branch feedback
Yahoo/Inbox

- SFPL-Chinatown Manager <chimgr@sfpl.org>
To: Thomas J Havey, SFPL-Chinatown Manager

Wed, Jul 12 at 2:22 PM

Dear Mr. Havey,

Thank you for bringing your recent experience to our attention. We understand your concern regarding the incident involving a patron being asked to leave the library.

While I cannot discuss specific details of individual patron cases, I can assure you that our library staff are trained to handle various situations and to maintain the safety and security of all patrons and staff members. Our staff's actions are based on maintaining a safe and inclusive environment, and not on any form of discrimination. The incident in question has been thoroughly documented and submitted to our security office.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. We value your feedback and are committed to providing a positive experience for all library users.

Sincerely,
Chinatown Staff

From: Thomas J Havey <thomasjhavey@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, July 10, 2023 11:40 PM
To: SFPL-Chinatown Manager <chimgr@sfpl.org>
Subject: Fw: SFPL Chinatown Branch feedback

NOTE: FORWARDING THE MESSAGE SENT ON JULY 7 THAT WAS MISADDRESSED, THUS NOT DELIVERED.

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Thomas J Havey <thomasjhavey@yahoo.com>
To: Thomas J. Havey <thomasjhavey@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, July 7, 2023 at 05:06:17 PM PDT
Subject: Re: SFPL Chinatown Branch feedback

Hello again Branch Manager,

This is to follow up on a new matter, taking into account your response to my previous email (see below).

Last Saturday, during the last hour or so of library hours, I came in to use a computer and printer. While doing so I was surprised by the amount of audible conversation going on, beyond what I believe is reasonably necessary in patron assistance. This is only a general observation as I ignored it as best I could so as to finish what I was doing before the computers shut off at 5:45.

However I do remember distinctly what seemed like an undue number of announcements by staff of the upcoming closing time.

Anyway, after I had finished with a computer and printer and came back to the front room before exiting the building I couldn't help overhearing a male staff member order an apparent patron to leave the building or he would be arrested for trespassing. What was odd about this situation was both that there still were other patrons in the building, including me, and also the patron in question was not disruptive or even arguing but instead seemed 'spaced out'.

He did exit as ordered which was just before I exited. I did not say anything to anyone at the time but, as I was in the process of walking down the stairs I turned around and saw him likewise turned toward me but seemingly unsure where he was to go. I turned away again and departed the vicinity entirely, but reflecting on what seemed like inappropriate handling of what may or may not have been a problem patron. If it might have involved, most unfortunately, racial discrimination then so much the worse.

All things considered, my impression from this visit was that staff did not maintain a reasonably quiet environment, then was quick to add to the unpleasantness in how closing announcements were provided. I am especially concerned about the final incident that I have not seen before in your branch.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Havey
SFPL #21223021865038

Re: Chinatown Branch feedback
Yahoo/Inbox

o SFPL-Chinatown Manager <chimgr@sfpl.org>
To: Thomas J Havey

Wed, May 3 at 5:46 PM

Dear Mr. Havey,

Thank you for taking the time to share your feedback regarding your recent experiences at our branch.

As a vital community hub, we strive to create a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere that accommodates the diverse needs of our patrons. We closely monitor noise levels and intervene when disruptions occur, in accordance with our established policies.

I apologize for the inconvenience you experienced due to the loud talking of another patron during your visit, and for our staff's response, which may not have met your expectations or adhered to our code of conduct. Please be assured that we take your feedback seriously and will use it as an opportunity to improve our services.

In the meantime, if you encounter a similar situation during future visits, please do not hesitate to bring it to our attention.

Again, thank you for bringing this matter to our attention, and we hope to continue serving you with a better experience in the future.

Sincerely,
Chinatown Branch Library

From: Thomas J Havey <thomasjhavey@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 3, 2023 4:41 PM
To: SFPL-Chinatown Manager <chimgr@sfpl.org>
Subject: Chinatown Branch feedback

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Hello Branch Manager,

This is to offer some feedback on my most recent experience at your branch, during about 5:30 to 5:50 PM, yesterday.

While I was seated at one of the computer stations I couldn't help overhear some loud talking on the part of another patron who was standing at the staff station located most southwesterly (of two) in the main room, i.e. the room directly entered through the front door on Powell St.

Apparently he was seeking some assistance from one of the Branch staff members, which I recognize as a common occurrence in almost any library, but what was surprising was that the staff member apparently made no attempt to induce the patron to lower his voice to a reasonable level.

However, I didn't need to use the computer for more than about 5 minutes, specifically to send a print to the station in the next room. So I ignored the noise, other than initially looking over to see what was causing it.

When I went next door to pick up the print, which went well as usual, I decided to write a note to the person I was going to snail mail the print to, so I sat down at a table at the far end of the room. As I was writing, though, I was surprised yet again to notice that the patron in question had come into the same room, apparently to scan something with the aid of a staff member.

This time, though, I decided not to try to ignore his loud talking any longer but instead walked over and expressed my objection to the staff member. He (heavy set male, dark hair) simply replied that he was

sorry, then I returned to the desk to finish writing the note. Afterwards, I then departed for the mail pick up location as of 6pm.

In retrospect I have decided it worth making this written complaint as it hardly is the only time that this kind of situation has been tolerated by branch staff. Within the last week or two I complained to a staff member about a woman carrying on a conversation with apparently a cell phone (computer stations area). She seemed reluctant to take action, then said that she would check with 'Chow' (spelling?). Fortunately for me, she eventually confronted the woman in question.

There are yet other incidents but I will stop here in the belief that my point of all this is clear.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Havey
SFPL #21223021865038

- -
 -
-