



San Francisco Public Library

SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMISSION

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of AUGUST 17, 2023

The San Francisco Public Library Commission held a regular meeting on **AUGUST 17, 2023**, virtually and at the Koret Auditorium, Main Library.

The meeting of the San Francisco Library Commission was called to order at **4:30 PM**.

Commissioners Present: Wolf, Huang, Bolander (Arrived at 4:38 PM), López (Arrived at 4:49 PM), Mall and Lomax Ghirarduzzi.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1 GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Barbara Alvarez, Friends of the Library, said they just started the fiscal year fundraising for the Library and are excited to work to raise public support for community programs and in particular start raising funds for the Mission and Chinatown branches.

Kate Lazarus, Friends of the Library Board, said this was her first commission meeting, was looking forward to learning more and thanked the Commissioners for their service.

Peter Warfield, Executive Director Library Users Association, Libraryusers2004@yahoo.com, said the postal service has confidentiality that e-mail and the web does not and that he has talked repeatedly about the toxic and problematic issues with respect to social media, the Library in the past was a safe space, but the web is full of scams, the latest is AI, Artificial intelligence.

AGENDA ITEM EM NO. 2 APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JULY 20, 2023

Public Comment

Peter Warfield said he thought the minutes were censored and, in some cases, the reverses of what the meaning is of what he said.

Commission Discussion

Motion: By Commissioner **MALL** seconded by Commissioner **LOMX GHIRARDUZZI** to approve the July 20, 2023 Minutes.

Action: AYES 6-0 (Wolf, Huang, Bolander, López, Mall and Lomax Ghirarduzzi)

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3 LIBRARY COLLECTION TRENDS

Shellie Cocking, Chief of Collections and Technical Services presented an overview of Library collection trends, which included five-year budget and circulation trends, between e-materials and physical materials and FY23 popular titles. Cocking said supply chain caused by COVID has eased. Collections started a Diversity Audit on the collection and a few of their goals are to include improving BIPOC representation in the English language circulation and increase collections in languages other than English. They are also using data to help select the right materials for the right branches. The data shows that the physical collection is serving a different population and a different purpose than the E-book collection.

Public Comment

Peter Warfield said over the years he talked about the library's trend to debookification and the Library's budget is still relatively low. It is good to see that books are very strong and for the last four fiscal years the budget for electronic resources has exceeded print. He said there was no mention of the correlation or the connection between open hours and circulation.

Commission Discussion

Vice President Huang said the Collections report was great and his view on how we fund physical collections versus e-resources, is getting the people what they want. Huang asked about the relationship between funding and circulation, does increasing funding induce more usage, and how should we think about the context of physical versus e-collection generally.

Cocking said it depends on what the Library is spending money on, in the early years they would buy new platforms. if they added hoopla, kids could get access to comics in an app at home. When they spend money on eBooks, it's not much different than the physical because they do 3/1 holding ratios in both formats. There are certain areas where they lost the physical circ and did not gain the e-circ for it, year to year it's different.

Huang said it feels like the right moment to be developing more financial and operating discipline around this category.

Commissioner Bolander said it appears that eBooks are more expensive than physical books, or can be, and that's because of publishers. When we budget and look at the obvious demand, we're very focused on what the patrons want, and we provide that service. He said Commissioner Huang's point about managing and getting an economic model that will make sense so we can plan better. He said the Library is meeting the demand of the patron, customers want it, and we give it to them.

Cocking said there's been a lot of talk in the profession about the cost of e-collections and some states that had lawsuits against the publishers.

City Librarian Lambert said the Library's trade group the American Library Association has done advocacy and Congress is aware of the issue, basically the big five publishers have monopolistic power and so others in the industry do not have SFPL's relative buying power, it's a challenge.

Commissioner Lomax Ghirarduzzi asked about the various trends and how the team responds to them, she

said the increase in the children's graphic novels is fantastic because, it's visual reading, which allows children that learn differently, to be able to express themselves or see themselves in these stories. Lomax Ghirarduzzi applauded the team on the DEI audit, and asked what goals the team are excited about.

Cocking said they think about all the different groups of people and work with people at the Main to find different titles for those areas. They started with the African American Center and Hormel Center to make sure the Library has a diverse collection and find the right branch to put it in so they will circulate, and people will see themselves reflected in the Library's collection is their goal.

Commissioner Lopez asked if the Patron Type Graph in the presentation represented books that haven't been returned and about physical items being returned, is that an area of concern.

Cocking said the graph represents patrons who haven't come back after COVID and generally, without fees, patrons are much more likely to return physical items then before, if we don't charge them fees, there's no reason not to return it.

President Wolf asked about DEI goals and what the team felt success looked like.

Cocking said that is a question the entire industry is asking. They look branch by branch and see if the numbers correlate with the racial make up for the neighborhood.

City Librarian Lambert said, the number one overriding measure of success is residents' level of satisfaction with Library services. The Controllers' Office has a survey and historically they've asked a specific question about residents' level of satisfaction with various aspects of library services, including collections, and the Library has always been rated very high.

Wolf asked about the percentage of people using eBooks versus physical books, how does SFPL rate compare to other urban centers.

Cocking said the Library Journal puts out an annual survey where they ask for circulation data, for SPFL it is not a good comparison because of our budget. SFPL can do 3/1 turnover rates for eBooks because of the very high prices, other libraries have up to 10 holds before they buy another copy.

City Librarian Lambert said SFPL is the highest circulating urban library in the state of California per-capita and if you look nationally, and one of the highest utilized libraries, in the top 15.

President Wolf said she appreciated the way in which Collections identified the top 10 and distinguished between the physical books verses the eBooks. Four of the top 10 physical books were kids' books and the more we can have physical books in the hands of kids, the better it will be.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4 CITY LIBRARIAN'S REPORT

Mike Fernandez, Chief Financial Officer, gave a FY 24 & FY 25 Budget Update for and said we define success by meeting our mission and this budget of \$199.4 M FY24 and \$186.5M FY25, will allow the Library to invest in the workforce with new positions, diversify and expand collections. He reviewed the budget sources, with 91.42% coming from the Library Preservation Fund, and outlined the uses of the budget by division.

Brian Weaver, Main 3rd Floor Manager presented the Bay Beats Music Program, which is a new online music collection featuring the sounds of the Bay Area musicians. More than 600 local musicians have submitted their music to be included on the Bay Beats website, in different musical genres, with rock being the most popular. Currently they are reviewing the music submissions and plan to launch the site in the fall.

Jason Hill, The Mix Program Manager presented the visit of California First Partner, Jennifer Siebel Newsom's to the Mix on July 20, 2023 to engage with youth interns and celebrate literacy, creative expression, and community. Hill said Mayor Breed, California Poet Lee Herrick, and California Arts Council Executive Director Jonathan Moscone were in attendance. He said the teens broke into different creative workshops and received free books.

Public Comment

Peter Warfield said one of the important things in the slogan the library has is free and equal access, and so much is not free and equal, which is true with all kinds of electronic access and materials. eBooks are not the same as print books and the library is touting the internet, the social media, and the eBooks, when there is only eBooks, that's not free and equal access.

Naima, from the Western Addition Branch, said the meeting is enlightening and she is thankful for all the information that was shared by the librarians that serve our public everyday, and appreciated all the free books the Western Addition Library, which is in an Equity Zone, gave away this summer. She thanked the Commission for prioritizing, putting books in the hands of youth and adults.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Mall asked if Bay Beats worked with the San Francisco Symphony and SF Jazz and that we have such a wealth of music in the Bay Area, it would be great for the library to do more interchange with those organizations.

Brian Weaver said they did some outreach and that is a great idea for next year.

Commissioner Lopez asked if in the future the Bay Beats information could include age too, as the younger generation often gets left out and for a young person to get an early start, through Bay Beats will be fantastic.

Weaver said he thought they had diversity in age with Bay Beats submissions, they got permission to allow minors to submit and there's a lot of aging rockers in there.

Commissioner Lomax Ghirarduzzi asked about the Bay Beats honorarium.

Weaver responded they made it clear they were offering a \$250 honorarium for an album's worth of music. That amount is generally the average amount of what the other library systems that are using the Rabble platform offer and they thought it was a fair amount.

President Wolf thanked Brian, the Bay Beats Team and Jurors for their work, saying the Commission

appreciates their participation and looks forward to start listening.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 ADJOURNMENT OF THE AUGUST 17, 2023 COMMISSION MEETING

Public Comment

Peter Warfield said he doesn't think the Commission should adjourn until it insists on having a future agenda item on what they would like to see on future agendas at the end of the meeting.

Commission Discussion

Motion: By Vice President **HUANG**, seconded by Commissioner **LOPEZ** to adjourn the meeting.

Action: AYES 6-0 (Wolf, Huang, Bolander, López, Mall and Lomax Ghirarduzzi)

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 PM.

Margot Shaub Commission Affairs Analyst

To access **Commission Meeting recordings** please visit: [Library Commission Meeting Recording](#)

Explanatory documents: Copies of listed explanatory documents are available as follows: (1) from the Commission Liaison Affairs Analyst/Custodian of Records, 6th floor, Main Library; (2) in the rear of Koret Auditorium immediately prior to, and during, the meeting; and (3), to the extent possible, on the Public Library Commission webpage: sfpl.org/library-commission/public-notices/agendas. Additional materials not listed as explanatory documents on this agenda, if any, that are distributed to Library Commissioners prior to or during the meeting in connection with any agenda item will be available to the public for inspection and copying in accordance with Government Code Section 54954.1 and Sunshine Ordinance Sections 67.9, 67.28(b), and 67.28(d).

Public Comment Submitted by email August 17, 2023 Thomas Havey:

Re: Chinatown Branch of SFPL

Ya

hoo/Sent

Thomas J Havey

From: **Privacy** [redacted] To: COB, SFPL (LIB)
Tue, Jul 18 at 2:38 PM

Dear Ms. Alcalá-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 I 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 **Privacy**
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 **Privacy** >
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

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From: Thomas J Havey <**Privacy**>
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 Privacy

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 Privacy >
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 [Privacy]
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 [Privacy]

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 **Privacy** >
Sent: Wednesday, May 3, 2023 4:41PM
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 sou

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
