

Testimony of the Friends of the DC Archives
Before the DC Council, Committee on Education, David Grosso, chair
Re: Modernization of DC Public Library, Washingtoniana Division
Thursday, October 22, 2015

Good day, I am Bill Rice here for the Friends of the DC Archives (FDCA) to testify on how modernization of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library by the DC Public Library will affect the District's historic resources.

Two evenings ago, Katherina Hering and I attended a presentation by DCPL Director Richard Reyes-Gavilan on the renovation plans for MLK. He included reference to "ongoing conversations" about the "municipal archives" and the Historical Society of Washington sharing space with the Washingtoniana Division to create "one-stop shopping for information on the history of the city." With this confirming of other informal conversations, we are ready to discuss this idea.

Mr. Reyes-Gavilan also brought up an immediate and disturbing prospect--that the interim, MLK replacement facility will be very small (apparently circa 10,000 sq. ft.), meaning, in effect, that Washingtoniana would be largely unavailable for the three years, maybe longer, of the MLK renovation.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, the existing Archives at Naylor Ct. needs major upgrading in hours, staff, and space. This is a top FDCA goal, along with a new Archives and modern records management for the District. Shutting Washingtoniana now, without major improvements at Naylor Ct., would create the deeply concerning prospect that researchers, as well as government agencies and the public, would be without a suitable municipal historical research facility for this period.

As before, FDCA wants to work with all relevant parties, including you, Mr. Chairman, to insure continuing access to the District's historic materials. Unfortunately, the dialogue needed to achieve this goal has been largely absent. For instance, what does Mr. Reyes-Gavilan mean by "ongoing conversations" concerning sharing space in MLK?

We are of course available to answer any questions. Thank you.

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