

## Open Letter to Provost Joy Connolly and Chief Librarian Polly Thistlethwaite about the Partnerships between the New York Public Library and the CUNY Graduate Center

Dear Provost Connolly and Librarian Thistlethwaite,

We, student representatives of the Doctoral and Graduate Students' Council (DSC) recognize the essential importance of a functional library system. At the core of our scholarship, and regardless of discipline, we believe that our library provides access to essential resources that make our research possible. A key component of these library and research resources, which has been developed and maintained since the CUNY Graduate Center opened its doors, is the New York Public Library, one of the largest library systems in the country and the world.

In 1968, we formalized our relationship when the Chancellor enlisted the American Council of Learned Societies to outline the mutual benefits of a collaboration: CUNY doctoral scholars and researchers would secure access to New York Public Library (NYPL) resources, and NYPL would, in turn, be compensated annually by New York City, the Governor's office, and NY state library aid programs in order to help build a world-class research library. This relationship continues to this day in the form of around \$2M per year in New York State Library funding to NYPL research libraries in order to support CUNY doctoral and graduate programs. Over the years, the Graduate Center Library's electronic and physical collections have grown substantially, in part, through direct partnership and through collaborative networks with the NYPL. Our relationship has played a key role in expanding the range of discoverable materials in collaboratively sourced library catalogs, shared electronic collections, and interlibrary loan materials.

As primary scholars and researchers of the Graduate Center, we have great trust in our collaborative networks with the NYPL, but also take some responsibility in seeing that the library services are not only maintained but also expanded such that they may best serve the interests of doctoral and graduate researchers and scholars. To this end, we want to highlight areas where we can strengthen our unique arrangements between the NYPL and the Graduate Center.

First, while we recognize that the Graduate Center and the NYPL have in recent initiatives improved access to electronic collections, we believe that we can strengthen our relationship in this area by winning vendor concessions to a broader number of online archival collections and databases. Resources such as Proquest databases (i.e. historical

newspapers, American periodicals) and Gale (i.e. e-book collections), for example, which are only available using NYPL credentials, could be made available to Graduate Center scholars by granting more seamless access using our library platform, as well as making them available in the library computers. The Graduate Center is a world-class public institution, which takes seriously its open-door policy and part of the institutions that services the intellectual and research endeavours of its residents and beyond. Existing plans, such as modifications to the first floor driven by the Center of the Humanities and Keith Wilson, for example, reinforce this mission and acquisition of library resources should be prioritized in all current and future library projects.

Secondly, we further recognize that the Graduate Center and the NYPL can strengthen shared resources through the MaRLI Collaborative Collection Development by participating in the program as full constituents. Full participation in MaRLI would directly expand access to our research collections by granting the Graduate Center with licenses to new acquisitions and electronic material, as well as automatic interlibrary loan access to other participating institutions' library materials (without having to appeal to the NYPL for participation as individuals in the GC community). We believe we could develop stronger interuniversity and interlibrary relationships with the NYPL as well as Columbia University and New York University in order to expand licensed resources and physical library and research work space available to Graduate Center scholars and researchers.

Third, we believe we can strengthen our collaborative networks through the full GC-specific participation and representation in the Advisory Council for the NYPL Center for Research Libraries, the body which advises NYPL administration about institutional priorities that serve its constituents. As a significant element of that constituency, we are concerned that the interest of Graduate Center scholars and researchers is not properly or adequately represented with the departure and lack of replacement of CUNY Professor, Dr. Duncan Faherty.

Lastly, we recognize that our current three-level library is and will be undergoing critical changes within the next few years as the concourse level of the library will be acquired by a new initiative in the digital humanities, and the first floor is being redesigned into a multi-purpose library space. With these impending changes always in mind, we have become increasingly cognizant of the need to increase the functionality of digital resources that can be accessed off-site, as well as other library and research workspaces for students and faculty. We believe that with these upcoming changes, it would be to the benefit of students, faculty, and the quality of scholarship we aim to contribute to the wider community, that we may begin a dialogue around resources available to members of the Graduate Center community through the NYPL.

We believe that the library is necessary for advancing our scholarship and professional endeavors and believe that it is due time that the Graduate Center Library and the NYPL consider finding ways to seek a more functional arrangement that fairly and efficiently utilizes shared resources.

We thank you in advance for your timely response to this letter.

Regards,

Steering Committee of the Doctoral and Students' Council

*Effectively Sign by the Steering Committee of the DSC on November 2, 2018*