



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

March 2, 2016

Gregory A. O'Dell
President & Chief Executive Officer
Events DC
801 Mount Vernon Place, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Elliott Ferguson
President & CEO
Destination DC
901 7th St., NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. O'Dell and Mr. Ferguson,

The Washingtoniana Collection of the DC Public Library houses one of the most important repositories of District history. The collection will close on March 4, 2017 for three years, while the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library undergoes much-needed renovations. A number of District residents have reached out to my office, concerned by reports that the materials in the collection will be temporarily housed at three locations with limited availability.

One location where a significant portion of the Washingtoniana collection will be temporarily relocated is at the Carnegie Library in Mt. Vernon Square. It is my understanding that residents' access to collection materials held at Carnegie will be by appointment only, and quite limited: Tuesdays through Fridays from 10am to 5pm, as well as one Saturday per month. In contrast, the Washingtoniana Collection is currently available to walk-in patrons six days a week, and until 8pm from Monday through Thursday. Limiting access to the collection in the manner proposed will significantly impede access to these materials by professional researchers as well as students, academics, preservationists, hobbyists, and the many others who have visited the Washingtoniana since its establishment in 1905.



Enclosed, you will find a copy of an August 2016 letter by a group of over fifty District residents to the Board of Library Trustees and DCPL Director Richard Reyes-Gavilan, laying out further the importance that access to the collection not be diminished.

I am writing to you today to request that you work with DCPL and the Historical Society of Washington to ensure that access to the Washingtoniana Collection is not reduced while the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library is being renovated. I also ask that you take action to minimize the effect of any arrangement made with Apple (which I understand is seeking to set up a store at the Carnegie Library site) or other private entities in relation to the collection.

Currently, the Washingtoniana Collection is the only fully functioning archive administered by the District Government. It is also one of our most long-lasting and significant cultural institutions. I look forward to hearing about the steps you, DCPL, and the Historical Society of Washington plan to take to ensure that access to this important resource is not diminished throughout the renovation period.

Regards,



Mary M. Cheh

Cc: Councilmember David Grosso
DCPL Director Richard Reyes-Gavilan
Board of Library Trustees President Gregory M. McCarthy