



# *Bib·li·o·FILE*

---

## **President's Letter**

---

Here we go again. The planned cuts to the Free Library's budget will close eleven neighborhood branches, reduce the materials budget by \$1.6 million, and lay off dozens of library workers. Financial crisis leads to budget cuts and the inevitable loss of library services. Or is it inevitable? Many people don't think so and that includes some members of city council. (See the letter on the next page.)

One major difference between this budget cut and previous ones is that these cuts are permanent. There are no plans to reopen these eleven branches and it was announced that the buildings would be sold or returned to the city for other uses. Essentially the Free Library is being restructured and will be twenty percent smaller than today. This is being done by fiat without any advance notice or chance for community involvement and without, at least initially, any public disclosure of the criteria used to determine which branches will close.

Now, in my experience it is not a bad thing for an organization to periodically evaluate its performance and make the adjustments necessary to meet its goals. This is true for both business and government. If the Free Library needs to change to better serve the citizens of Philadelphia then the process leading to that change should be open to all citizens. As it is now, I question how closing eleven neighborhood libraries better serves Philadelphians. It is in precisely the neighborhoods where libraries are closing that people need the services our library offers. I suspect a close examination of what Philadelphians need and what the Free Library offers will indicate an expansion of library services is needed.

While the Independence Branch is not currently listed as one of the branches to be closed, we should all be troubled by these cuts. I urge you to contact the mayor, your city council person or any other government representative and express your concern about these library cuts. You can also find and electronically sign an online petition opposing closing these libraries at [www.libraryfriends.info/](http://www.libraryfriends.info/)

*Joe Baker*

---

## **How Much Do We Value Libraries?**

Philadelphia is closing libraries. Philadelphia is reducing its budget for books. Philadelphia is making it harder for some children to hear a story or learn how to use a computer. But in La Gloria, Columbia, one man is risking his life to make a library. The October 20, 2008, New York Times featured the article "Acclaimed Colombian Institution Has 4,800 Books and 10 Legs" by Simon Romero.

Every weekend Luis Soriano, a primary school teacher, loads his two donkeys with books and heads out into the rural countryside. His collection has grown to 4,800 books and is known as the "Biblioburro." The idea came to him as "he witnessed the transformative power of reading among his pupils, who were born into conflict even more intense than when he was a child." His practice is to read to the children from books he brings before they can borrow them. Over the past decade he's fallen off his donkey and broken his leg and been threatened by bandits but that has not discouraged him from his mission. Mr. Soriano finances his work himself from his teacher's salary and from small gifts. In describing his mobile library he says, "This began as a necessity; then it became an obligation; and after that a custom. Now it is an institution."

In Philadelphia where fifty percent of homes don't have a computer and twenty-five percent of the population lives below the poverty level, what can we do to make books available to all our children?



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA  
CITY COUNCIL

FRANK RIZZO  
Room 582 City Hall  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107  
(215) 686-3440  
Fax (215) 686-1929  
E-mail Address:  
frank.rizzo@phila.gov

MINORITY WHIP  
COUNCILMAN-AT-LARGE

COMMITTEES  
Appropriations  
Committee of the Whole  
Disabled & Handicapped  
Education  
Environment  
Ethics  
Public Property and Public Works  
Public Safety  
Technology and Information Services

November 14, 2008

The Honorable Michael A. Nutter  
Mayor  
City of Philadelphia  
City Hall, Room 215  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107

**SUBJECT: Budget Deficit**

Dear Mayor Nutter,

The current economic contraction is the worst we've experienced in decades. However, Philadelphia—over centuries—has demonstrated remarkable strength and resilience in difficult times. We have done so by knowing who we are—and who we want to be—staying true to our values and moving forward with our long-term ambitions, by shepherding our resources and thoughtfully exploiting change.

We will do so again, with vision, commitment, and leadership—transformational leadership.

Your response to the budget deficit includes cuts to important services that save lives, shape lives, and ensure our future. If we want to be a green, growing, great city, then it's fine to promote sustainability and bikes. That's what strategic decision-making is about. But, not while cutting important services.

Even "non-discretionary" departments, such as the Department of Human Services, should be subject to review for management efficiencies that can produce cost savings. A \$1 Billion shortfall over 5 years for a City with a \$4 Billion annual budget is a gap of 5%. That's not insurmountable. And, certainly a City department like DHS, with an annual budget of \$616 Million, which is 15.28% of the City budget, cannot be "off the table." Efficiencies can be found everywhere. Before we cut fire companies, library branches, pools, snow removal, and leaf collection, we must exhaust the search for such efficiencies.

The economy will rebound; it always does. Let's not take unnecessary measures that will have lasting negative consequences. I ask that you re-double your efforts to find management efficiencies in lieu of cuts to important services that affect the quality of life in our communities.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

  
Frank Rizzo

## Consider This

As part of the justification to close eleven branch libraries the mayor cited the fact that Philadelphia has more library branches per capita than any other major city in the country.

For the ten comparison cities San Diego, San Jose, New York City, Chicago, Phoenix, San Antonio, Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas and Philadelphia:

- Philadelphia ranks last in the education level of its adult population.
- Philadelphia is next to last in high school graduation rate.
- Philadelphia has the highest crime rate.
- Philadelphia has the highest poverty rate.
- In eight of the cities 100% of the public schools have libraries and librarians. In Chicago 90% of the public schools have libraries and librarians. In Philadelphia less than 50% of the public schools have libraries and librarians.

**We need all our libraries put to good use!**

## Friends Secretary Meets New Director

At the welcome reception held on September 20<sup>th</sup> Martha Cornog, Secretary for the Friends of the Independence Branch Library, met Siobhan Reardon, the new Director and President of the Free Library. On behalf of our Friends group Martha congratulated Ms. Reardon on her appointment and told her how happy we are to support the Independence Branch. Martha observed one of our stated purposes in the Friends bylaws that is, in addition to raising money, to advocate for the library before city and library officials.

Since this reception, of course, the economic crisis has caused the mayor to drastically cut the Free Library's budget. We appreciate the challenges facing Ms. Reardon and offer her our support in the difficult task of maintaining library services.



Siobhan Reardon, left, and Martha Cornog

## Thank you, Friends!

Thank you for your generous contributions to the Friends of the Independence Branch Library. In the last two months your donations helped buy, in addition to new books for the collections, new shelves for the Children's section and new bulletin boards at the entrance to the library. The new shelving replaces metal racks that were prone to tipping over and were easily pulled apart by rambunctious children. We've needed the bulletin boards for some time to avoid taping notices to the wall and marring the paint. Your contributions help the busiest neighborhood library in the city better serve its patrons.



boards at the entrance to the library. The new shelving replaces metal racks that were prone to tipping over and were easily pulled apart by rambunctious children. We've needed the bulletin boards for some time to avoid taping notices to the wall and marring the paint. Your contributions help the busiest neighborhood library in the city better serve its patrons.



## Event Highlights at the Independence Branch Library

Call 215-685-1633 to confirm programs or for additional information.

For a complete listing check the Branch calendar at <http://www.library.phila.gov/> by selecting "Find a Location" and then "Independence."

Library Hours: Monday, Wednesday 12-8 pm; Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday 10 am-5 pm.

### Toddler Story Hour

Seasonal and Holiday stories, songs and crafts for children (ages 1-4 years) with parent/caretaker  
Tuesday mornings at 10:30 am

### Totally Pre-K Hurray!

Stories and activities for preschoolers.  
First Friday of the Month at 10:30 am

### Scrabble with Leah

For school-age children  
Wednesdays at 4:00 pm

### Gay Men's Book Group

Wednesday, Jan. 7, 6:30 pm  
Wednesday, Feb. 4, 6:30 pm

### DTV is coming in 2009

A representative from the Federal Communications Commission will be available to answer your questions concerning this transition.  
Monday, January 12, noon and 6:30 pm

### Harper Concert with Ellen Tepper

Ellen Tepper, affectionately known as the "Victor Borge" of the harp, will perform a medley of 500 years of harp music with running commentary on the historical background, anecdotes, and humorous stories relating to her instrument.

Wednesday, January 14, 2009 at 4:00 pm, Free

### Chinese New Year Events: Celebrate the Year of the Ox!

Chinese Lion Dance and Folk Dances presented by Chinatown's Holy Redeemer students  
Friday, January 23 at 12:30 pm

### Chinese Folk Dance Demonstration

Presented by the University of Pennsylvania Museum's International Classroom Division  
Friday, January 23 at 4:00 pm

### Chinese/English Bilingual Storytime and Calligraphy Demonstration!

Saturday, January 24 from 2:00 to 4:00 pm

### Enneagram 101

What is the Enneagram and how can it help you? Do you want to gain insight into your behaviors, motivations, and interactions with other people in your life? This workshop will introduce the exciting personality typology of the Enneagram, its history and development, and how it can be used for personal growth. Pre-registration is required.

Wednesday, February 11 at 6:00 pm

### Friends Present – Come Together: Conversations on Jazz Music

Tuesday, Feb. 25, 3:30 pm

### Leapin' Lizards! It's a Reptilian Pet Fest with the Iguana Lady, Cheryl Tobias!

Wednesday, March 25 at 4:00 pm



## Join the Friends of the Independence Branch Library!

Your membership or extra donation helps the library offer enhanced services to our community. Basic membership is \$10. We welcome your additional contribution.

\$10     \$25     \$50     \$100     Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ (We never share email addresses.)

Please mail this form to:

**Friends of the Independence Branch Library  
18 South 7th Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106**

The official registration and financial information of the Friends of the Free Library of Philadelphia may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

---

Friends of the Independence Branch Library  
18 South 7<sup>th</sup> Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106



*Bib·li·o·FILE*

Winter 2008-2009

Joe Baker  
*Acting President*  
Martha Cornog  
*Secretary*  
Tom Culbreth  
*Treasurer*